Astronomers Finding Evidence for Astrological Claims

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There's no Longer Any Doubt Celestial Bodies Affect Planet Earth as a Whole

Skeptics may find this a hard pill to swallow, but astronomers have done more than anyone to demonstrate the validity of the ancient belief system underpinning astrology.

In an article for The National, the leading English-language newspaper in the Middle East, author Robert Matthews says there no longer is any doubt that celestial bodies affect our planet as a whole.

Matthews is a visiting reader in science at Aston University in Birmingham, England. He says these links go beyond the obvious, such as the role of the sun and moon in the tides.

"The biggest climatic upheavals experienced by our planet are now known to be under the influence of the other planets in our solar system," he says.

Through their gravitational tugging, the moon and planets distort the shape of the Earth's orbit and the tilt of its axis to its orbit, causing subtle changes in the intensity of sunlight reaching us.

"By altering the level of heating reaching different latitudes, these changes are now thought to play a key role in triggering the huge expansion in polar ice characteristic of an Ice Age," he explains.

"Now astronomers think they may have uncovered another astrological connection between the Earth and its fellow planets – one that beggars the trivia of astrology.."

More than 150 years ago astronomers noticed that the number of sunspots appearing on the solar disk followed a distinct pattern, rising and falling over a period of about 11 years. This is curiously close to the 11.9 years that it takes Jupiter, the biggest planet in the solar system, to complete one orbit of the sun.

"It's hard to know what to make of such coincidences. But in 1852 the Swiss astronomer Johann Wolf showed that despite its great distance Jupiter had more gravitational effect on the sun than any other planet," Mathews said.

Wolf went on to develop a theory that seemed to account for sunspot numbers via the influence of Jupiter and other planets. However, because sunspots are a symptom of solar activity, and this in turn directly affects the earth, Wolf's ideas "sounded uncomfortably close to astrology," Matthews said.

He speculates that this is probably the reason why Wolf's ideas were hastily dumped at the start of the 20th century following the discovery of a link between sunspots and the magnetic field of the sun,

For whatever reason, Wolf's evidence linking the gravity of planets with the magnetic field of the sun wasn't believed to be compelling. But a team led by Dr. Jose Abreu of the ETH Zurich Institute for Geophysics in Switzerland has rekindled the controversy with impressive new evidence for precisely such a link.

To make its case, the team examined records of solar activity far more extensive than those used by Wolf, who could only go back as far as the mid-17th century and the first telescopic observations of sunspots by Galileo.

Dr. Abreu and his colleagues exploited the fact that changes in the sun's magnetic field affect the levels of cosmic rays smashing into the earth's atmosphere – which in turn creates isotopes that get trapped in polar ice and tree rings.

By analyzing the rise and fall in levels of these isotopes the team was able to reconstruct the peaks and troughs in solar activity covering more than 9,000 years,

"Armed with so much data the team has been able to look for patterns in the activity far more subtle than those found by Wolf. And what they have found broadly confirms his idea of a planetary influence on the sun," Mathews said.

Published in the current issue of the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics,* the team's findings stress that the planets cannot be the prime driver for the 11-year cycle of solar sunspot activity. If that were so, the orbits of the planets would change noticeably through the energy needed to drive the activity.

"But the planets can and do seem capable of affecting the processes that generate the sun's magnetic field," Mathews says.

Analysis of the isotope data has uncovered a set of cycles of solar activity ranging from about 85 to more than 500 years, each of which appears to be linked to planetary cycles.

"This sounds pretty esoteric until one ponders the implications. Every so often, these cycles combine to produce periods of especially high or low activity.

"When this happens the effect on the earth can be dynamic" he noted.

Astronomers have identified several periods in recent history when unusually high or low solar activity coincided with anomalous conditions on earth. Among them is the Medieval Warm Period lasting from about 1000 to 1250. And the so-called Little Ice Age, which lasted between about 1350 to 1850.

Each coincides with peaks and troughs in solar activity triggered by the planets, and to events of major historical significance. For example, the bitter winters of the Little Ice Age caused mass starvation and social upheaval in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries.

“The emerging evidence for planets influencing the sun and thereby global events suggests that the real problem with astrology is that its claims were simply too modest,” Mathews concludes.