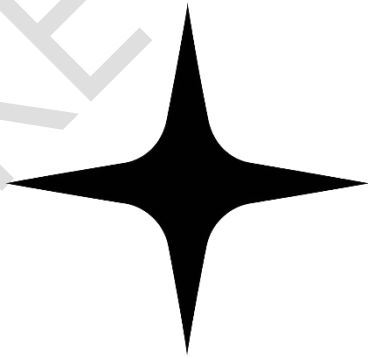


THE CATHOLIC ASTROLOGER

RECLAIMING A MEANINGFUL COSMOS



Michael Edwin Barwick

The Catholic Astrologer: Reclaiming a Meaningful Cosmos

Sample excerpt from a forthcoming work.

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The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006.

Catechism quotations are from:

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 2nd ed. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.

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*“The heavens are telling the glory of God;
the firmament proclaims his handiwork.”*

— PSALM 19:1

DEDICATION

*For my father, who taught me how to see God,
and for my mother, who taught me how to love the sky.*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Interroga pulchritudinem terrae, interroga pulchritudinem maris, interroga pulchritudinem aeris... respondent tibi omnia: Ecce pulchra sumus.

Ask the beauty of the earth, ask the beauty of the sea, ask the beauty of the air... all respond: "See, we are beautiful."

— AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, SERMON 241

The word *astrology* carries many meanings.

In modern usage, it may suggest newspaper columns, fortune-telling, or techniques intended to uncover the future. The Church rightly rejects practices that seek illicit knowledge, surrender human freedom to created powers, or place trust in something other than divine providence.¹

The inquiry pursued in these pages begins elsewhere.

It asks whether the ordered movements of the heavens, as elements of a created and intelligible cosmos, may be approached symbolically rather than deterministically: not as forces compelling human action or instruments for mastering the future, but as patterns that may invite reflection on the character of time and the structure of human experience.

Christian faith understands creation as neither divine nor mute. The world proceeds from divine wisdom, possesses its own order and integrity, and may direct the attentive mind

beyond itself toward its Creator.² The heavens belong within that created order. They do not govern the soul, yet neither need they be regarded as spiritually vacant.

The purpose of this book is therefore contemplative. It revisits an older philosophical and theological question: whether creation, precisely because it is created, may be received as meaningful, and whether the human impulse to read its patterns can be disciplined by freedom, humility, and trust in providence.³

Freedom, in this account, does not require a universe emptied of order. It requires that order not be confused with compulsion. To discern a pattern is not to surrender oneself to it. Human beings remain capable of reflection, judgment, response, and change. Whatever astrology may disclose about the character of a moment or the tendencies within a life, it cannot relieve the person of responsibility for what is made of them.

If the reflections that follow encourage a more attentive reading of the natural world, a deeper reverence for human freedom, and a renewed sense of wonder before the created order, they will have served their purpose.

Endnotes — Author's Note

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§2112–2116, 1730–1735.
2. Ibid., §§299–301, 337–341.
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 22, a. 1; I, q. 103, a. 1.

PREFACE

Fides quaerens intellectum

Faith seeking understanding

— ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, PROSLGION, PROEMIUM

For many Catholics, astrology is dismissed almost immediately.

The Catechism's rejection of divination is clear, and the phrase "Catholic astrology" can therefore sound contradictory.¹ Such hesitation is understandable.

I was not born into the Catholic faith. I grew up in a home filled with books — psychology, philosophy, religion, and eventually astrology. Of these subjects, astrology eventually held my attention most persistently.

However, my fascination with the heavens began long before I knew the difference between astronomy and astrology.

In kindergarten, our class built the planets from papier-mâché and hung them from the ceiling on fishing line. I was captivated. At home, I filled an entire sketchbook with drawings of each planet and persuaded my father to mount them along the living-room wall. Long before I asked whether the heavens were meaningful, I knew they were beautiful. The planets felt less like distant objects and more like companions inhabiting the same universe as I did.

Around the same time, I had my first clear memory of a conversation about God. One evening, after my father awoke from an after-dinner nap, he realized he needed cigarettes and

prepared to set out on what he jokingly called a "tobacco run" to the convenience store several blocks away. That time, I persuaded him to let me come along. To a small child, the journey felt like an expedition: across the grass of the housing complex, over a brook, beneath towering hydroelectric lines, across the schoolyard, and finally to the brightly lit store. We talked the entire way. My father often spoke about God, faith, and the importance of belief, usually in simple, practical terms.

On the walk home, I asked him how we could know that God was real. He opened his newly purchased pack of cigarettes, removed a small piece of foil, and released it into the evening breeze. I watched it glimmer in the fading light as the wind carried it across a nearby field. "God is like the wind," he said. "We can't see the wind, but we can see what it does. We can't see God, but we can see what He does." The explanation was hardly a formal argument, but it lodged deeply in my imagination. Ever afterwards, I found myself looking for signs of God's presence and activity in the world. In retrospect, a conversation began that evening which has never entirely ended.

Sometime later, after my family moved from the city to a small town, I began constructing crude horoscopes for friends and family with my mother's small collection of astrology books. What fascinated me was not prediction but pattern: the strange interplay between what individuals seemed to share and what made each person distinct.

Astronomy was part of the picture too. As a teenager, after purchasing my first book of star charts, I spent a late summer night watching Orion rise above the horizon before fading into dawn. One Christmas, I received a telescope, which led to many evenings spent observing all the heavenly bodies—from the moon to the Andromeda galaxy. I grew up interested in and

pursuing knowledge and experience in both astrology and astronomy.

Over time, these interests led to deeper questions astrology itself could not answer. What kind of universe permits correspondences—meaningful relationships in which patterns in the heavens appear to reflect, signify, or illuminate patterns in human life—without collapsing into fate? What becomes of freedom if such patterns are real? How can order exist without overriding human responsibility?

These questions gradually moved beyond astrology and science towards philosophy and theology.

My search eventually led me into the Catholic intellectual tradition, and especially into thinkers whose careful distinctions preserved both divine sovereignty and created integrity.² I encountered authors who treated causation, freedom, and providence with metaphysical seriousness rather than dismissive skepticism.

For nearly four decades, I have worked professionally as an astrologer. At the same time, the Church's rejection of fatalism and divination has remained decisive for me. Grace cannot be engineered. Freedom cannot be overridden. The heavens are creatures, not powers. They do not rule the soul.³

This book arises from that lived tension — though “tension” may not be the right word. It is less a conflict than a question that would not disappear:

Is it possible to reject superstition without reducing creation?

This work is therefore not primarily about astrology.

It is about the meaning of the cosmos that astrology once attempted, and still attempts, to read.

Endnotes — Preface

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§2115–2116.
2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 22, aa. 2–4; I, q. 103, aa. 5–6; I, q. 105, a. 4; I–II, q. 9, a. 6; see also Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Providence*, trans. Dom Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1951), **157–61**; Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. K. Shook (New York: Octagon Books, 1983), 91–99, 178–84.
3. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§1742, 1996–2002, 2112–2114.

INTRODUCTION — THE RETURN OF THE SKY

*“The eternally incomprehensible thing about the world is its
comprehensibility.”*

— ALBERT EINSTEIN, “PHYSICS AND REALITY” (1936)

Step outside on a clear night and look up.

Even in an age of electric light and glowing screens, the sky retains its quiet authority. Orion rises above the winter horizon with the same geometry that startled ancient hunters and shepherds. Jupiter burns steadily among the fixed stars. Constellations wheel overhead with patient regularity.

The heavens have not changed.

What has changed is how we see them.

Across much of human history, the sky was not mere scenery... They belonged to an intelligible creation that spoke of its Creator.¹

Modern culture sees the cosmos differently.

Astronomy has revealed astonishing truths about galaxies, stellar evolution, and cosmic history. Yet alongside this knowledge, the heavens have grown strangely remote. We observe them with instruments, measure them with precision, and explain their movements with remarkable success — but rarely experience them as bearing symbolic depth.

The night sky can feel like a vast machine.

This transformation is not merely scientific but also philosophical. Significant strands of the modern imagination have been shaped by habits of thought that privilege mechanism over meaning and explanation over contemplation.² What many earlier interpreters experienced as a cosmos rich with significance is now often imagined as neutral space governed by impersonal forces.

And yet the silence is incomplete.

Astrology has regained cultural visibility.

Smartphone applications track planetary motion. Social media circulates astrological commentary to audiences who might never open a book on the subject. Even skeptics joke about Mercury retrograde. Much of this revival is superficial and commercial, yet its persistence is notable.

It suggests an unresolved question: can the cosmos be intelligible without being merely mechanical?

This book addresses that question.

It does not defend popular astrology in many of its current forms, as I share the Church's rejection of divination.³ The deeper issue is whether modern imagination has narrowed its options too severely — whether we must choose only between superstition and emptiness, between magical thinking and a spiritually neutral universe.

Christian doctrine suggests another possibility.

Creation is neither divine nor mute. It is sustained by divine wisdom and therefore intelligible. Natural causes operate genuinely, yet within an order that reflects their source.⁴ The visible world is not self-explanatory; it bears traces of the Logos through whom it was made.⁵

Within such a vision, the heavens need not rule the soul to remain meaningful.

Astrology, when carefully reconsidered, may be approached not as a predictive mechanism but as a symbolic language that emerged from older perceptions of cosmic order.⁶ Understood in this way, it becomes neither a rival to science nor a covert theology of fate. It becomes one strand within humanity's long effort to read time within an intelligible creation.

Wise boundaries remain necessary.

Fatalism must be rejected. Human freedom must remain intact. The future cannot be engineered. Providence cannot be replaced by technique.⁷

But once those boundaries are respected, another possibility appears.

Perhaps the question is not whether the stars cause events.

Perhaps the cosmos still bears signs.

How This Book Unfolds

Because this subject can provoke suspicion and fascination in equal measure, the argument moves deliberately. It does not begin by asking the reader to accept astrology. It begins by asking a more basic question: what kind of world do we inhabit? Is creation spiritually vacant, or can it still be received as meaningful without making created things into gods?

Part I opens that question from the human side:

Chapter 1 considers astrology's return as a sign of contemporary restlessness: the longing for pattern, identity, coherence, and a more personal sense of time.

Chapter 2 then turns to the theological ground beneath that hunger, asking how order, causation, providence, and participation allow created things to act without competing with God.

Chapter 3 listens to the Church Fathers, especially their rejection of astral fatalism, and asks what exactly they were rejecting.

Chapter 4 considers the modern experience of time and how clock-time can flatten older ways of inhabiting rhythm, season, and meaning.

Part II widens the lens:

It asks how the symbolic imagination thinned and why many modern people find it difficult to experience the world as more than a field of objects and mechanisms. These chapters do not reject science or the hard-won gifts of modern knowledge. They ask instead whether a method designed to measure material processes has sometimes been mistaken for a complete account of reality. A measurable cosmos may still be a meaningful one.

Part III returns to the Christian tradition with the central distinction in view: sign is not force.

The Magi, the medieval cosmos, symbolic cosmology, freedom, and providence are revisited not to baptize superstition, but to recover a grammar of creation spacious enough to honor both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Here astrology is considered at its best: not as fortune-telling, not as a rival revelation, and not as a technique for managing the future, but as one symbolic language among many by which human beings have tried to read time within an ordered world.

Part IV gathers the argument and asks what might be reclaimed.

If astrology can be purified of fatalism, divination, and spiritual self-absorption, it may have something modest but real to offer: a contemplative way of noticing pattern, temperament, season, limitation, vocation, and freedom.

The Afterword and Epilogue then return the discussion to the wider Christian imagination and, finally, to praise.

The appendices address common objections, historical sources, and the more personal road by which these questions became mine.

Readers who come to this book primarily from Catholic concern may wish to keep the Author's Note and Appendix A close at hand.

Readers drawn by astrology may find the theological chapters slower than expected, but those chapters carry the load-bearing beams of the argument presented herein.

Readers interested in the history of ideas may want to notice how the book moves from lived longing to metaphysical order, to symbolic recovery. The path is intentionally patient. It has to

be. A meaningful cosmos cannot be reclaimed by slogan. It must be discerned, tested, and received.

Endnotes — Introduction

1. Wisdom 13:5; Romans 1:20; see also Psalm 19:1.
2. Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 138–43; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, paperback edition), 59–61, 323–26.
3. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §2116.
4. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 22, a. 1; q. 104, a. 1; q. 105, a. 5.
5. John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15–17; see also Hebrews 1:3.
6. Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos, 1200–1687* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 569–617.
7. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§302–308, 1730–1735, 2115–2116.

PART I: THE QUESTION RETURNS

*“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless
until it rests in you.”*

— AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, CONFESSIONS

Some questions belong to particular eras.

And there are questions that wait patiently beneath them.

They do not vanish when cultures change vocabulary. They do not disappear when intellectual fashions turn. They remain quiet but persistent, like a pulse beneath history's skin.

One of those questions concerns meaning.

Not meaning in the narrow sense of usefulness or productivity but meaning in the deeper sense of *why anything is at all* — why existence feels charged with significance even when we struggle to name it. Human beings have always sensed that life exceeds mechanics. We experience ourselves not merely as organisms navigating environments, but as persons oriented toward something beyond immediate survival. We love beyond advantage. We seek truth beyond utility. We ache for a fulfillment that no achievement quite satisfies.

This ache is not a defect. It is a sign.

Across centuries, philosophers and theologians have recognized that this interior restlessness points beyond the self. The longing for permanence in a transient world, the hunger for justice in flawed societies, the desire for beauty that stirs even in sorrow: these suggest that the human heart is shaped for more than material continuity. Desire itself becomes a kind of evidence. Not proof in the mathematical sense, but testimony inscribed within experience.

We want more than comfort: we want coherence. We want our lives to *mean* something within a larger pattern we did not invent.

Modern culture often treats such longings with suspicion. Restlessness is reframed as dissatisfaction to be managed through consumption, distraction, and even medication. Technologies multiply, conveniences increase, and yet a subtle unease lingers beneath the surface of abundance. Efficiency solves problems but cannot answer the need for purpose. Stimulation occupies attention but cannot still the deeper hunger for intelligibility.

The result is not necessarily disbelief: it is displacement. The great questions do not disappear; they are merely postponed.

But postponed questions do not remain silent forever. They return in quieter hours... in moments of beauty that interrupt routine, in grief that strips away distraction, in encounters with love that feel both fragile and eternal. Something within us resists the idea that existence is accidental and consciousness incidental. We sense that awareness itself participates in a much larger mystery than the mechanisms that sustain it.

The question returns.

It returns when success feels strangely weightless.

It returns when suffering feels unbearably heavy.

It returns when beauty wounds us with a sweetness that seems to promise more than time can deliver.

The human person is structured as a seeker, even when surrounded by answers. We are oriented toward transcendence even when immersed in immediacy. No catalogue of data fully satisfies the mind's desire for wisdom, nor does any sequence of pleasures exhaust the heart's longing for communion.

This orientation is not learned. It is discovered.

We recognize it slowly, often reluctantly, as if uncovering an interior landscape we once mistook for background noise. The modern world, for all its brilliance, has not erased this landscape. It has simply grown louder, making the quiet terrain more difficult to perceive.

Yet the terrain remains.

A subtle intuition persists that reality is not neutral — that existence itself bears the trace of intention. We sense that truth is not merely constructed but encountered. We suspect that goodness is not only a matter of preference but also of participation in a deeper order. Even those uncertain about formal belief often speak in borrowed theological language: seeking authenticity, yearning for connection, longing for purpose.

These are not accidental metaphors. They are echoes.

Human restlessness suggests that fulfillment lies not in endless accumulation but in alignment — a harmony between the inner life and the structure of reality itself. The heart seeks not simply experiences but orientation. It desires to rest within something trustworthy, something stable enough to bear the weight of love, hope, and mortality.

This is why humanity's spiritual traditions endure. They do not persist merely through institutional inertia but because they address perennial questions no technological advance can dissolve. They speak to the structure of desire itself, acknowledging both its nobility and its vulnerability. The search for meaning is not an intellectual hobby; it is woven into the fabric of personhood.

Thus, asking ultimate questions is not escapism.

Indeed, it is realism of the deepest kind.

Part I begins at this point of return. Not with abstract systems or disputed claims, but with the human condition as it is lived: restless, reflective, and reaching. Before debates about cosmology or theology can be fruitful, we must acknowledge the interior horizon. The longing for meaning is not a puzzle to be eliminated but a compass to be interpreted.

We do not begin by looking outward. We begin by noticing that we are already looking beyond ourselves.

This movement of transcendence, ever subtle, persistent, and irreducible, suggests that the human person is not self-contained. Our desires extend further than our grasp. Our hopes exceed our control. Our capacity for wonder suggests that we are attuned to realities beyond immediate perception.

The question is not whether such longings exist.

The question is what they signify.

If the human heart were designed solely for survival, it would not ache for eternity. If consciousness were merely an evolutionary tool, it would not experience beauty as revelation or love as vocation. The disproportion between our desires and

our circumstances invites interpretation. Something within us points beyond us.

This pointing is not coercive. It is invitational.

We are free to ignore it, reinterpret it, or follow it toward its source. Yet even dismissal cannot fully silence the sense that life gestures toward meaning. The human spirit resists confinement within purely material explanations because it experiences itself as oriented toward a fullness no finite object can provide.

Restlessness, then, is not merely agitation.

It is anticipation.

A sign that the heart is tuned to a frequency deeper than distraction can reach. The longing for ultimate meaning becomes intelligible if reality itself is meaningful: if existence originates not in accident but in intention, not in chaos but in wisdom.

To explore this possibility requires intellectual honesty and spiritual humility. It asks us to consider that the world may not be mute, that our desires may not be absurd, and that restlessness may be an invitation rather than a flaw.

Such exploration does not begin with certainty.

It begins with attention.

With the willingness to notice that the deepest questions persist across cultures and centuries because they arise from the structure of human existence itself. Every age inherits them. Every person encounters them. They may be answered differently, but they cannot be permanently avoided.

Part I, therefore, reopens the question of meaning not as nostalgia for a vanished past but as recognition of an enduring present. The modern world, for all its achievements, has not

altered the fundamental architecture of the human heart. We still seek truth that liberates, goodness that endures, and beauty that consoles. We still long for a coherence that can integrate suffering and joy into a single intelligible story. And we always will.

The question returns because we are the kind of beings for whom it must. And in that return lies hope.

A question that persists suggests an answer not yet exhausted.

A longing that endures suggests a fulfillment that has not been disproven.

Restlessness itself becomes a quiet witness, not to absence, but to possibility.

The heart seeks rest not in distraction, but in belonging.

Not in possession, but in communion.

Not in control, but in trust.

To follow that seeking is not to abandon reason but to enable reason to widen into wisdom. It is to admit that explanation alone cannot satisfy the desire for meaning, and that the human spirit flourishes when intellect and contemplation move together.

The journey that follows begins here: recognizing that our deepest questions are not embarrassments to overcome but invitations to pursue. Restlessness is not an obstacle to understanding but its beginning.

We do not search unless something already is calling us.

And, perhaps, the very longing we feel is already a form of response.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER I: LONGING BENEATH THE STARS

*“Life is never made unbearable by
circumstances, but only by lack of
meaning and purpose.”*

— VIKTOR FRANKL, MAN’S SEARCH FOR
MEANING

Restlessness and Return

Astrology has regained cultural visibility.

Not always in forms ancient or medieval practitioners would recognize, and rarely with much philosophical patience, but unmistakably present. It appears in smartphone applications, social media feeds, podcasts, memes, dating profiles, and casual conversation. People who have never opened an ephemeris still know their Sun sign. Others go further and get theirs tattooed.

Even skeptics borrow the language when ordinary explanation feels too thin: a difficult week becomes “Mercury retrograde,” a surprising convergence feels “written in the stars,” and a season of opportunity arrives as though “the stars aligned.”

This is easy to mock. Mockery, however, is a poor instrument for understanding a cultural return.

Human beings have repeatedly sought patterns through which time and experience could be received as meaningful

rather than merely successive.¹ Astrology's renewed visibility does not prove astrology's claims. It does suggest that something in modern life remains hungry for a language of order, timing, character, and belonging.

This book does not treat astrology as prediction, a system of cosmic forces, or a rival to divine providence. It asks why symbolic languages of cosmic order continue to appeal to the modern imagination, and what that appeal reveals about the needs of contemporary persons living in a world that often gives them information without wisdom, choice without orientation, and identity without rootedness.

Modern Life and the Hunger for Pattern

Contemporary life is saturated with information, but information is not meaning.

We measure productivity, monitor performance, and quantify experience with extraordinary precision. Calendars divide days into manageable blocks. Devices track habits, steps, sleep, spending, attention, and mood. Much of this is useful. Some of it is even merciful. A diabetic monitors blood sugar; a tired person tracks sleep; a scattered mind learns where its hours have gone.

Still, a measured life is not automatically intelligible.

Time can begin to feel less like a story and more like a sequence of obligations. Events pile up without becoming a narrative. Even major transitions can be absorbed into an unbroken flow: another notification, another deadline, another crisis, another small victory quickly replaced by the next demand. Sociologists and cultural critics have noted this kind of fragmentation in late modern experience.²

Under such conditions, the search for pattern intensifies. People want more than data about their lives. They want a sense of how the pieces belong together.

Alasdair MacIntyre famously argues that human action becomes intelligible within narrative and that the unity of a human life is narrative in character.³ This helps explain why astrology's language has such staying power. It speaks of temperament, conflict, affinity, season, and change through images drawn from the sky. It suggests, at least symbolically, that individual experience participates in rhythms larger than immediate circumstance.

Whether those suggestions are true in any deeper sense is a later question. For now, what matters is the shape of the attraction. Astrology offers a grammar for pattern in a culture that often leaves people with fragments.

Identity in an Age of Self-Construction

Modern identity has become intensely self-conscious.

Individuals are asked to define, present, revise, and explain themselves almost continuously. Personality becomes a project. Social roles multiply. Digital spaces reward careful curation of image and narrative. Contemporary analyses of modern identity describe this condition as one of reflexive self-construction.⁴

This endless authorship of the self is tiring work.

Under such pressure, symbolic systems promising self-understanding become attractive. Astrological language offers compact portraits: temperaments associated with signs, relational dynamics expressed through planetary symbolism, transitions framed as cycles. A person may not "believe in

astrology” in a doctrinal sense and still find that its metaphors give language to something otherwise difficult to say.

In this respect, astrology resembles other modern personality frameworks. Its appeal belongs partly to a culture accustomed to understanding the self through psychological and therapeutic categories.⁵ Such systems do not always command full belief. Often they work more modestly. They give people words.

We should not dismiss that need too quickly. To be human is not only to exist, but to be interpreted: by oneself, by others, and finally by God. When people reach for symbolic language, they may be trying to make themselves legible. They may be asking, beneath the fashionable vocabulary and the jokes, “What am I made of? What keeps happening in me? Why does my life have this shape and not another?”

Popularity here may reflect not mere credulity but a search for legibility.

People want lives that make sense.

The Birth Chart and the Particular Life

This is where the birth chart becomes so compelling.

A birth chart proposes that a human life may be contemplated from the standpoint of a particular moment and place. Not humanity in general. Not spirituality in general. This life. This body. This family. This hour. This corner of the earth under this sky.

That is part of astrology’s pastoral power. It offers a symbolic portrait of particularity. The same heavens encompass everyone, yet each person independently encounters them at some time somewhere with their first breath. The chart does not have to

dictate personality or destiny in order to function as an image of a life received under specific conditions.

This can be distorted, of course. The birth chart can become a mirror one never stops admiring, a costume for self-importance, or a set of excuses dressed up as cosmic insight. It can be used to avoid responsibility, baptize preference, or explain away the hard work of conversion. Astrology is no stranger to narcissism. Nothing human is.

But distortion is not the whole story.

At its best, the chart can invite better questions than the ones popular astrology often asks. Not simply: What will happen to me? Not: What am I allowed to blame on the planets? Rather: What has been given to me? What tensions do I repeatedly meet? Where do freedom, limitation, vocation, suffering, relationship, and possibility gather in the life I actually have?

This is not a private spirituality with a custom-made truth for each customer. It is closer to a personal language of attention. The truth remains larger than the self. Grace remains grace. Providence remains divine. But the path by which a person receives, resists, discovers, and responds to that truth is never abstract. The soul is not saved in general. Each person individually is called, wounded, forgiven, strengthened, and sent.

Astrology's appeal reveals, in this respect, a hunger for individualized meaning without isolation. People don't just want to be told that life is meaningful. They want to understand how their own life participates in meaning. They want a vocabulary capacious enough to hold temperament and history, gift and wound, agency and mystery.

That desire is spiritually dangerous when it turns inward and makes the self the final horizon. It becomes fruitful when it teaches attention, humility, and responsibility.

Time, Chance, and the Desire for Coherence

Alongside the search for identity lies another pressure: the experience of time.

Modern life often presents events as contingent and disconnected. Opportunities appear unexpectedly. Crises interrupt plans. Success and failure are unevenly distributed. Randomness becomes a convenient explanation, and sometimes it is the only honest one available.

Yet many people find it difficult to live inside a purely accidental story.

Certain years feel decisive. Encounters seem strangely timely. Losses divide life into before and after. Joy arrives with a quality that cannot be reduced to schedule. Experience resists neutral succession. Philosophical reflections on temporality have long noticed the tension between lived time and abstract chronology.⁶

Astrology addresses this intuition by proposing that time has qualities as well as quantities. Moments differ not only by what occurs within them, but by how we inhabit them. A difficult period becomes part of a cycle rather than a meaningless inconvenience. A season of opening feels like alignment rather than accident. The symbolic frame may oversimplify, but the need it answers is real.

People are not machines passing through empty units of duration. They live by memory, expectation, dread, promise, anniversary, grief, feast, and hope. The hunger for meaningful time is one of the most human things about us.

The Question Beneath the Return

Astrology's persistence should therefore be read first as a symptom, not a system.

It signals dissatisfaction with visions of reality that treat time as empty succession and the self as isolated consciousness moving through neutral space. Cultural philosophers have described related features of modern secular consciousness.⁷ Beneath astrology's popularity may lie a more fundamental desire: to inhabit a world in which existence is not merely occurring but somehow signifies.

That desire can mislead.

Symbolic languages may be mistaken for mechanisms. Patterns may be hardened into predictions. Popular astrology often drifts toward simplification, vague affirmation, psychological flattery, or the suggestion that the planets exercise powers they simply do not possess. Such distortions deserve critique.

But dismissal alone fails to address the restlessness that sustains astrology's appeal. Something in human experience resists the notion that reality is spiritually flat. Something in us suspects that time may possess qualities as well as quantities, that individuality need not mean isolation, and that the world may be capable of bearing meanings that measurement alone cannot exhaust.

Astrology's renewed visibility is one sign of that unrest.

The longing itself, however, proves nothing. A desire for a meaningful cosmos does not establish that such a cosmos exists, much less that astrology describes it truthfully. The usefulness of a symbol does not guarantee its truth. A metaphor can console and still mislead.

The harder question now begins.

If the heavens can signify without compelling, if created things can bear meaning without becoming gods, and if human freedom can exist within an ordered cosmos, then we need an account of reality spacious enough to explain how such things might be possible.

That question takes us beyond astrology.

We must turn to order, causation, and participation.

Endnotes — Chapter 1

1. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 49–92.
2. Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, trans. Jonathan Trejo-Mathys (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 131–48, 224–50.
3. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 211–218, esp. 216.
4. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 32–34, 52–55; see also 244.
5. Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 22–27.
6. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5–30, 52–87.
7. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 37–42, 59–61.