

O'Carroll's encyclopedia outlines and details Mary's Catholic career in a compila-

tion that will be invaluable to Marian scholars.

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ASTROLOGY IN THE RENAISSANCE: The Zodiac of Life by Eugenio Garin
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. pp 144. £10.95

There are four themes discussed in this book concerning the centrality of astrology in the changing patterns of thought in the Renaissance. It was the author's intention to show that astrology, which is a difficult, indeed thorny, subject for us in the twentieth century, was intimately bound up in the decline of an allegorical, magical world view as the seeds of modern scientific thought germinated during the 14th to 16th centuries. His contention is that the changing cosmology (and theology) was, at least partially, worked out in astrological thought. As such the book promised what might have been a very relevant account of a debate that still continues today, for current thinking about astrology is focussed on the same issue, namely as to whether astrology is a sacred science, intimately connected with a religious understanding of the world, or whether it is a contingent and empirical science, correlating to reality in such a way as to be subject to statistical methods of analysis.

The expectation, however, is rarely fulfilled as Professor Garin moves from theme to theme, in what was originally a set of four lectures. Instead we are presented with a rather dense translation of a rambling work of scholarship. The reader of this slim volume has to work very hard to extract the message. Any historical sense is confused by insufficient chronology and unless the reader has a fairly detailed background in Italian Renaissance studies he might find the text patchily obscure. Sentences, for example, sometimes ramble on for a whole paragraph, with so many sub-clauses, and with the whole direction of the sentence changing, that one is left baffled. However, the text is not all like that so some passages have a clarity that encourages one to continue through the book.

The first theme of the book concerns astrology and history, in which the author shows that there was never a clear distinction between divinatory astrology and mathematical astronomy during the Renaissance. Neither was there, he argues, a rekindled interest in astrology due to the emerging humanist philosophy, but that the debate on the relation of the heavens to man on earth was linked to all cultural and religious thought of the day; the new sciences posed just as difficult a set of deterministic problems as did divinatory astrology and magic. Indeed magic is the second theme of the book, especially the magic formalised in the Arab text, the *Picatrix*.

Lecture Three is entitled "Neoplatonism and hermeticism" and picks up the two contrasting modes of thought that were so closely entwined in the later middle ages; one being the holistic metaphysic and the other an increasingly fragmented but practical ideology. Of these two world views, the 'poetic' and the 'rhetorical' as Garin calls them, it is the latter that crystallized into the 'scientific' and yet astrology and magic were connected with both. The scientific framework was worked out just as much from magical formulae as from mathematical ones.

As Professor Garin attempts to tie the ends together in his last essay, "The Criticism of Astrology", he works over the same ground. Astrology did not disappear because it was 'expelled as a beast' after a moral reform, but like the complexity he works through in Renaissance history, it is still linked to conceptions of reality which are with us still. I only wish that link with the present age was easier to find in this book.

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