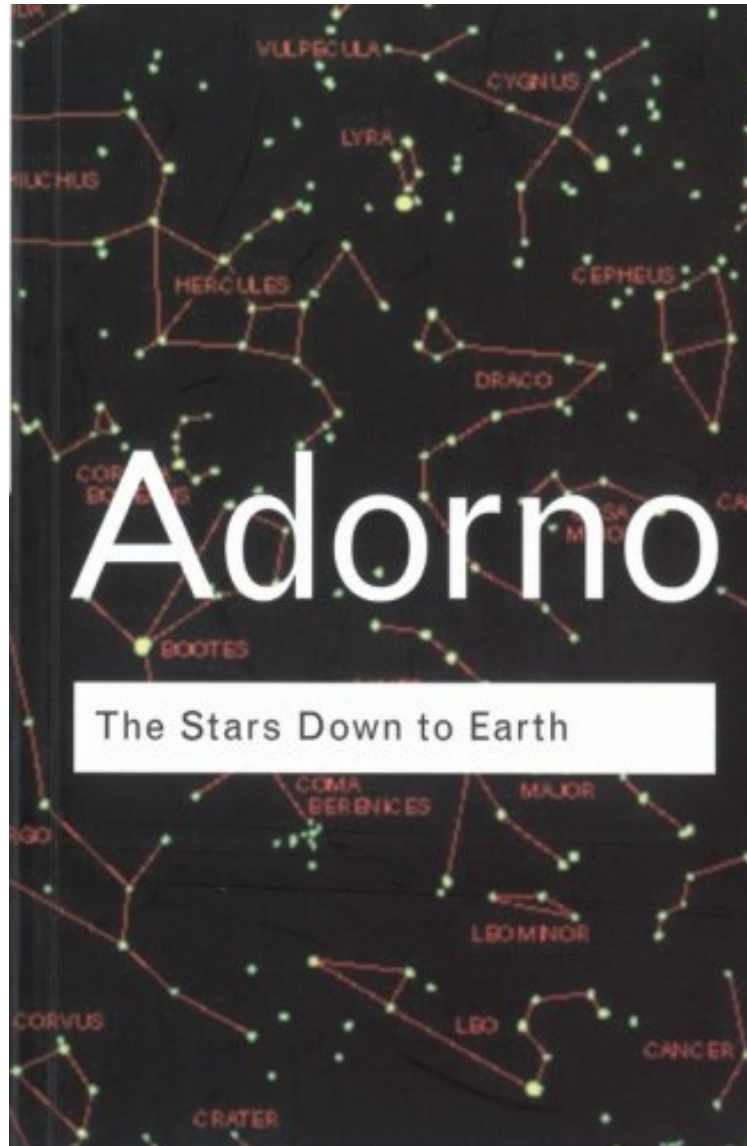


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The Stars Down to Earth (Routledge Classics) (Volume 113)

Theodor Adorno

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#161571 in Books Theodor Adorno 2001-11-23 2001-10-11 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.79 x .58 x 5.081, .60 #File Name: 0415271002256 pages The Stars Down to Earth And Other Essays on the Irrational Culture | File size: 49.Mb

Theodor Adorno : The Stars Down to Earth (Routledge Classics) (Volume 113) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Stars Down to Earth (Routledge Classics) (Volume 113):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Adorno brings his considerable intellect to bear on a seemingly ...By R. Burnier Adorno brings his considerable intellect to bear on a seemingly trivial subject -- Astrology -- but it is

valuable to go through this exercise on how mass culture provides ways of coping with complexity. Adorno's is ultimately an empathic approach these issues. Since he is a central figure in the tradition of critical theory, he of course looks at astrology as a modern reincarnation of ancient tropes that used to serve humankind but are now irrevocably lost. It is a corrupted remnant of what used to be absolutely true for humans. Modern astrology becomes quasi-scientific, muddled in "facts" and generally lives in a world of plausible deniability, and a mingling of personal agency with deterministic celestial commands to take the edge off the heavy burden of being a lone individual in mass society. In short, it is symptomatic of our long, continuing crisis of modernity.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL PHILOSOPHER CRITICIZES ASTROLOGY, AND LOOKS AT OTHER SUBJECTS

By Steven H Propp

Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) was a German sociologist, philosopher and musicologist who was also a leading member of the Frankfurt School. He wrote other books such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *Negative Dialectics*, *Prisms*, etc. The Editors Introduction to this posthumously-published book states, This volume brings together four texts written by Theodor Adorno between the late 1930s and the mid-1950s. The longest, *The Stars Down to Earth* is for the most part a content analysis of an astrology column in the *Los Angeles Times* which Adorno wrote in 1952-3 during a return visit to the United States from Germany. The title of the final piece, *Anti-Semitism and Fascist Propaganda* explains its topic clearly enough. Published in 1946, the paper draws extensively on a much longer study which Adorno had written in 1943, but which was not published in his lifetime. (Pg. 1) In the essay on astrology, he says, It pretends to a higher level of scientificness than the supposedly more primitive forms of esoteric wisdom without, however, entering into the argument itself: the lack of a transparent interconnection between astronomical observations and inferences pertaining to the fate of individuals or nations. Astrology attempts to get away from crude and unpopular fatalism by establishing outward forces operating on the individuals decision, including the individuals own character, but leaves the ultimate choice to him. Astrology undertakes the constant encouragement of people to take decisions, no matter how inconsequential they may be. It is practically directed towards action in spite of all the lofty talk about cosmic secrets and profound meditation. Thus, the very gesture of astrology, its basic presumption that everyone has to make up his mind at every moment falls in line with what will later come out with respect to the specific content of astrological counseling: its leaning towards extroversion. (Pg. 44) Later, he adds, the column tends to reinforce guilt feelings, compulsive patterns and various other unconscious motivations instead of working against them. It tends to make the socially dependent even more dependent psychologically. (Pg. 105) He asserts, astrology mirrors exactly the opaqueness of the empirical world and implies so little transcendent faith, is so opaque itself that it can be easily accepted by supposedly skeptical, disillusioned people. The intellectual attitude it is expressive of is one of disoriented agnosticism. The cult of God has been replaced by the cult of facts, just as the fatal entities of astrology, the stars, are themselves viewed as facts, things, ruled by mechanical laws. One could not grasp the specificity of astrology and of the whole frame of mind it stands for if one would simply call it a reversion to older states of metaphysics: what it is characteristic of is the transfiguration of a world of things into quasi-metaphysical powers. (Pg. 116) He observes, During the so-called enlightened era of the last 200 years, no stratum of the population has been free from anti-Semitism. (Pg. 142) After quoting Fr. Charles Coughlin, he comments, The transformation of Christian doctrine into slogans of political violence could not be cruder than in this passage. The actual shedding of blood is advocated as necessary because the world has supposedly been redeemed by the shedding of Christs blood. Murder is invested with the halo of a sacrament. Psychologically, all fascist propaganda is simply a system of such symbols. (Pg. 170) This is clearly not one of Adornos major works; but he comments on subjects that he does not treat elsewhere in his better-known works.

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The Stars Down to Earth shows us a stunningly prescient Adorno. Haunted by the ugly side of American culture industries he used the different angles provided by each of these three essays to showcase the dangers inherent in modern obsessions with consumption. He engages with some of his most enduring themes in this seminal collection, focusing on the irrational in mass culture - from astrology to new age cults, from anti-Semitism to the power of neo-fascist propaganda. He points out that the modern state and market forces serve the interest of capital in its basic form. Stephan Crook's introduction grounds Adorno's arguments firmly in the present where extreme religious and political organizations are commonplace - so commonplace in fact that often we deem them unworthy of our attention. Half a century ago Theodore Adorno not only recognised the dangers, but proclaimed them loudly. We did not listen then. Maybe it is not too late to listen now.

From Library Journal These four essays, originally written between the late 1930s and mid-1950s, examine significant instances of what Adorno calls "irrational" systems of thought in contemporary culture. He analyzes such phenomena as occultism, anti-Semitism, and the relationship between anti-Semitism and fascist thinking. His analysis illustrates common elements in all the systems examined. The lead article, "The Stars Down to Earth," is a content analysis of the astrology column of the Los Angeles Times during a visit Adorno made to the United States in 1953; it sets the tone for the other essays. What is particularly clear from Adorno's examination is the subtle and manipulative nature of such beliefs. The resurgence of extreme religious and political organizations, and the difficulty with which certain patterns of thought seem to die, illustrates the extent to which those ideas have penetrated our culture and the dangers they still hold. Editor Crook's lead-ins to the essays are useful. Recommended for all collections of the history and sociology of contemporary culture and mass movements. Terry Skeats, Bishop's Univ. Lib., Lennoxville, Quebec Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. 'There is no question of the contemporary importance and relevance of these essays. T. W. Adorno is one of the great critics of the role of irrational authoritarianism in contemporary society.' Douglas Kellner 'This collection demonstrates the continuing relevance of Adorno's work to the analysis and understanding of modern times. A brilliant contribution to the sociology of racism, anti-Semitism and popular culture.' - Bryan S. Turner, co-editor, The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology 'Theodor Adorno returns from the grave to deliver this timely warning about the dangers of superstition.' Language Notes Text: English (translation) Original Language: German