

modern concentration on the perception and understanding of Nature by means of reason, without attention to that by which Nature is perceived and understood, has led to the 'naturalist' illusion that there is no such thing. From the special experts in experiment, untrained in logic and metaphysic, Mr. Lewis appeals to the mystics and philosophers of all ages (p. 109); regarding our present predicament as abnormal and perhaps transitory (p. 53).

From this first contention, that human rationality is in itself (by his definition) a 'miracle'—that the supernatural not only exists but also interpenetrates Nature—Mr. Lewis goes on to ask whether there are any other such interventions. At this point, Mr. Lewis's argument passes from general to particular, from the possibility of 'miracles' to the probability of the greater miracles of Christian belief; and inevitably from logic and metaphysic to historical evidence as to times and places. Not being (admittedly) a historian, Mr. Lewis does not see that criticism of one class of 'miracles' must be applicable to all, from the Incarnation, Joshua's prolonged daylight, and the Resurrection, to the 'calm' of Dunkirk. It is this which has made the most expert historians the most cautious in admitting 'miracles'; and they occur most freely in periods when critical skill was least. Christian theology itself, as Mr. Lewis has seen (p. 85), is one long protest against the misinterpretation of symbols inevitably inadequate.

If a 'miraculous' event is unique, as Nature is itself unique, historical proof is almost impossible. Mr. Lewis compares the recovery of a missing episode from a novel or a symphony: if what is found 'makes sense' of the whole composition, its genuineness becomes very probable, and Mr. Lewis devotes the rest of his book to this view. He might have followed the great theologians further. But appropriateness is not proof.

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ONSLAUGHT ON A SUPERSTITION

The Royal Art of Astrology

By Robert Eisler. Pp. 296+17 plates. (London: Herbert Joseph, Ltd., 1946.) 18s. net.

FOR the convenience of astrologers "Whitaker's Almanack" for 1947 carefully records the "hour when the Sun enters each Sign of the Zodiac"; Eisler describes in his opening pages how rampant astrology is. He is obviously anxious to destroy this present "stale, superstitious residue", and perhaps his historical survey often forgets his own dictum that this once "glorious philosophical attempt" founded modern astronomy and cosmology (pp. 28, 262). He connects present astrology with "widespread intellectual destitution", and includes with it many pre-critical survivals, such as belief in the "spontaneous generation of life" or in "causes and effects" (pp. 11f, 260f).

Astronomy can forecast an eclipse; astrology can use astronomical calculations, but its own peculiar predictions from horoscopes about the War give Eisler a chance. Italy's entry was not foreseen: an unread message in the stars, however, is less damaging than a message misread. The stars were misread about Sweden, for some astrologers expected Hitler to attack her. Astrologers constantly predicted no war until there was one; then they constantly predicted its end before the finish came. Eisler deduces that modern astrologers try to please their clients by

comforting predictions (pp. 21ff). Even if war-time predictions are not fair samples, they are significant. Some astrologers, fairness should add, affirm the old aphorism, the stars incline and do not compel: they impose temperament, not specific destiny. Astrology is vulnerable enough to make indiscriminating arguments unnecessary.

The zodiacal signs cannot derive their astrological significance from accumulated Chaldean and Egyptian experience, Eisler affirms, because they were originally unimportant (pp. 87-110). "Precession" provides "one of the most decisive arguments" against astrology by involving it in absurdities. Eisler notes a typical absurdity "in most modern text-books of astrology". A child born, or conceived, when a certain sector of the zodiac is rising has "Taurine" qualities. Aries is there now, but Taurus was there two thousand years ago, and left his power in it (pp. 110-22).

The stars and planets did inflict one stupendous consequence on men—a medley of beliefs in their presumed effects which determined astrological lore more than sober induction. Eisler uses modern research, the study of old astrological records, for example, to probe the growth of astrology. Inferences about astrological inferences may be mistaken; but Eisler's survey reveals the workings of the human mind and their astrological consequences. His onslaught seems to have precipitate consequences at times. He seems to ignore, for example, that Eudoxus and some others after him regarded the "spheres" as non-physical geometrical conveniences (pp. 33ff). He calls the "hypothetical 'attraction'" of Vitruvius the ancestor of Newton's "mythical 'force' of 'gravitation'", though Newton did not regard "forces" as actual agents (p. 237).

If Mars derives his astrological reputation from his reddish hue, and Saturn, the "leaden planet", his from his "slow, constant movement", astrology has embodied some wild analogies. It embodies another, if those born under a slowly rising sign live long (pp. 103, 162f, 169). Eisler discusses many wild analogies that have suffused astrology. Imagination has grouped the stars into constellation-pictures, connected them with myths, and drawn astrological deductions. Scorpio, for example, indicates his influence by appearing in the horoscopes of Hitler and Mussolini, though Goethe and Horace had the same ascendant sign (pp. 102f). Historical evidence, Eisler replies to modern defenders, shows that the signs were not named *after* their actual effects had been observed (p. 115).

Tycho Brahe, Eisler says, clung to geocentric astronomy because a central earth is essential to astrological divination (pp. 210, 230). In 1653, Thomas Steele does not fear Copernicanism because astrology can use any valid system of calculation; for an extreme relativist to-day mathematical convenience decides between heliocentrism and geocentrism.

Interesting items include souls and stars, the egregious horoscope of Christ, the "houses" of the planets and the creation of the world, astrological disregard of the velocity of light, the adoption of Uranus as the patron of machinery, and, like odd grains of wheat in much chaff, some actual lunar effects.

There is no index—perhaps because there is so much to compile. The chapter headings, however, are reasonably good guides. Interesting plates and figures are explained in Chapter 33. The last chapter contains a useful bibliography—with comments by the author.

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