

Planetary Effects and Psi, Related Through Geo- and Bio-Mechanisms? A Reply to Douglas (2007)

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Speculations about mechanisms as expounded by Douglas (2007) are encouraging, but they also need to be thought over carefully and run through the appropriate tests.

When, in the 1980s, I took up Michel Gauquelin's neo-astrological thread of research, I hoped to find a connection between Gauquelin-type correlations of "neo-astrology" (Gauquelin, 1988) and Chizhevsky-type correlations of "helio-biology" (Chizhevsky, 1971). Neo-astrological correlations manifest themselves with birth peaks of eminent professionals after the rise or culmination of Mars (e.g., athletes), Jupiter (e.g., actors), and Saturn (e.g., physicians). Helio-biological correlations appear with peaks of social unrest and cultural-political revolutions during periods of high sunspot activity. I found sufficient evidence for neo-astrological (Ertel & Irving, 1996) as well as for helio-biological correlations (Ertel, 1996, 1997). But to my disappointment, I missed a connection between the two. Between the planetary and the solar or correlated geomagnetic processes no connection could be unearthed (Ertel, 1989).

Gauquelin's seemingly positive findings between geomagnetic indices and births of ordinary people disappeared under my checks. Ordinary people's relation to planetary positions were very weak anyway and vanished under Gauquelin's own subsequent replication trials. Gauquelin birth effects for eminent professionals did not covary with geomagnetic cycles either. When Spottiswoode (1997) published his first findings about modulating effects of local sidereal time (LST) and psi results (LST opens a channel from earth to cosmic space), I checked this correlation with my own psi data that I had collected in the meantime. I could not convincingly replicate Spottiswoode's effect either and hoped to have a chance for another try with more data in the future. On the whole, therefore, my own earlier speculations about correlations between paranormal and normal (physical) phenomena of conventional science have been severely dampened.

Regarding Gauquelin-type planetary effects, simple common sense arguments add to the skepticism. Births of babies with great professional futures correlate with birth hours: For about three hours after rise of a planet, birth frequencies increase, then they drop for three hours. After the planet's culmination, the frequency of births increases again for that short period and drops for a longer period, sometimes with an additional mini-peak after the planet's set. The first question that one needs to answer is: Do any terrestrial or solar or stellar parameters exist that might correlate with those fast-changing planetary positions? Even if such physical factors existed, they would have to become effective around the clock with different angles at different times for different locations with different geographical longitudes. Worse, they would have to become differentially effective for newborns with different professional futures. Additional complications arise when considering some negative correlations, as with Mars, for example: Births of eminent painters decrease with Mars in rise and culmination positions, while births of athletes, as said above, increase during these critical hours.

Let me conclude: After some time immersed in speculations that flourish in our heads as well as those of other researchers, resulting in ideas that should be tolerated, we should remind ourselves of the business of the day and try to solve the more elementary conceptual and theoretical questions. We should then test the corresponding empirical hypotheses using accessible data, and be prepared for disappointment.

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¹ See www.cyclesresearchinstitute.org/chizhevsky/chizhevsky1.pdf

² See www.psych.uni-goettingen.de/home/ertel/ertel-dir/index.html

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