

HERR MIKROKOSMUS: FAUST AS ASTROLOGER

by

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Although the earliest depictions of Faustus portray him as an astrologer, very few publications to date have touched on the role of astrology in the life of this infamous character. Parallel to the decline in astrological sciences beginning in the seventeenth century, post-Scientific Revolution depictions of Faust have deemphasized astrology as a primary pursuit of the figure. I examine the status of astrology in four versions of the Faust(us) myth: The anonymous *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* and its English translation/adaptation as *The English Faust Book*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, and Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. I argue that the decline in the status of astrology corresponds to historically weakening belief in the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm as epistemologically relevant and analyze the implication of the Faust figure in genuinely modern quandaries of skepticism and aesthetic representation.

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For all those who have felt “was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält.”

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, astrology was valued as an epistemological tool of the highest order. The worldview of the responsible cognitive agent included belief in astrological predictions, since astrology functioned as one of the most certain methods for justifying beliefs about the world. If we assume the classical definition of knowledge as justified true belief, then astrology emerges as one of the historically most important methods of gaining knowledge. Because advanced seekers of knowledge throughout history have utilized astrology, it is not surprising that depictions of the Faustus figure often portray him as an astrologer. Faust's activities also reflect the practice of alchemy, and this aspect of the character has long been an object of study.¹ In this paper, I focus on Faust as an astrologer to the exclusion of his alchemical pursuits. Though these practices overlap in many ways, I concentrate on Faust's relation to astrology largely because scholarship up to the present has not explored this topic thoroughly. My aim is to investigate the role of astrology as a means to knowledge in versions of the Faust story through the centuries, looking at how the epistemological status of astrology in each work reflects the contemporary history of science.

From the 1587 anonymous folk tale *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, through the dramas of Marlowe and Goethe, and Thomas Mann's 1947 novel *Doktor Faustus*, the portrayal of astrology in each work illuminates the cognitive function of the

¹ Mahal, Günther. "Faust und Alchymie." *Faust: Annäherung an einen Mythos*. Comp. Frank Möbus. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1995. 21-27. Print.

ancient science in the respective epoch. Whereas the Faust of the *Historia* receives admiration from lords and mathematicians for his accurate astrological predictions,² Mann's Faust character, Adrian Leverkühn, is unfamiliar with astrology as a practice, and defends it as a form of intuition that is separate from the science of his day.³ Though no one work or author can represent an era, the incarnations of the Faust story reflect the shifting epistemological roles of astrology with surprising clarity.

The prominence of astrology in the Faust myth derives from the activities of the historical Faust. Though the exact identity of Faust remains unknown, many sources refer to a Jörg Faustus (died c. 1539), who was an astrologer, a natural philosopher, and a physician.⁴ In *Doctor Faustus: From History to Legend*, Frank Baron emphasizes the prominence of astrology in the life of the historical Faust:

He appears to have earned his living primarily as an astrologer. But he also claimed competency as a magician, and the authors of the legend reacted most strongly to this particular occupation. They tended to neglect Faustus as a philosopher and astrologer, the roles that helped the historical figure attain a certain degree of respectability.⁵

As Baron makes clear, Faustus' status as astrologer was, in the sixteenth century, a sign of academic proficiency, and certainly did not necessitate the practice of magic, though Faustus claimed to be competent in both fields.

The clearly heretical figure portrayed in the Faust myths was no simple reflection of the historical astrologer Faustus, but was, as Baron argues, the

² *Historia* 36

³ Mann 366

⁴ Jones 3

⁵ Baron A 84

compilation and organization of anecdotes by the anonymous Protestant author of the *Historia*.⁶ The anecdotes that formed the basis for the legendary Faustus were propagated most famously by Martin Luther. “The influence of Martin Luther,” Baron claims, “is the most important single factor in the development of the Faustus legend,”⁷ though Luther never met Faustus himself. An elusive outlaw, Faustus attracted both great scorn and the patronage of influential figures such as Franz von Sickingen, the Bishop of Bamberg, and the von Hutten family, who admired his “science.”⁸ He claimed to have miraculous abilities in the occult practices, and yet passed away without written records of his achievements. This lacuna in Faustus’ recorded identity allowed for the rapid spread of legends, particularly through Luther, who viewed him as a magician aided by the devil, who would then earn the devil’s reward as soon as he proved no longer useful.⁹ Luther’s opinion of Faustus comes as no surprise, given his hostility toward astrology, conservatism toward “new” science, and obsession with the presence of the devil.¹⁰ The infamous story of Faustus’ pact with the devil is hence a relic of Luther’s attempts to discount practices that, according to his belief, did not have a place in Protestant Germany. In Luther’s popular *Tischreden*, Faustus and his *Geist* appear as a topic of discussion, creating the foundation for Luther’s assault. Luther’s words spread throughout Germany during Faustus’ life, making his obscure and allegedly violent death in South Germany an apparent confirmation of Luther’s predictions. The fortuitous correspondence of

⁶ Baron 8

⁷ Baron 70

⁸ Jones 3

⁹ Jones 3

¹⁰ Jones 3

Faustus' fate and the warnings of Luther spread public interest in the legend and made the story of Faust and the devil into a household tale. Thus, it was Faustus' practice of magic, paired with uncanny coincidence, which lent the greatest fuel for Luther's attacks. Luther did not emphasize Faustus' main occupation as astrologer, since competency in this science generally indicated the learnedness of the practitioner among the sixteenth century public, and certainly did not necessitate ties to the devil.

As Christa Knellwolf King makes clear, astrological beliefs and practices had "a well-established bearing on the philosophical, intellectual, cultural and scientific spheres of life" in the Renaissance.¹¹ Through the sixteenth century, astrology remained a powerful political and social force, and was not generally counted among the occult arts. Its apparent ability to predict future events accurately was appealing to those possessing power of any kind, for one wielding power could not afford to ignore an art that could divine destiny.¹² By the end of the fifteenth century, it had ceased to be a subject of interest exclusively to royalty and the intellectual elite, and remained an integral aspect of university scholarship through the sixteenth century.¹³ In addition to the predictions of judicial astrology, which related to politics and law, natural astrology was, through the seventeenth century, the primary means by which mundane events such as crop yields and weather were forecasted. In addition, because each part of the body was thought to correspond to a sign of the zodiac, medicine and astrology were so closely intertwined that in the seventeenth century, at least some

¹¹ King 92

¹² Whitfield 128

¹³ Whitfield 126, 139

knowledge of astrology was considered necessary to a physician's training.¹⁴

Astrology was thought to be compatible with Christianity in that it explained *how* God governed the world, namely through the complex influences of the stars, while religion affirmed the *fact* that he did so. Thus, astrology was, at this time, a science that was popularly thought to mold to the divine plan of the universe. Before its influence took hold, Luther's Protestant rejection of astrology was therefore a marginal claim.

In all versions of the Faust legend, as well as in the known life of Jörg Faustus, he is an accomplished necromancer as well as an astrologer. The raising of spirits does not belong to the traditional doctrine of astrology as inherited from the Greeks. Due to an increased interest in magic during the Renaissance, the line between astrology and necromancy, which is the practice of summoning spirits, appears to have grown vague. In this alternative version of astrology, innumerable spirits, demons, and intelligences inhabited the universe, each linked to a particular planet or sign of the Zodiac, and these spirits were the causes of astrological effects.¹⁵ Thus, this kind of astrological necromancy claimed that the practitioner could call on a spirit to reveal the future. Taking into consideration this complication of the astrological tradition, we can now make sense of the title page of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, on which Faust summons Mephistopheles from within a magic circle that is inscribed with the signs of the Zodiac and the planetary glyphs.¹⁶ Luther's damnation of astrology may well have had its ground in the fact that the practice of astrology in

¹⁴ Tester 223

¹⁵ Whitfield 136

¹⁶ See Illustration 1

the sixteenth century was often paired with magic, most particularly in the practices of Jörg Faustus.

Just as Faust's practice of astrology combines elements of necromancy, astrology itself resists reification into a continuous tradition. In *A History of Western Astrology*, S.J. Tester defines the science as follows:

Astrology is the interpretation and prognostication of events on earth, and of men's characters and dispositions, from the measurement and plotting of the movements and relative positions of the heavenly bodies, of the stars and planets, including among the latter the sun and the moon. This may or may not imply belief in stellar 'influences'; it certainly implies constant and therefore usable relationships between configurations in the heavens and those on earth.¹⁷

Like the term "science," the word "astrology" may refer to a great multiplicity of activities and ideas, which can have quite varying purposes in different circumstances. As we see in the above definition, an astrologer need not even believe in the influence of stars upon earthly activities to practice astrology. Because the astrological tradition extends thousands of years into the past, the science has developed according to the shifting cultural, intellectual, and religious *milieu*. Ann Geneva states, for instance, that modern astrology "generally bears little resemblance to earlier practices, and often the less one knows about modern methods, the easier it becomes to penetrate the early modern mentality."¹⁸ The astrological practices of a Babylonian priest, an ancient Greek mathematician, a Renaissance magus, and a contemporary

¹⁷ Tester 11

¹⁸ Geneva 3

psychological Astrologer share few conceptual constraints.¹⁹ The primary uniting factor is a conviction that there exist significant correlations, if not causations, between the motions of the heavenly bodies and the events on Earth—in short, the belief that people and the cosmos form a relation of microcosm to macrocosm.

Because belief in the human realm as microcosm has faded from the modern worldview, astrology appears today to be an outdated relic of pre-modern science. As we have seen, because the practice of astrology has varied considerably with the centuries and its diverse practitioners, it is important to view astrology in the appropriate historical context. Since the inception of the ancient science, notions of causation, and indeed of truth itself, have undergone tremendous shifts. In the centuries preceding the eighteenth century, the nature of truth was generally thought to be metaphysical or revealed, as it had been since Plato and Augustine.²⁰ As the empiricism²¹ of the Scientific Revolution caught hold, revealed truth ceased to have authority, and “facts,” established through empirical discovery, became the language of truth. The development of this new sense for truth did not, however, happen overnight. As Charles Webster states:

The scientific language belonged to Cartesianism and Newtonianism, but the underlying ethos indicates continuity with a prophetic tradition coextensive with the Scientific Revolution. ... There was continuing faith not only among the Platonists, but also with Stillingfleet, Whiston and Newton that there existed a fundamental unity between prophecies of the scriptures and those

¹⁹ Curry 4

²⁰ Tester 219

²¹ In the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Alan Lacey defines empiricism as “any view which bases our knowledge, or the materials from which it is constructed, on experience through the traditional five senses.”

contained in the hermetic writings, Sybilline oracles and other works of ancient theology.²²

Though we associate the name of Newton firmly within the tradition of the Enlightenment and the modern world, the rise of the “Enlightenment of Newtonianism” did not correlate perfectly with the decline of revealed truth as a cognitively responsible means of justification. For instance, though he is credited as the founder of the new scientific methodology, Francis Bacon based his approach on the scriptural notion of man’s dominion over nature, the purpose of which was to counteract its sacrifice at the Fall.²³ Newton himself possessed a major edition of the works of Paracelsus, the Renaissance physician, astrologer, alchemist, and general occultist.²⁴ Based on the extent to which his copies of alchemical works were notated, and on the great volume of Newton’s own alchemical writings, John Keynes deemed Newton the last of the magicians.²⁵ Newton’s practice of alchemy and proximity to the works of Paracelsus indicate that the symbolic language of prophetic texts was not foreign to his conceptual landscape. His attitude toward astrology itself, however, is highly contested, since his works evince neither support nor rejection for the science.²⁶ A legend among present-day astrologers recounts that Newton defended astrology in response to the disparaging remarks of Dr. Halley, stating, “Sir, I have studied these things—you have not.” I. Bernard Cohen argues, however, that this

²² Webster, Charles. *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Print. 42.

²³ Webster 2

²⁴ Webster 9

²⁵ Webster 9

²⁶ Tester 229

story is false, and that Newton's answer relates to Dr. Halley's disrespectful comments on religion.²⁷ The inscrutability of Newton's view of astrology reflects the sense of increasing uncertainty that overcame the science during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through this period of "Enlightenment" that produced the modern mind, the developments that led eventually to the division of astronomy from astrology are difficult to define. For reasons that were lost in the complexity of intellectual life during this time, scientists ceased to feel justified in holding the beliefs that were central to astrological practice.

In what follows, I explore historical views of the limitations to knowledge through Faust's practice of astrology. Because astrology has its basis in unmediated beliefs,²⁸ discussions of its reception throughout history reflect the attitude of the age toward such problematic beliefs. In this analysis, I turn first to the earliest known publications of the Faust story, the *Historia*, and its translation into English, showing the scientific integration of astrology in the sixteenth-century depiction. I next look to Marlowe's drama as an expansion and alteration of this attitude toward the science. Then, I consider Goethe's *Faust* as an example of the diminishing role of astrology in nineteenth-century thought, due to changing epistemological constraints. In exploration of the twentieth-century mind, I turn finally to Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, and show how pre-modern epistemology and modern empiricism coexist in the complex figure of Adrian Leverkühn.

²⁷ Webster 230

²⁸ Unmediated beliefs are beliefs that we adopt more or less independently and not as part of a chain of beliefs that we already have. A basic astrological unmediated belief is the claim that there exist meaningful correlations between celestial phenomena and events on earth.

CHAPTER II
EARLY FAUST STORIES

In the *Historia* and its translation and elaboration, the English Faust Book, Faust seeks to transgress human cognitive boundaries through astrology. The books depict the practice of astrology itself, however, as neither unusual nor damnable. To be sure, Faust is in both works portrayed as an example to good Christians of the wrath of God on those who practice dark arts. The complete title of the English Faust Book is, after all, “The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus.”²⁹ This interpretation coincides with the firm warning that concludes the *Historia*, which advises “GOTT zu fürchten, Zauberei, Beschwörung und andere Teufelswerke zu fliehen.”³⁰ Though Faust himself appears thoroughly damnable, his astrology is never singled out as heretical. It is his hubris to access the higher realms, rather, which is scorned in both books. One significant difference between the English Faust Book and the *Historia* is that the latter situates Faust and his wrongdoings in a social context, whereas the English book allots the fault to Faust alone. The *Historia* describes Faust’s descent into the dark arts as the result of spending time with other *Speculierer* (Faust “ist zur bösen Gesellschaft geraten”):³¹

Zudem fand D. Faustus seinesgleichen, die gingen um mit ... figuris, characteribus, conjurationibus, incantationibus, und wie solche Namen der Beschwörung und Zauberei mögen genennt werden. Das gefiel D. Fausto wohl, speculiert und studiert Tag und Nacht darinnen, wollt sich hernach

²⁹ Jones 1

³⁰ *Historia* 151

³¹ *Historia* 7

keinen Theologum mehr nennen lassen, ward ein Weltmensch, nannte sich einen D. Medicinae, ward ein Astrologus und Mathematicus und zum Glimpf ein Arzt.³²

In the original book, it is Faust's contemporaries who expose him to *Spekulation* and hence catalyze his descent into heresy. The translation of the *English Faust Book* of the above passage credits Faust alone for his heretical behavior, and goes on to emphasize his moral wrongdoing:

using figures, characters, conjurations, incantations, with many other ceremonies belonging to these infernal arts, as necromancy, charms, soothsaying, witchcraft, enchantment, being delighted with their books, words and names so well, that he studied day and night therein: insomuch that he could not abide to be called doctor of divinity but waxed a worldly man and named himself an astrologian, and a mathematician ... without a doubt he was passing wise, and excellent perfect in the Holy Scriptures: but he that knoweth his master's will and doth it not, is worthy to be beaten with many stripes.³³

Both versions of the text portray Faust's practice of astrology as part of a wider downward spiral into "worldly" matters, which stands at odds with the study of theology. Faust must choose whether to travel the road given to him in divinity school, or to live according to other principles.

Though both texts appear to create a dichotomy between correct behavior that accords with theology and worldly life, which includes astrology, mathematics, and medicine, the moral contrast of these two realms is not clear. According to the way

³² *Historia* 7

³³ Gent 93

that the texts form the distinction, if astrology is to be a target of scorn, then mathematics and medicine must also be viewed as reprehensible. Because the latter two practices seem free from moral reproach, the texts appear also to view astrology as acceptable. Ambiguities in the texts notwithstanding, astrology, as practiced by Faust, does come under moral contempt. The bare fact that Faust is an astrologer must not be the problem; It is primarily the *way* in which he practices that the Protestant authors mean to disparage.

In both early texts, Faust is an astrologer by occupation, but transgresses the traditional bounds of the science by performing necromancy. Due to this desire for knowledge beyond his God-given human sphere, Faust summons Mephistopheles, in part because he wants to create the most accurate astrological calendars. The English Faust Book describes Faust's astrological gains via Mephistopheles as follows:

He had learned so perfectly of his spirit the course of the sun, moon and stars, that he had the most famous name of all the mathematicians that lived in his time, as may well appear by his works dedicated to unto sundry dukes and lords: for he did nothing without the advice of his spirit, which learned him to presage of matters to come which have come to pass since his death. . . . If any thing wonderful were at hand, such as death, famine, plague or wars, he would set the time and place in true and just order, when it should come to pass.³⁴

Faustus' conjectures meet with praise from mathematicians and sovereigns, since he tailors these predictions to the guidance of the dark spirit. As the *Historia* states: "So stimmten auch seine Practiken, die er Fürsten und großen Herrn dedicierte, überein, denn er richtete sich nach seines Geistes Weissagungen und Deutungen zukünftiger

³⁴ Gent 113

Ding und Fall, welche sich auch also erzeugten".³⁵ Through Mephistopheles' intervention alone is Faustus able to predict the future successfully. As the spirit explains to Faustus, the sphere of astrological conjecture is not accessible to the human mind, which is bound to the Earth.³⁶ It is spirits, such as Mephistopheles, that are privy to the secrets of the firmament. In fact, as Faust admits his doubts regarding the accuracy of his own astrological predictions, due in part to inconsistencies in the works of astrologers that are his references, Mephistopheles offers the following explanation in the *Historia*:

‘Es hat ein solch Judicium, daß alle Sternseher und Himmelgucker nichts Sonderliches gewiß practicieren können, denn es sind verborgene Werk Gottes, welche die Menschen nicht wie wir Geister, die wir in der Luft unter dem Himmel schweben, sehen und ergründen können. Denn wir sind alte Geister, in des Himmels Lauf wohl erfahren.’³⁷

Mephistopheles here implies that all astrologers have, if their work was accurate, made predictions with the help of God or a spirit. Those who have not had such contact merely guess or are charlatans, since the heavenly realm is inaccessible to human beings left to themselves. The English Faust Book elaborates this passage by placing a further layer of inscrutability on the correct practice of astrology. In his answer to Faustus, Mephistopheles states that even if an accurate work exists, a human being requires the help of a spirit in order to decipher that which has been left to posterity:

³⁵ *Historia* 36

³⁶ *Historia* 37

³⁷ *Historia* 37

‘For if by some chance some one mathematician or astronomer hath left behind him any thing worthy of memory, they have so blinded it with enigmatical words, blind characters and such obscure figures that it is impossible for an earthly man to attain unto the knowledge thereof without the aid of some spirit or else the special gift of God.’³⁸

The spirit offers to be Faustus’ source for accurate astrological information, teaching him to unravel the intricacies of the science and helping him to create precise astrological calendars:

‘Wherefore Faustus, learn of me: I will teach thee the course and recourse of [Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon], the cause of winter and summer, the exaltation and declination of the sun, the eclipse of the moon, the distance and height of the poles and every fixed star, the nature and operation of the elements fire, air, water, and earth, and all that is contained in them.’³⁹

Though the early books make a clear association between astrology and spirits, this link by no means intimates that the practice of astrology is demonic. Faust summons Mephistopheles through necromancy, but it is his decision to transgress the bounds of the mortal realm that the early books depict as heresy.

These early versions of the Faust myth portray the effective practice of astrology as transgressing human cognitive capacity. In these texts, correct astrological prediction is possible only via access to alternate forms of cognition, namely that of spirits. Because spirits exist free from the limitations to knowledge that

³⁸ Gent 114

³⁹ Gent 114

restrict human cognition, they may possess astrological knowledge. The books depict Faust's practice of necromancy, on the other hand, as available to human cognition. Since necromancy allows Faust to summon Mephistopheles, from whom he learns the divine art of astrology, it allows Faust to transgress the given epistemological restrictions. The status of astrology as divine knowledge, to which access is forbidden to humans, allows the anonymous authors of these early stories to uphold Protestant ethics and avoid alienating a public that respected astrological conjecture. The early Faust stories forbid transgressions of God-given limitations to human cognition by asserting that astrology is too divine for the cognitive capacity of humans. Without forcing a critique of astrology outright, the authors of these books thus argue against the practice of astrology. They claim that accurate astrological predictions necessitate the guidance of a spirit, which would involve the heretical use of necromancy to transgress God-given boundaries to cognition.

In contrast to the divine aggrandizement of astrology in the early Faust stories, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* portrays astrology as a human basis for the occult arts. Though it was published in 1604, just twelve years after the English Faust Book, the title character's approach to knowledge differs considerably from the Faust of the early books. In place of the one-dimensional hubris of the early Faust, Marlowe's character is an individual who is plagued by doubt regarding his transgressions of the human realm. In the chapter that follows, we will explore the attitude of Marlowe's Faust to astrology within a historical discourse.

CHAPTER III
MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

As the title illustration to Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Fasutus* (1604) portrays,⁴⁰ astrology plays a primary role in the drama, as it did for Marlowe's source, the English Faust Book. The occultist Cornelius, from whom Faustus' learns magic, describes astrology as the foundation of occult practice:

He that is grounded in astrology,
Enriched with tongues, well seen in minerals,
Hath all the principles magic doth require.
Then doubt not, Faustus, but to be renowned
And more frequented for this mystery
Than henceforth the Delphian oracle.⁴¹

Cornelius promises Faustus renown by way of magic, and through the teachings of Cornelius and Valdes, practitioners of the "damned art," Faust learns to conjure. Whereas Mephistopheles instructs the early Faust character in astrology, Marlowe's character has access to the art prior to summoning the spirit. The title illustration to Marlowe's drama, pictured in Illustration 1, represents astrology as central to Faustus' necromancy, for he is encircled by planetary and zodiacal glyphs.

⁴¹ Marlowe 1.1.140-45



Illustration 1: The title illustration to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

This astrological circle allows communication with Mephistopheles, depicting the symbolic language of astrology as a primary means of communication between the human and spirit realms. As Christoph Daxelmüller states, the devil appears as intermediary between microcosm and macrocosm: The demon “trat als Vermittler zwischen Mikro-und Makrokosmos, zwischen Mensch und göttlichem oder höllischem Jenseits auf.”⁴² Consistent with the early Faust books, the practice of astrology by Marlowe’s Faustus represents the transgression of human limitations to knowledge. After lamenting over the inevitability of his fate as one who is damned due to a “hardened” heart, Faustus uses talk of astrology as a way to reestablish his connection to the spirit:

⁴² Daxelmüller 13

I am resolved Faustus shall ne'er repent.
 Come, Mephistopheles, let us dispute again
 And argue of divine astrology.
 Tell me, are there many heavens above the moon?
 Are all celestial bodies but one globe,
 As is the substance of this centric earth?⁴³

Faustus here privileges descriptions of sense experience over theoretical knowledge, and the many astronomical questions that he poses to his spirit reflect this ideology. Seeking to use the spirit's knowledge as a means of justifying astrological beliefs, Faust attempts to overcome epistemological boundaries, for he cannot attain such knowledge without the guidance of Mephistopheles.

In contrast to the early Faust stories, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* reveals the internal struggles caused by the title character's determination to transgress given cognitive limits. Faustus continues all efforts to achieve forbidden knowledge despite an acute awareness of consequent damnation, and the corresponding psychological turmoil. Marlowe's portrayal of Faust thus reveals the psychological dimension of the scientist's aspirations to achieve knowledge that lies outside human grasp. The play departs from the early books in its portrayal of Faust as an immature, shortsighted young man who holds an ambivalent attitude about the insatiable pursuit of knowledge. Despite frequent experiences of regret throughout his time with Mephistopheles, Faust's inability to make morally constructive decisions leads to his damnation in later life. Awaiting the strike of midnight that will bring descent into hell, Faustus describes the torment of his situation: "Accursed Faustus, where is

⁴³ Marlowe 7.32-37

mercy now? / I do repent, and yet I do despair. / Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast. What shall I do to shun the snares of death?"⁴⁴ Faustus' suffering is grounded in conflicting desires within himself.

Plagued by fits of self-doubt and yet driven to apply his brilliance in pursuit of knowledge beyond the scholars of his time, Marlowe's Faustus is a tragic figure. The complete title of Marlowe's play is *The Tragical History D. Faustus*. As Frank Baron states, the title makes evident a moral shift from the early myths: "Schon der Titel deutet eine Distanzierung von dem moralischen Ton der Vorlage an; der in dieser Hinsicht unverbindliche Begriff des Tragischen ersetzt nun das einseitig negative Urteil über Faustus."⁴⁵ Marlowe's psychological portrayal of Faustus thus adds a modern nuance to the flat and morally inexcusable speculator of the early books. Because the reader is aware of Faustus' moral vacillations, his condition becomes that of a seventeenth century scientist, and not only for the mythic character "Faustus."

In fact, Marlowe depicts Faustus' scientific concerns as fairly typical for his day. As in the early Faust stories, Marlowe's drama does not portray as reprehensible Faustus' practice of astrology itself, since the science was integral to early seventeenth century intellectual life. According to Francis R. Johnson in "Marlowe's Astronomy and Renaissance Skepticism," the approximately 40 lines that comprise Faustus' and Mephistopheles main astrological dialog reflect some of the most generally debated astronomical questions of the period. Whereas the author of the English Faust Book filled the characters' interlocations with fantastic material, Johnson argues that Marlowe raises problems that were current in astronomical

⁴⁴ Marlowe 13.62-65

⁴⁵ Baron 100

textbooks that he read during his education at Cambridge.⁴⁶ Faust asks Mephistopheles, for instance, “How many heavens or spheres are there?” and Mephistopheles answers: “Nine: the seven planets, the firmament, and the empyreal heaven.”⁴⁷ The spirit’s answer reveals, according to Johnson, a rejection of the conventional Ptolemaic system of the 1580’s, which describes ten moving spheres and the motionless empyreal heaven.⁴⁸ In Mephistopheles’ model, there are only eight spheres, thus omitting spheres that were not observable directly. Johnson further attributes this unorthodox view to Marlowe himself: “Marlowe’s position is that of the skeptical, empirical school among Renaissance astronomical writers, who refused to accept a system containing any sphere void of visible bodies whereby man could directly observe its motions.”⁴⁹ Though Marlowe was known for his intellectual nonconformity during his studies at Cambridge,⁵⁰ it remains questionable whether this astrological position can be accredited to the author. Nevertheless, it reveals the centrality of astrological questions to the development of empirical sciences in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

For many hundreds of years, astrology had played a primary role in the development of the modern sciences. Until the expansion of technology and mathematical advances allowed for astronomy to take hold as an independent science,

⁴⁶ Johnson 241

⁴⁷ Marlowe 7.60-61

⁴⁸ Johnson 246

⁴⁹ Johnson 246

⁵⁰ King 75

its practice was inseparable from astrology.⁵¹ In contrast to magic, palmistry, and geomancy, which were considered “occult” arts, astrology was taught in universities as part of the core curriculum through the sixteenth century.⁵² All of the great astrologers of antiquity—including Hipparchus, Ptolemy, Manilius, and Firmicus Maternus—were astute astronomers in their day, and many of the scientists responsible for the most important advances in astronomy—such as Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo—were also capable astrologers.⁵³ Some of the revolutionary work done by Brahe and Kepler on planetary orbits, for instance, was undertaken to provide accurate data for astrological charts.⁵⁴ In truth, early modern astronomy was never separate from astrology’s influence.

Nevertheless, in the course of the sixteenth century, the intellectual standing of astrology—as opposed to astronomy—deteriorated with the rise of Copernicanism.⁵⁵ Although Copernicus first encountered the idea that the Earth revolved around the Sun on an axis from reading the antique astrologer Manilius,⁵⁶ his heliocentric theory caused a general decline in astrological belief. This decline is understandable, since the dissolution of the geocentric universe meant the death of the standing conception of the relationship of cosmos to humankind. In a geocentric universe, the positions of the planets in relation to the Earth describe a relation to the Universe as a whole. In a heliocentric universe, however, planetary positions in relation to the Earth merely

⁵¹ Garin 25

⁵² Geneva 144

⁵³ Bobrick 150

⁵⁴ Bobrick 150

⁵⁵ Geneva 144

⁵⁶ Bobrick 151

describe their relation to the Earth as part of the infinite, overwhelmingly unknown Universe. Thus, within the heliocentric model, the fact that a planet is “in” a particular constellation no longer has universal bearing. The influence of the Zodiacal signs was weakened in the new system, since the macrocosm lost the property of exerting absolute influence upon the human being, the microcosm.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the argument from analogy, “as above, so below,” ceased to have such force.

As Marlowe’s knowledge of astrological-astronomical science appears limited to what he learned at Cambridge, his play does not show acquaintance with Copernicus’ seminal work, *De revolutionibus*, which was at the time considered quite advanced.⁵⁸ The repercussions of the heliocentric theory became far more influential in the decades that followed, and its inversion of the standing orientation of the universe fueled the skepticism that led to the Scientific Revolution of the eighteenth century.

Describing the most conclusive evidence of the intellectual “death” of astrology in the mid-eighteenth century, Peter Whitfield states:

By the time we come to the first edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1771, the entry on astrology is brief, cold, and dismissive: ‘A conjectural science which teaches to judge the effects and influences of the stars, and to foretell future events by the situation and aspects of the heavenly bodies. This science has long ago become a just subject of contempt and ridicule.’⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Geneva 144

⁵⁸ Johnson 254

⁵⁹ Whitfield 189

How did this once integral science, practiced since 1500 BC as a divine art,⁶⁰ come to be a “just subject of contempt and ridicule” following millennia of reverence?

Whitfield suggests that the primary reason for the rejection of astrology by the intellectual elite was the increasingly urgent requirement that causation be proven empirically. He states: “the idea that there could be no knowledge without demonstration was one of the cardinal tenets of the Scientific Revolution, and the search for a verifiable chain of cause and effect would clearly prove fatal to astrology.”⁶¹ Because astrology assumes a causal link between celestial activity and human experience based on belief, clearly no such “verifiable chain” is available. William Lilly, the seventeenth century English astrologer, could not, for instance, explain to a court of law his infamous prediction of the Great Fire of London in 1666.⁶² As the need for empirically justifiable claims extended into the sciences, astrology was divested of its interpretive framework.

The two hundred years that stand between Marlowe’s drama and Goethe’s masterpiece reflect the rise of empiricism, which corresponded, at least in intellectual circles, to a waning interest in the supernatural. However, this period was not dominated entirely by empiricism. Immanuel Kant’s reform of metaphysics through epistemology in the eighteenth century explores the limits of knowledge, claiming that one does not gain knowledge through experience alone. Kant argues that experience is by nature subjective, and hence cannot be the only source of knowledge.

⁶⁰ Geneva 151

⁶¹ Whitfield 185

⁶² Whitfield 184

Though Kant's reform did not influence attitudes toward astrology directly, his claim that immediate experience does not give rise to knowledge alone greatly influenced Goethe's thought. In the 1755 text, "Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels," Kant presents a relatively modern astronomical theory. He concludes this work, which claims that our galaxy is a fixed-star system similar to the Milky Way, by stating that the appreciation of nature defies explanation: "Bei der allgemeinen Stille der Natur und der Ruhe der Sinne redet das verborgene Erkenntnisvermögen des unsterblichen Geistes eine unnennbare Sprache und giebt unausgewickelte Begriffe, die sich wohl empfinden, aber nicht beschreiben lassen."⁶³ In this passage, Kant claims that the "immortal spirit" speaks its unnamable language through silence in nature. Referring to both earthly and astronomical nature, Kant emphasizes that a mystery surrounds the human being, which eludes all words and descriptions. Kant's claim represents a critique of the epistemological confidence that characterized much empiricism. This epistemological stance was hugely influential to Goethe, as well as to innumerable thinkers in the ages that followed. In the next chapter, we turn to Goethe's *Faust* as a post-Kantian depiction of a scientist torn between empiricist and pre-modern models of the universe.

⁶³ Kant, Immanuel. "Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels oder Versuch von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprunge des ganzen Weltgebäudes, nach newtonischen Grundfäßen abgehandelt." *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. Wilhelm Dilthey. Vol. I. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1910. Print.

CHAPTER IV
GOETHE'S *FAUST*

In Goethe's *Faust*, the practice of astrology plays a relatively minor role in the title character's life. In contrast to earlier depictions, in which Faust strives to expand his knowledge of heavenly and earthly realms through astrology, Goethe's figure seems to reflect the mid-eighteenth century disenchantment with the science. Like so many works by Goethe, however, *Faust* presents the reader with apparently infinite layers of interpretation. Free from the religious judgments endured by earlier Faust figures, Goethe leaves the moral status of his title character ambiguous. Due to the multifaceted nature of the text, no single perspective on astrology seems clear. That being said, Goethe emphasizes Faust's status as an Empiricist who has reached what he perceives to be the limits of knowledge. Though he attempts to transcend traditional scientific methods through the use of magic, Faust remains trapped within the Empiricist assumption that knowledge derives from experience alone. Because Goethe's own scientific writings support a worldview that reflects pre-modern, non-empirical notions of the macrocosm, Goethe appears to suggest through *Faust* that one must ultimately leave Empiricism behind in order to achieve true knowledge.

It is Faust's reaction to the image of the macrocosm in his book of spells that offers the most insight into the role of astrological thinking in the work. The argument from analogy, "as above, so below," is a central presupposition of astrology, and describes the relation of macrocosm to microcosm. Günter Mahal illustrates these teachings as follows:

Alle Dinge im Kosmos—vom größten Stern bis hinunter zum kleinsten

Organismus—stehen nach dieser Vorstellung in einer vollendet harmonischen Ordnung miteinander. Die Einsicht in die kleinsten Strukturen des Mikrokosmos ermöglicht gleichzeitig Aufschlüsse über die im Weltall herrschenden Strukturen—und umgekehrt. Der Makrokosmos wird dabei als eine vernunftbegabte Wesenheit, als *Logos* begriffen; der Mensch als dessen Abbild.⁶⁴

Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, patterns on Earth and within the human body were widely accepted to reflect patterns in the universe as a whole. This association was not taken to be correlation alone, but also as a kind of causation. In this way, this causal view of the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings was essential to astrological conjecture. Since Goethe appears sympathetic to such a view, it is likely that he accepted at least some claims of astrology. Through exploring Goethe's own attitude toward macrocosmic-microcosmic causation, we may clarify the role of astrology in *Faust*.

Although the intellectual elite of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries generally viewed astrology as an anachronism, Goethe's holistic conception of science does not reflect the general attitudes of his time. Goethe's scientific works reflect a combination of empiricism, Kantianism, and mysticism, which does not exclude belief in astrology as an epistemological tool. Due to his subtlety of expression and sense for irony, it remains difficult to ascertain from Goethe's autobiographical writings the extent to which he valued astrology. Notably, Goethe opens his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, with a description of some favorable planetary positions at the time of his birth:

⁶⁴ Mahal 31

Am achtundzwanzigsten August 1749, mittags mit dem Glockenschlage zwölf, kam ich in Frankfurt am Main auf die Welt. Die Konstellation war glücklich: die Sonne stand im Zeichen der Jungfrau und kulminierte für den Tag, Jupiter und Venus blickten sie freundlich an, Merkur nicht widerwärtig, Saturn und Mars verhielten sich gleichgültig; nur der Mond, so soeben voll ward, übte die Kraft seines Gegenscheins um so mehr, als zugleich seine Planetenstunde eingetreten war. Er widersetzte sich daher meiner Geburt, die nicht eher erfolgen konnte, bis diese Stunde vorübergegangen. Diese guten Aspekten, welche mir die Astrologen in der Folgezeit sehr hoch anzurechnen mußten, mögen wohl Ursache an meiner Erhaltung gewesen sein.⁶⁵

Goethe's planetary personifications add a touch of humor to a text that may otherwise appear to be a hubristic "proof" of the author's superiority.⁶⁶ This description of his natal horoscope is not, however, made purely in jest, for it sets up the serious claim that Goethe was pronounced dead upon birth, due to the incompetence of the midwife: "durch Ungeschicktheit der Hebamme kam ich für tot auf die Welt, und nur durch vielfache Bemühungen brachte man es dahin, daß ich das Licht erblickte."⁶⁷

Goethe seems to suggest that the fortunate planetary placements were at least partially responsible for his unlikely recovery, and hence appears to respect the opinions that the *Astrologen* offered him in hindsight. It is thus clear from the opening of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* that Goethe was familiar with astrology, and held a certain respect for the ancient practice.

⁶⁵ Goethe 5

⁶⁶ Gray 241

⁶⁷ Goethe 5

The prominence of Goethe's description of his horoscope suggests an affinity toward the macrocosmic-microcosmic model of causation, which assumes perfect harmony among all parts of the universe. An examination of Goethe's Kant studies is useful in this respect. In *The Romantic Conception of Life*, Robert J. Richards situates Goethe in the Romantic tradition of *Naturphilosophie*. These Romantic scientists found inspiration in Kant's claim in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* that teleological and aesthetic judgments are logically similar.⁶⁸ In other words, both kinds of judgment penetrate to the same underlying object. This claim suggests that scientific expression is complementary to artistic expression, and that the basic structures of the world can be explained thoroughly by combining these approaches. Taking Kant's theory to heart, Goethe suggested to Schiller that in both art and science, understanding of the whole must precede analysis of the parts.⁶⁹

Forming the basis for Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* offers a post-Enlightenment view of the human microcosm. Just as his "Copernican revolution" in epistemology placed the rational human subject at the center of the cognitive world, Kant's teleological theory inverts the pre-modern concept of the microcosm. Whereas the pre-modern microcosm places the human being under the influence of celestial phenomena, Kant's model suggests that human beings form the larger world in accordance with their own rational needs. The work argues that by way of reason, humans are able to create systems out of otherwise disparate objects because they are the ultimate end of creation. According to Kant, all other beings in

⁶⁸ Richards 12

⁶⁹ Richards 12

nature exist for the sake of humanity. Answering the question of why the vegetable and animal kingdoms exist, Kant explains:

Für den Menschen, zu dem mannigfaltigen Gebrauche, den ihn sein Verstand von allen jenen Geschöpfen machen lehrt; und er ist der letzte Zweck der Schöpfung hier auf Erden, weil er das einzige Wesen auf derselben ist, welches sich einen Begriff von Zwecken machen und aus einem Aggregat von zweckmäßig gebildeten Dingen durch seine Vernunft ein System der Zwecke machen kann.⁷⁰

Kant suggests that the whole of nature appears to us as a harmonious teleological system in which each part answers to the needs of humans.⁷¹ This view of the world as a reflection of humankind forms a basis for the *Naturphilosophie* of the Romantics. According to this model, it was first necessary to explore the human being before one could understand any one part of the world.

The extent to which the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* influenced Goethe is a subject of longstanding scholarly debate.⁷² In his scientific writings, Goethe states that the arrival of this work marked a turning point in his thinking:

Nun aber kam die Kritik der Urteilskraft mir zuhanden, und dieser bin ich eine höchst frohe Lebenspoche schuldig. Hier sah ich meine disparatsten Beschäftigungen nebeneinander gestellt, Kunst- und Naturerzeugnisse eins behandelt wie das andere; ästhetische und teleologische Urteilskraft erleuchteten sich wechselseitig.⁷³

⁷⁰ Kant 384

⁷¹ Liggett 66

⁷² Molnár 15

Through its pairing of aesthetic and teleological judgments, Goethe comments that the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* united interests of his that had once been disparate. Marginal notes and markings that he made during close studies of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* suggest that Goethe read Kant's teleological model of the world in part as a reinforcement of his own theories.⁷⁴ The page markings become particularly emphatic in §80,⁷⁵ in which Kant claims that the mechanistic view of organisms is much too limited in its ability to explain the astounding variety of life forms.⁷⁶ For Kant, the *letzte Zweck* of appearances in the world needs to be considered in order to make sense out of its parts.

This holistic way of thinking is precisely what Goethe's Faust character is unable to do. Though he yearns to know "was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält" (I.382-383), Faust does not feel justified in ascending to belief in macrocosmic-microcosmic causation, in part because he appears to favor direct experience as a justification. The concept of harmony between all parts of the universe is inaccessible to Faust, since he cannot experience this harmony immediately. Gazing at a depiction of the macrocosm in his *Studierzimmer*, Faust cannot comprehend the meaning of the image:

Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt,
 Eins in dem andern wirkt und lebt!
 Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen
 Und sich die goldnen Eimer reichen!

⁷³ Goethe 875

⁷⁴ Molnár 145

⁷⁵ Molnár 145

⁷⁶ Kant 274

Mit segenduftenden Schwingen
 Vom Himmel durch die Erde dringen,
 Harmonisch all das All durchklingen!
 Welch Schauspiel! Aber ach! ein Schauspiel nur!
 Wo fass' ich dich, unendliche Natur? (I.447-453)

In declaring that his attempts at understanding the image of the macrocosm are *Schauspiel*, Faust reveals that he is able to conceive of macrocosmic causation only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Because he cannot comprehend how “*eins in dem andern wirkt und lebt*,” he distances himself from this model and describes it as a performance, in relation to which he can only be a removed observer. As he turns the page to an image of the Spirit of the Earth (*Erdgeist*), however, Faust senses an immediate affinity:

Du, Geist der Erde, bist mir näher;
 Schon fühl' ich meine Kräfte höher,
 Schon glüh' ich wie von neuem Wein,
 Ich fühle Mut, mich in die Welt zu wagen,
 Der Erde Weh, der Erde Glück zu tragen (I.461-465)

Faust relates to the power that he perceives from the *Erdgeist* as a material phenomenon, comparing it to the experience of drinking wine. He believes that the spirit will give him courage to act in the material world, carrying the joy and pain of earthly existence. Far from the abstraction of the *Mikrokosmos*, Faust claims to understand the Spirit of the Earth because it appears more relevant to immediate experience. He speaks an incantation to the *Erdgeist*, believing to have power over the spirit. However, as the spirit finally appears, Faust is at first unable to stand the

presence of the being. Though Faust claimed familiarity with the spirit, the appearance of the *Erdgeist* confirms his inability to comprehend phenomena that do not conform to material experience:

FAUST. Der du die weite Welt umschweifelst,

Geschäftiger Geist, wie nah fühl ich mich dir!

GEIST. Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,

Nicht mir! (I.510-513)

Faust fails to understand the true power of the *Erdgeist* because he envisions the spirit as bound to material reality, which it is not. Faust's reception of the *Erdgeist* fails in part because he does not attempt to understand the context in which the spirit appears within the book of spells. In the stage directions, Faust "schlägt unwillig das Buch um und erblickt das Zeichen des Erdgeistes" (I.460), suggesting that his decision to summon the *Erdgeist* is careless and haphazard. Since he does not bother to read the magic relating to the *Erdgeist* before summoning him, Faust appears to be under the impression that he can call upon and understand the components of a system without understanding the system as a whole.

The overemphasis that Faust places on the separate parts of the material realm also becomes evident in his reactions to the objects in his study. In his *Studierzimmer*, surrounded by the dusty books and scientific instruments of previous generations, Faust longs to transcend the limitations to knowledge that have been set by the science of his ancestors:

Mit Gläsern, Büchsen rings umstellt,

Mit Instrumenten vollgepfropft,

Urväter-Hausrat drein gestopft –

Das ist deine Welt! das heißt eine Welt! (I.406-409)

Driven into desperation by the material burden of his academic predecessors, Faust's situation recalls Dürer's "Melencolia I," in which piles of curious scientific instruments surround the scholarly winged figure, who appears to be sunken in depression.⁷⁷ Crowned by laurels that seem to signify achievement and equipped with wings, the figure appears able to transcend the melancholy that overcomes her,⁷⁸ if only she would remove herself from the collection of instruments that seems to trap her. As Panofsky states, the figure "gives the impression of a creative being reduced to despair by an awareness of insurmountable barriers which separate her from a higher realm of thought."⁷⁹ From the perspective of Goethe's holistic view of science, these barriers may represent the self-imposed confines of a science that dissects the world into parts without giving attention to the larger context. In Dürer's work, the rainbow and radiant star shining brightly in the background appear to represent the world beyond the myopic concerns of weighing, measuring, carving, and recording. The image implies that the scholar's melancholy may be cured if she were to widen her gaze. In this way, "Melencolia I" intimates that the angel may free herself through comprehending the whole of nature, instead of remaining within the self-imposed confines of a science that dissects the world into parts. Accordingly, Dürer's etching seems to support a holistic worldview that mirrors Goethe's own, implying that the worldview that lies behind astrology is consistent with the notion of freedom.

⁷⁷ See Illustration 2

⁷⁸ I follow Panofsky in describing the figure in "Melencolia I" as female. See Panofsky 160.

⁷⁹ Panofsky 168



Illustration 2: Albrecht Dürer, "Melencolia I" (1514)

Because the character of Faust is highly complex, however, it remains difficult to interpret his sense for cognitive responsibility, and hence his attitude toward astrological beliefs. There are moments in *Faust I*, for instance, in which Faust recognizes the correlation between nature and the individual in a way that echoes the relation of macrocosm to microcosm. In "Wald und Höhle," Faust stands alone and speaks of Mephistopheles:

Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,
Kraft, sie zu fühlen, zu genießen. Nicht

Kalt stauenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,
 Vergönnest mir, in ihre tiefe Brust,
 Wie in den Busen eines Freundes, zu schauen.
 Du führst die Reihe der Lebendigen
 Vor mir vorbei, und lehrst mich meine Brüder
 Im stillen Busch, in Luft und Wasser kennen.
 Und wenn der Sturm im Walde braust und knarrt,
 ... Dann führst du mich zur sicheren Höhle, zeigst
 Mich dann mir selbst, und meiner eignen Brust
 Geheime tiefe Wunder öffnen sich. (I.3220-3234)

Faust's stance toward nature here is not that of an empiricist. Although he frames the natural world in material terms (*Königreich*), and emphasizes sense experience of nature (*fühlen, genießen*), Faust also recognizes the correspondence between natural events and immaterial self-knowledge. He describes the revelation of secret self-knowledge, for example, as corresponding to the storm raging in the forest. In this scenario, transformations in the outside world reflect changes within Faust himself. This passage implies, therefore, that we cannot characterize Faust as ignoring analogies between whole and part.

Faust II depicts attitudes toward astrology in even greater complexity. In comparison to *Faust I*, astrology plays a much more obvious role in *Faust II* through the character of the *Astrolog*, who features prominently in the first act and takes his place to the right of the *Kaiser's* throne.⁸⁰ The role of the *Astrolog* is curious, however, because he never puts his alleged art into practice. His most clearly

⁸⁰ See stage directions to "Kaiserliche Pfalz - Saal des Thrones"

astrological utterance is, in fact, whispered to him by Mephistopheles, who has, in the meantime, become the Kaiser's fool. Through Mephisto, the *Astrolog* gives a strange speech at the command of the *Kaiser* that riches should be sought in order to restore the impoverished empire:

Die Sonne selbst, sie ist ein lautes Gold,
 Merkur, der Bote, dient um Gunst und Sold,
 Frau Venus hat's euch allen angetan,
 So früh als spat blickt sie euch lieblich an;
 Die keusche Luna launet grillenhaft;
 Mars, trifft er nicht, so dräut euch seine Kraft.
 Und Jupiter bleibt doch der schönste Schein,
 Saturn ist groß, dem Auge fern und klein.
 Ihn als Metall verehren wir nicht sehr,
 An Wert gering, doch im Gewichte schwer.
 Ja! wenn zu Sol sich Luna fein gestellt,
 Zum Silber Gold, dann ist es heitre Welt;
 Das übrige ist alles zu erlangen:
 Paläste, Gärten, Brüstlein, rote Wangen,
 Das alles schafft der hochgelehrte Mann,
 Der das vermag, was unser keiner kann. (II.4955-4970)

This passage parodies traditional associations of celestial bodies with earthly characteristics and events. Because the speech is a response to a demand for money, the text depicts astrology as a means to material gain, and hence power. However, because Mephistopheles is the true speaker, and he is an exceptionally difficult figure

to place, the attitude toward astrology is left unclear. At best, we may approach the passage as a parody of rigid associations of astronomical bodies with matter. In the final few lines of the speech, Mephistopheles claims, by way of the *Astrolog*, that the transfiguration of metals through the influences of the sun and moon allow for great achievement. Mephisto also states, however, that no one in their company possesses the ability to achieve such things, which is perhaps an implication of the *Kaiser's* incompetency. Though this association of astrological and alchemical activity with material power remains difficult to parse, its impenetrability indicates the problematic nature of macrocosmic and microcosmic associations in the text. Even if we cannot rightfully extract any positive interpretation of this passage, the fact that it contains so many layers of obscurity may indicate that *Faust II* seeks to present astrological thinking as equally difficult to comprehend.

Further into act one of *Faust II*, the expanded role of the *Astrolog* in “Rittersaal” develops the function of astrology in the text. Though interpretation of this scene remains difficult, it does appear to associate astrology with the creation of beautiful illusions. The *Kaiser* commands Faust to produce the spirits of Helen and Paris before him, yet is it the *Astrolog*, not Faust, who presides over their appearance, which then becomes a play entitled “*Der Raub der Helena*” by the *Astrolog* (II.6548). Although the emergence of the spirits is Faust’s responsibility, the *Astrolog* fashions the event into an aesthetic experience for the onlookers. Before the spirits appear, the *Astrolog* sets the stage by explaining the power of magical illusion to overcome the claims of reason:

Empfangt mit Ehrfurcht sterngegönnte Stunden;

Durch magisch Wort sei die Vernunft gebunden;

Dagegen weit heran bewege frei
 Sich herrliche verwegne Phantasei.
 Mit Augen schaut nun, was ihr kühn begehrt,
 Unmöglich ist's, drum eben glaubenswert. (II.6415-6420)

In defining this paradoxical cognitive framework for the spectacle that will soon appear, the *Astrolog* seems to imply a correlation between beautiful, believable illusion and a point in time that is favored astrologically. The desired (*begehrt*) appearance comes at a favorable hour (*sternge gönnte Stunde*), and creates an aesthetic phenomenon for the onlookers that is, according to the *Astrolog*, believable by virtue of its impossibility. The epistemology behind the latter claim is logically absurd, which portrays the *Astrolog* as an irrational figure. Because this contradiction sets the stage for the performance, the implication seems to be that the kind of paradoxical thinking that is required of an astrologer lays the groundwork for aesthetic perception.

The claim that astrological thinking is inherently aesthetic echoes Faust's experience with the image of the Macrocosm in *Faust I*. Unable to comprehend the illustration of universal part-to-whole analogy, Faust denounces his attempts to find meaning in the image as *Schauspiel* and continues paging through the book. This gesture appears to reflect the post-Scientific Revolution trend of rejecting the unmediated beliefs that form the basis for astrology and all microcosmic-macrocosmic allegories, which seems consistent with the portrayal of astrology as an *aesthetic* phenomenon that makes no empirical claims. Accordingly, Goethe's portrayal of the *Astrolog* in *Faust II* as a master of spectacles seems to imply that the irrationality of astrological thinking may be its sustaining factor as an aesthetic phenomenon, but lends it no authority to explain reality. This claim also remains

ambiguous, however, if we consider that the “performance” of summoning Helen and Paris is not mimetic; In other words, the spirits *themselves* allegedly appear, and not actors who represent them. This confluence of reality and illusion, in which astrology plays a central role, may echo the vague status of the ancient science in modernity. Is astrology a science that describes reality, or a spectacle that requires aesthetic distance?

Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* may shed light on this confusion. As we have seen, Kant claims that scientific and aesthetic claims are not fundamentally different from one another. For Kant, both teleological judgments about nature and aesthetic judgments about the beautiful share the same form, namely the subsuming of a particular under a universal. Since these ostensibly separate forms of thinking work according to the same principle, scientific expressions correspond with claims of beauty and contribute to a complete understanding of the world.⁸¹ Taking this theory into account, astrological thinking could possess qualities inherent to scientific and aesthetic processes. In order to explore further the relation of astrology to science and aesthetics, we now turn to Thomas Mann’s novel *Doktor Faustus*.

⁸¹ Richards 12

CHAPTER V

MANN'S *DOKTOR FAUSTUS*

Doktor Faustus is a twentieth-century re-telling of the Faust myth, written during the years of 1943 to 1947 and declared by Thomas Mann at the time to be his final work. In contrast to the instantiations of the Faust story in previous chapters, Mann's book takes the form of a novel. Zeitblom, the ostensible childhood friend of title character Adrian Leverkühn, claims factual authority for the events that he recounts. Because this work is a fictional biography and not a drama, it develops by way of portraying a life under the guise of fact, but within a genre that reveals it as fiction. In earlier depictions of the Faust tale, the dramatic form allowed for aesthetic distance between the reader and the representations on stage. Mann's choice of the novel genre allows him to tell the story *as if* it were fact. Because the novel has unmistakable political dimensions that relate to the intellectual fall of Germany in the years prior to World War II, it comes as no surprise that Mann chose the novel in order to emphasize that the infamous pact of the legendary Faust seemed to have surfaced in German politics. Mann's novel is not, however, pure political allegory. This complex and ambiguous work also explores the nature of artistic production, as well as the relationship of art to science. Within this framework, the novel also provides a rich context for discussing the status of astrology in the modern mind.

Though it is an instance of the Faust story, *Doktor Faustus* does not present the legendary scientist as a character in the novel. Adrian Leverkühn is not Faust himself, but performs the role of Faust, albeit indirectly. His final composition, "D. Fausti Weheklang," appears to represent Leverkühn's lamentation of his own

damnation. Aware of his own demise as a spectacle, Leverkühn invites all his acquaintances to witness his final performance, which consists primarily in a perplexing speech in which he admits making a pact with the devil in exchange for artistic greatness.⁸² His audience sits stunned, confused as to whether Leverkühn is performing a role or recounting actual events. After the composer explains his intentional contraction of syphilis, the most loquacious audience member, Daniel Zur Höhe breaks the mystified silence by judging Leverkühn's story as an aesthetic piece: "Es ist schön. Es hat Schönheit. Recht wohl, recht wohl, man kann es sagen!"⁸³ Zeitblom goes on to describe the reaction of the audience, and his own response to Zur Höhe's aesthetic declaration:

Einige zischten, und auch ich wandte mich mißbilligend gegen den Sprecher, da ich ihm doch heimlich dankbar war für seine Worte. Denn obgleich albern genug, rückten sie, was wir hörten, unter einen beruhigenden und anerkannten Gesichtswinkel, den ästhetischen nämlich, der, so unangebracht er war, und so sehr er mich ärgerte, doch auch mir selbst eine gewisse Erleichterung schuf. Denn mir war, als ginge ein getröstetes "Ach so!" durch die Gesellschaft.⁸⁴

Though this interpretive framework does not last, it reveals that aesthetic and factual judgments are not disparate entities. Though Leverkühn appears to his audience in the most authentically personal desperation, the raw genuineness of his expression leads, paradoxically, to aesthetic judgment from the audience. Leverkühn's relation to the Faust figure exists in an ambiguous continuum of mimesis and authenticity. He

⁸² Mann 655

⁸³ Mann 657

⁸⁴ Mann 657

creates a meta-performance that is simultaneously factual and representational: Leverkühn is the subject of his own composition, and also represents the legendary Faust. In a very Faustian move, Leverkühn's composition breaks down traditional interpretive boundaries, and challenges the definition of art. This desire to "break through" is also present in Leverkühn's view of astrology.

Due to his desire to overcome given limits to knowledge, Leverkühn expresses nostalgia for *astrologische Zeiten*, in which, he imagines, people had access to knowledge that remains unattainable to his contemporaries. Leverkühn's claims about astrology, however, appear misinformed. Although he seems willing to support the microcosmic-macrocosmic analogy to some extent, he ultimately confounds astronomy with astrology by speaking about astrology in overly empirical terms. In an apparent defense of the premise that the movements of planetary bodies influence earthly phenomena, Leverkühn explains:

Astrologische Zeiten wußten sehr viel. Sie wußten oder ahnten Dinge, auf die heute die ausgedehnteste Wissenschaft wieder verfällt. Daß Krankheiten, Seuchen, Epidemien mit dem Sternenstande zu tun haben, war jenen Zeiten eine intuitive Gewißheit. Heute ist man so weit, darüber zu debattieren, ob nicht Keime, Bakterien, Organismen, die, sagen wir, eine Influenza-Epidemie auf Erden erregen, von anderen Planeten, Mars, Jupiter oder Venus stammen.⁸⁵

In this passage, we see Adrian's paradoxical relationship to astrology, which in turn reflects a more general inconsistency in his view of science. On the one hand, Adrian is critical of contemporary science, describing it as limited in comparison to the pre-

⁸⁵ Mann 366

modern “astrologischen Zeiten,” in which, he claims, people had access to a kind of knowledge that remains veiled to scientists of his day. On the other hand, however, Adrian expresses admiration for contemporary science, explaining that these scientists are “so weit” as to be able to debate the possibility that, for instance, the germs and bacteria that cause epidemics could have their origin on other planets in our solar system. Adrian’s convolution of pre-and-post modern science involves the combination of contradictory notions of causation.

Adrian does not create this paradox out of thin air. His father, Jonathan Leverkühn, educates him in the amateur art of “Elementa spekulieren.”⁸⁶ This kind of conjecture based on natural phenomena involves, as father Leverkühn practices it, a fusion of pre-modern Romantic notions of latent meaning in nature and a preference for empirical methods of determination. The elder Leverkühn feels obligated to demonstrate his findings empirically to his family, though this exhibition meets with ridicule, particularly from young Adrian.⁸⁷ Father Leverkühn presents, for instance, the “fressende Tropfen” to the children in order to exhibit the apparent life of the “dead” matter.⁸⁸ The strange tendency of frost to take on apparently vegetal forms also fascinates him as an instance of inorganic creation:

Daß sie mit einer gewissen gaukelnden Unverschämtheit Pflanzliches nachahmten, aufs wunderhübscheste Farrenwedel, Gräser, die Becher und Sterne von Blüten vortäuschen, daß sie mit ihren eisigen Mitteln im Organischen dilettierten, das war es, worüber Jonathan nicht hinwegkam ...

⁸⁶ Mann 20

⁸⁷ Mann 28

⁸⁸ Mann 27

Bildeten, so lautete seine Frage, diese Phantasmagorien die Formen des Vegetativen *vor*, oder bildeten sie *nach*? Keines von beidem, erwiderte er wohl sich selbst; es waren Parallelbildungen.⁸⁹

Although Zeitblom describes Jonathan Leverkühn as a mystic,⁹⁰ the amateur conjecturer does not seem to frame his observations in spirituality. The wonder that he experiences has its root, rather, in his belief that nature itself and not a creator is the origin of its mimetic teleology. For instance, he attributes the formation of the shells of shellfish—in other words, the making of externally visible beauty—to the creature itself, stating: “Diese Geschöpfe haben ihre Festigkeit nach außen geschlagen ... und eben daß sie ein Außen ist und kein Innen, muß der Grund ihrer Schönheit sein.”⁹¹ Father Leverkühn locates the creative force in nature itself, and not in a creative spirit. In this way, his view exemplifies modern empirical science, which eschews God as the power behind the seeming teleology in natural forms. However, this perspective is certainly not a mere product of empiricism, since the result of nature’s creation is, according to Jonathan’s speculations, to transmit a kind of message that has no empirical base. The shellfish have, after all, formed themselves in a way that is beautiful to an external human perspective. In other words, the beauty of nature transmits a kind of meaning, although this meaning may prove impenetrable: “Zier und Bedeutung liefen stets nebeneinander her, auch die alten Schriften dienten dem Schmuck und zugleich der Mitteilung. Sage mir keiner, hier werde nicht etwas mitgeteilt! Daß es eine unzugängliche Mitteilung ist, in diesen Widerspruch sich zu

⁸⁹ Mann 26

⁹⁰ Mann 25

⁹¹ Mann 23

versenken, ist auch ein Genuß.”⁹² With these words, father Leverkühn seems to reveal the true end of his *Spekulation*; namely the pleasure in contemplating the inherently inaccessible language of natural beauty; In other words, these investigations seem to merge science and aesthetics.

Jonathan Leverkühn’s application of a creative will to beauty in nature appears to reflect Immanuel Kant’s notion of *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck* in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. By suggesting that beautiful natural objects communicate a message to an outside observer, father Leverkühn accepts the paradox that non-willing objects can exhibit a quality that is normally ascribed only to a being that is endowed with a will, i.e., they appear to have a purpose. In a similar fashion, Kant describes beautiful objects as seeming teleological. In other words, they appear created *in order to* please the human senses, though Kant also claims that this teleology does not apply to the object itself, but rather to the observer.⁹³ Like Goethe, Jonathan Leverkühn seems influenced by Kant’s claim that one must observe nature as a whole teleological system in order to understand it.

Adrian Leverkühn mirrors his father’s method of *Spekulation* insofar as he seems to view the empirical observation of nature as the precondition for experiencing the transcendent. It is primarily in dialogue with Zeitblom, the Humanist, that Adrian’s beliefs become apparent. In sharp contrast to Adrian’s fascination with natural science, Zeitblom recalls his own lack of interest in the subject: “[Adrian] kannte wohl meine bis zur Abneigung gehende Interesselosigkeit an den Faxen und Geheimnissen des Natürlichen, an ‘Natur’ überhaupt, und meine

⁹² Mann 25

⁹³ Kant 136

Anhänglichkeit an die Sphäre des Sprachlich-Humanen.”⁹⁴ The reason that Zeitblom takes no fascination in “nature” stems from his view of the causal link between the natural and the transcendent. The self-proclaimed Humanist disdains thinking, such as Adrian’s, that asserts natural—as opposed to spiritual—phenomena as the origin of transcendent feelings. In the case of Zeitblom, this disdain appears grounded in an anti-materialist intention to separate the *Geist* of humanity from its biological aspects. Zeitblom explains his Humanism further:

Frömmigkeit, Ehrfurcht, seelischer Anstand, Religiosität sind nur über den Menschen und durch den Menschen, in der Beschränkung auf das Irdisch-Menschliche möglich. Ihre Frucht sollte, kann und wird ein religiös tingierter Humanismus sein, bestimmt von dem Gefühl für das transzendente Geheimnis des Menschen, von dem stolzen Bewußtsein, daß er kein bloß biologisches Wesen ist, sondern mit einem entscheidenden Teil seines Wesens einer geistigen Welt angehört; ... In diesem Pathos, dieser Verpflichtung, dieser Ehrfurcht des Menschen vor sich selbst ist Gott; in hundert Milliarden Milchstraßen kann ich ihn nicht finden.⁹⁵

Adrian’s lively and urgent reports of scientific findings in the areas of astronomy and biology not only lay astray from Zeitblom’s interest, but also compel him to defend his Humanist position.⁹⁶ Zeitblom reflects that his friend’s “sinnige Manie” for the sciences reminds him of Jonathan Leverkühn’s propensity, “die elementa zu

⁹⁴ Mann 360

⁹⁵ Mann 365

⁹⁶ Mann 355

spekulieren,”⁹⁷ and appears to associate this focus on the natural with godlessness. For Zeitblom, God is found in humanity’s reverence for its own spirituality, based on the belief that human beings are not reducible to their biological components. Zeitblom’s argument becomes defensive because he interprets Adrian’s fascination with the boundlessness of space as misguided—for Zeitblom, Adrian looks to feel reverence in the wrong places, namely in material reality. As we will see, however, Adrian’s view is not simply reducible to materialism.

In his rebuttal of Zeitblom’s position, Adrian draws upon the history of natural science. His argument against Humanism turns on an inversion of the causal chain behind Zeitblom’s view:

So bist du gegen die Werke ... und gegen die physische Natur, der der Mensch entstammt und mit ihm sein Geistiges, das sich am Ende auch noch an anderen Orten des Kosmos findet. Die physische Schöpfung, dieses dir ärgerliche Ungeheuer von Weltveranstaltung, ist unstreitig die Voraussetzung für das Moralische, ohne die es keinen Boden hätte ... Übrigens ist es amüsant, zu sehen, wie sehr dein Humanismus, und wohl aller Humanismus, zum Mittelalterlich-Geozentrischen neigt.⁹⁸

Adrian here asserts that the physical world is the precondition for morality, and implicitly also for religion. The spiritual as well as biological nature of the human being, argues Adrian, has its origin in material reality, and this fact leads him to suspect that similar beings exist on other planets. In this radical inversion of Zeitblom’s inward-looking Humanism, Adrian echoes the Copernican rejection of

⁹⁷ Mann 355

⁹⁸ Mann 365

Geocentrism. Whereas Zeitblom favors a closed system of symbols, where the macrocosm (i.e., God, religion, and morality) reflects the human microcosm absolutely, Adrian's universe is infinite and thus lacks such symbolic ties. His use of the term "mittelalterlich-geozentrisch" to describe Zeitblom's view reveals awareness on Adrian's part that this dispute between friends mirrors the sixteenth century debate between Geocentrism and Heliocentrism.

Although Adrian takes great interest in natural science, and views the material as the precondition of human values, his primary interpretive framework appears to be aesthetic. As we have seen, Adrian admires the fact that humankind had access to things in "astrologischen Zeiten" that remain inaccessible even to modern scientists.⁹⁹ Zeitblom recalls that Adrian had defended astrology particularly in the context of music.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Adrian composes an orchestral piece based upon "die kosmische Musik" entitled "Die Wunder des Alls," in spite of Zeitblom's discomfort with the title and suggestion of alternatives.¹⁰¹ Mann leaves unclear the extent to which Adrian takes his apparently reverent title seriously. Zeitblom explains:

Adrian bestand lachend auf der anderen scheinpathetisch-ironischen Benennung, die den Wissenden allerdings besser auf den durch und durch skurrilen und grotesken, wenn auch oft auf eine streng-feierliche, mathematisch-zeremoniöse Weise grotesken Charakter dieser Schilderungen

⁹⁹ Mann 366

¹⁰⁰ Mann 366

¹⁰¹ Mann 367

des Ungeheuerlichen vorbereitet ... Mit dem Geist demütiger Verherrlichung also, hat diese Musik nichts zu tun.¹⁰²

Zeitblom's hyperbolic denunciation of Adrian's work must not, of course, be taken at face value. Because the narrator views his friend's perspective on the universe as nihilistic, his review of Adrian's work, which stems from this position, reflects this objection. It is quite possible, in fact, that Adrian entitles the piece ironically in order to mock Zeitblom's Humanist insistence that reverence is the appropriate attitude toward the world. Even if the title is ironic, however, there is further evidence that Adrian does indeed possess a wonder at nature that appears to transcend the cold and allegedly objective gaze of a materialist scientist. Adrian delights, for example, in explaining to Zeitblom deep-sea explorations as if he had personally taken part.

Zeitblom recalls:

Die Wunder der Meerestiefe, die Tollheiten des Lebens dort unten, wohin kein Sonnenstrahl dringt, waren das Erste, wovon Adrian mir erzählte—und zwar auf eine besondere, wunderliche Weise, die mich zugleich amüsierte und verwirrte, nämlich im Stil eigener Anschauung und persönlichen Dabeigewesenseins ... Selbstverständlich hatte er von diesen Dingen nur gelesen, hatte sich Bücher darüber verschafft und seine Phantasie damit gespeist.¹⁰³

In a bizarre combination of scientific fascination with the as-yet undiscovered and creative imagination, Adrian explains to his friend the intense emotional states that he “experienced” when dropping into the ocean depths in the hollowed observational

¹⁰² Mann 367

¹⁰³ Mann 356

iron ball. He goes as far as to explain the feelings of indiscretion and sin that accompanied his exploration of the otherworldly phenomena, which the “Pathos der Wissenschaft” could not alleviate completely.¹⁰⁴ Adrian’s fantasy and emotionality regarding his imagined scientific journey indicates an attachment to the observation of nature that exceeds mere data collection. Like Jonathan Leverkühn, Adrian possesses an aesthetic attitude toward natural phenomena. If Adrian were to believe in material science to the exclusion of aesthetic judgments, he would likely not regard science as “pathos.”

Adrian’s obsession with deep-sea exploration and the infinite expanses of the universe mirrors a journey in the Faust myth. As we have seen in the *Historia*, for instance, Faust demands Mephistopheles to show him the heavens in order that he may update his astrological calendars with first-hand information.¹⁰⁵ Faust asks the spirit to explain to him what he knows about astrology. Mephistopheles replies that the science pertains to the hidden knowledge of God, and as such is not accessible to humans in its most actualized form. In contrast to Faust’s one-dimensional insolence, Adrian, in his fantastic adventure, feels indiscretion at having penetrated a place not meant for human eyes. There is something of a moral conscience at work in Adrian’s—albeit imaginary—experience of unprecedented scientific exploration for the sake of data retrieval. Although the presence of such a conscience does not itself reveal Adrian’s attitude as non-materialist, it adds a conscientious dimension to the scientism that he expressed to Zeitblom in their debate, which differentiates his position from the shameless explorations of Faust in the *Historia*.

¹⁰⁴ Mann 358

¹⁰⁵ *Historia* 49

Adrian's apparent conscience also distinguishes his attitude toward astrology from that of the mythical Faust. In the *Historia*, Faust uses the science to enhance his reputation among influential people by creating the most accurate calendars and predictions.¹⁰⁶ Adrian, in contrast, nostalgically attaches a vague epistemological advantage to the times when astrology was used regularly as a means to knowledge. His admiration for the *astrologischen Zeiten* stems, after all, from his suspicion that people in these times "wußten oder ahnten Dinge, auf die heute die ausgedehnteste Wissenschaft wieder verfällt."¹⁰⁷ The quality of the *astrologischen Zeiten* that he most admires stands contrary to the most developed science of his day, namely that antique astrologers had *Ahnungen*, or notions, which by definition cannot be proven or disproven through experimentation. As we have seen, Adrian's attitude toward astrology is contradictory, since his statement mixes pre-modern and modern causality. Thus, his precise understanding of the epistemological advantage possessed by ancient astrologers remains veiled. He does not appear, however, to value the potential accuracy of astrological predictions for personal gain.

When we compare Adrian's opinion of astrology to his rebuttal of Humanism, his ultimate understanding of causality becomes even less clear. In his dialogue with Zeitblom, Adrian comes across as a modern skeptic dismembering the outdated faith of his friend in truth that cannot be represented empirically. Adrian's essential position in this conversation is that material reality, which we experience through the senses, is the precondition for the non-material, e.g., human values and religion. In this way, he expresses a modern understanding of material causality. However, in his

¹⁰⁶ *Historia* 36

¹⁰⁷ Mann 366

statement honoring the *astrologischen Zeiten*, Adrian idealizes the ability of the ancient science to *ahnen*, or have notions of, things that seem to elude empirical observation. It is left unclear whether Adrian means that this early form of knowing is absolutely non-empirical, and hence forever inaccessible to science, or whether he believes that science will one day achieve precisely this knowledge. Because he continues his defense of astrology with the news that a recent scientific theory has found that some dangerous bacteria could have originated on other planets, Adrian seems to favor the understanding of astrology as an antiquated science that has evolved into more empirical sciences. Nevertheless, this view does not appear consistent with his admiration for the *Ahnung* of astrological times.

Whether it is more or less empirical, Adrian's attitude toward astrology as a scientific tool differs from the illustrated conjurer of Marlowe's drama and the Faust of the *Historia*. The woodcarving depicts Faust, for example, as using the practice as a means through which to contact the demonic. In other words, it portrays astrology not as a science to discover things relevant to human life, but rather as a language that transgresses the Earthly realm and with it, all things that accord with human logic and empirical sense. In the *Historia*, Faust does indeed use astrology as a way of illuminating empirical realities of the Earth, such as weather.¹⁰⁸ However, the means by which he comes to this information are essentially non-empirical, since Mephistopheles informs him about the heavens, to which he, as mortal, has no access.¹⁰⁹ Similar to the scene in the woodcarving, in the *Historia*, astrology represents a language with which Faust establishes a connection to the dark spirit. For

¹⁰⁸ *Historia* 36

¹⁰⁹ *Historia* 36

instance, Faust uses astrological questions as a false pretense to encourage Mephistopheles to explain the heavens to him, which the spirit had insisted was impossible, since true knowledge of the starry realm is not available for mortals to possess:

Doctor Faustus durfte, wie vorgemeldet, den Geist von göttlichen und himmlischen Dingen nicht mehr fragen ... Damit er nun von göttlicher Creatur und Erschaffung besser ein Gelegenheit hätte, etwas zu erfahren ... nimmt ihm deswegen für, den Geist unter dem Vorwand zu fragen, als ob es zu der Astronomia oder Astrologia den Physicus dienlich seie und nötig zu wissen.¹¹⁰

Though it is the mere pretense of astrology and not astrology *per se* that allows Faust to trick the demon, the science nevertheless represents an epistemological sphere that the mortal and spirit share. Adrian, alternatively, does not appear to associate astrology with the immortal realm, but rather as a human means of acquiring knowledge.

The epistemological focus of Adrian's interest in the workings of the natural world distinguishes his practice of *Spekulation* from that of his father. In fact, Adrian does not *practice* experimentation on the natural world as Jonathan does, but rather takes a more distanced, intellectual perspective on the natural phenomena that he finds fascinating, and even moving. Though the methods of father and son are empirical, in that are both concerned with gaining demonstrable knowledge about their findings, the ends of their practices of *Spekulation* ultimately diverge. Whereas Jonathan takes joy in the inaccessible language of nature that he believes natural forms to transmit, Adrian would not, it seems, remain content with ascribing

¹¹⁰ *Historia* 38

Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck to nature, since, as is apparent in the dialogue with Zeitblom, he views nature as the precondition for all notions of purpose. For Adrian, it is clear that nature transmits purpose, since our very idea of teleology stems from the natural world. Thus, the astonished wonder that touches Jonathan Leverkühn does not move his son. For Adrian, the language of nature is not an unbreakable cipher, but is rather mathematics itself.

However, the aesthetic experience of wonder is not foreign to Leverkühn. From a young age, Adrian is aware of the magic that numbers seem to create. In his student room, Adrian hangs a print of the magic square from Dürer's *Melencolia I*:¹¹¹

ein sogenanntes magisches Quadrat, wie es neben dem Stundenglase, dem Zirkel, der Waage, dem Polyeder und anderen Symbolen auch auf Dürer's *Melencolia* erscheint. Wie dort war die Figur in sechzehn arabisch bezifferte Felder eingeteilt, so zwar, daß die 1 im rechten unteren, die 16 im linken oberen Felde zu finden war; und die Magie—oder Kuriosität—bestand nun darin, daß diese Zahlen, wie man sie auch addierte, von oben nach unten, in die Quere oder in der Diagonale, immer die Summe 34 ergaben.¹¹²

This square holds significance beyond the mere mathematical game that arises from the arithmetic “magic” of achieving the same sum regardless of the fields used.

According to Klibansky, such quadratic configurations of numbers were once a “non-pictorial, mathematical substitute for those images of astral deities which were recommended by Ficino, Agrippa and all the other teachers of white magic ... Dürer was not an arithmetician, but he was thoroughly familiar with the significance of the

¹¹¹ See Illustration 2

¹¹² Mann 127

magic square.”¹¹³ According to this interpretation, squares such as Dürer’s were used as symbols of the planets, with a particular arrangement of numbers in the internal fields for each planet. Thus, these squares were mathematical representations of worlds, which were at that time correlate to gods.

Adrian’s placement of the magic square in the place of honor above his piano evidences his deep fascination with cosmology and its relationship to mathematics. Zeitblom references this interest further, recalling Adrian’s riveted interest in philosophical lectures on the Pre-Socratics. Primary topics in these lectures, he explains, were early cosmologies that understood the cosmos as essentially ordered and harmonious, with mathematics as the constructing tool of the creator, “der seine Grundleidenschaft, die Mathematik, die abstrakte Proportion, die Zahl zum Prinzip der Weltentstehung und des Weltbestehens erhob ... Die Zahl und Zahlenverhältnis als konstituierender Inbegriff des Seins und der sittlichen Würde.”¹¹⁴ This understanding of harmony within the universe based on meaningful mathematical proportions is the origin of the form of astrology that was developed by Pythagoras and Aristotle and later practiced in the modern world. Geneva explains the mathematical proportions around which horoscopes have been drawn since ancient Greece:

Each sign belonged to one of the four Aristotelian elements ... Placed around the wheel of the zodiac, the planets would then, when connected by elements, geometrically form triangular shapes ... one for each element. The planets also formed geometric angles, called ‘aspects’, to one another; the only

¹¹³ Klibansky 325-26

¹¹⁴ Mann 128

aspects considered significant for prognostication were at 30° intervals, conforming to Pythagorean norms. Aspects of 60° and 120° were deemed harmonious because they linked signs of the same element or gender; the quartile and opposition were considered disharmonious because they joined incompatible or opposing signs.¹¹⁵

Just as all numbers in the magic square are integral to each possible calculation within its borders, no planet and no mathematical relationship between them becomes superfluous in drawing a horoscope. Even if two planets do not form aspects in intervals of 30°, this fact retains interpretive significance. As the moment or individual represented by the horoscope is the composite of these relationships, micro- and macrocosm are united. As Whitfield states, “The desire or the intuition that lay behind astrology was that mankind and the cosmos must be linked, that, at some profound level of his being, man *belonged* in the universe.”¹¹⁶ It comes as no surprise that Adrian finds himself in a position to defend this ancient science. Although Adrian’s notions of astrology and science in general are difficult to parse, he strives, like his father, to find a place in the universe.

As we have seen, Goethe appears to imply in *Faust* that a primary shortcoming of the title character is his inability to think holistically about the nature of the universe. Though Adrian Leverkühn is an artist, and not a scientist, he misinterprets astrological thinking through the perspective of empiricism, emphasizing the material parts of a science that loses its meaning when viewed in this light. This dissecting lens may be part of the intellectual nihilism leading up to World

¹¹⁵ Geneva 154

¹¹⁶ Whitfield 202

War II that Thomas Mann seeks to illustrate. At the center of this nihilism lies the problematic status of representation in modernity. Like the form of Mann's novel suggests, modernity demands empirical claims, even where mimetic form may be more appropriate. In this way, the status of astrology in Mann's novel seems to mirror the situation of the modern artist. Astrology requires a representative step in order to do its work, namely the assent to unmediated beliefs: Macrocosmic-microcosmic causality must be imagined, since one cannot experience it directly. Perhaps Mann includes the admiration of "astrology" in Leverkühn's worldview in order to signal a restriction in Leverkühn's thinking, the liberation of which may lead away from potentially destructive myopia. If Leverkühn were to accept the belief in macrocosmic-microcosmic analogy that true astrology requires, then he would exercise the aesthetic capacity for representation that Mann seems to encourage. Mann was certainly no stranger to Kant's theories, and this fusion of aesthetic with scientific perspectives speaks to Kant's claim that scientific and aesthetic judgments are not disparate entities. Leverkühn may thus embody the thinking inherent to the *astrologischen Zeiten* more than he could imagine; He is an artist who also claims scientific authority, and thus represents a living example of the holistic worldview.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In instantiations of the Faust story since the sixteenth century, astrology has played an increasingly minor role, and a goal of this thesis has been to investigate the reasons behind this shift. With the discussion of *Doktor Faustus*, the present study ends in post-war Germany, leaving the relation of astrology and science in more recent times unexplored. A pertinent question that remains to be answered is whether the astrology of today has the epistemological authority to serve as a useful means to knowledge. To frame the question differently, would a present day “Faust,” i.e., one with an insatiable appetite for knowledge, take interest in the cognitive framework that astrology offers? In order to respond to this question, we must examine the function of present-day astrology. As Whitfield states, the science lost its place in the intellectual *milieu* after the eighteenth-century:

When compared with the classical, medieval and Renaissance tradition, the astrology of the post-scientific revolution had been intellectually sterile: it existed outside science, outside religion, and outside philosophy. It needed a new intellectual basis, a cultural framework to re-connect it to the mainstream of ideas.¹¹⁷

After nearly disappearing in the eighteenth-century, the practice of astrology first re-emerged into the mainstream in the works of Alan Leo, an English astrologer who sought to promote the science to a larger audience. The two foundations for Leo’s practice were the popular magazine “Modern Astrology,” and the supply of

¹¹⁷ Whitfield 197

horoscopes to clients by post.¹¹⁸ The great volume of requests for horoscopes prompted Leo to develop a shortened method of nativity casting that abbreviated the client's birth date to "May: Sun in Taurus," "December: Sun in Sagittarius," and so forth. Alan used the Sun sign as a marketable hook, and was the first astrologer in history to create general "profiles" that applied to all people born with the Sun in that particular constellation. Leo's method continued to gain influence through the twentieth-century as the popular conceptualization of astrology, and remains to this day.

The influence of Alan Leo on twentieth-century astrology also radically shifted the way that serious practitioners viewed the science. One result of the widespread Sun sign identification that swept English society in Leo's time was that readers began taking astrology personally. Thinkers such as Dane Rudhyar¹¹⁹ and Carl Gustav Jung¹²⁰ further suggested that the function of astrology in the twentieth-century must shift toward purposes of self-actualization to accord with the emphasis on individual psychologies that became prevalent in the twentieth-century. The development of astrology as a psychological tool was the most essential shift in the practice of the science within this century.

An issue that remains, however, is whether astrology can still be considered a science despite the fact that it lacks a theoretical foundation. In the modern restricted sense, science is a system for gaining knowledge that is based on the scientific method. This method of inquiry must examine empirical and measurable data in order

¹¹⁸ Whitfield 196

¹¹⁹ See Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality* (1936)

¹²⁰ See Jung's letter to L. Oswald on December 8, 1928

to count as scientific, and modern astrology offers no such quantitative information. The cognitive function of psychological astrology is the acquisition or experience of self-knowledge and understanding, which naturally eludes measurement. According to the modern scientific paradigm, astrology is not scientific. This classification does not, however, exclude the possibility that astrology could be epistemologically useful. As we have seen, other interpretive frameworks, such as those of Goethe and Kant, emphasize the value of epistemological methods that do not result in quantifiable data. If it were integrated into the current scientific milieu, this focus on holistic thinking could make room for astrology to emerge as a useful tool.

Because the inability to think holistically contributes to the downfall of Goethe's *Faust*, we may imagine that a more contemporary version of the character would not come to the same end. Branches of science such as quantum physics are bridging what used to be dichotomies between empirical and more holistic thought. This incorporation of previously separate modes of thought is clear in astrology: The function of contemporary astrology borders psychology, since these practices share the goal of lending awareness to the mental patterns of clients. If we apply these integral developments to *Faust*, the images of the macrocosm and the *Erdgeist* would seem to no longer appear in separate parts of the book. In other words, a hypothetical Faust of today may not feel the need to choose between empirical and integrative worldviews.¹²¹ Though he may continue his epistemic strivings, the pursuits of our contemporary Faust may lead to more insight than violence.

¹²¹ In addition to the prolific writings of C.G. Jung, Jean Gebser, Rudolf Steiner, Ken Wilber, Richard Tarnas, and Stanislav Grof, academic institutions such as the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, California, represent a contemporary academic movement that has the aim of expanding the theoretical range of science.

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