From the standpoint of many thinkers in the Renaissance, astrology was not just ideology: it was science. It comprised a body of knowledge that fit the criteria of verification commonly accepted for confirming information and establishing certitude about the natural world. It derived from authoritative traditions rooted in admired ages and places, illuminated by ancient wisdom. The most respected intellects had set great store by it from time immemorial. It made sense according to prevailing ideas about how the world and human nature worked. Its language was embedded in the very discourse whereby the results of scientific investigations were expressed. It seemed to conform to observations and experiences accumulated over time. Its methods were the methods of all knowledge-gathering; one could say, it corresponded to the cognitive “style” of the time. It used an experiential, not an experimental approach; and as such it belonged to Renaissance science and only partly to ours. And to the extent that Renaissance thinkers began to invent modes of knowledge-testing to

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2 For the notion of cognitive “styles” I am indebted to Alistair Crombie, Styles of Scientific Thinking in the European Tradition: The History of Argument and Explanation Especially in the Mathematical and Biomedical Sciences and Arts (London: Duckworth, 1994); on which, also Chungling Kwa, Styles of Knowing: A New History of Science from Ancient Times to the Present (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).
which it could not conform, it gradually lost its grip on Renaissance minds and was superseded by other approaches. To the familiar affirmation that Cancer was a feminine sign because it was related to water and that Leo was a masculine sign because it was related to fire, Giorgio Raguseo (d. 1622), summarizing the perplexity of many, responded, “this is certainly no mathematical demonstration, in which an unknown is being proven by an unknown.”

Thus the story of astrology and science in the Renaissance is largely the story of science in general. No wonder Giovanni Battista Riccioli included both astrologers and astronomers together in the list he compiled at the end of the 17th century of experts on celestial matters from ancient to modern. And no wonder that, well into the 17th century and beyond, it kept its position among the studies associated with “mixed mathematics” as taught in the medical schools. And the works and days of its practitioners deserve all the attention that, for instance, the *Cambridge History of Early Modern Science*, or indeed the *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* have devoted to them. To these anthologies we also refer for a fuller discussion of the problematic term “science” in this context, adding only that for the sake of convenience “science” and “natural knowledge” will be used interchangeably in deference to historical usage when referring to our period, and clear indications will be given when anything specifically relating to the notion of “modern science” is in play.

To understand the full implications of the theme of astrology and science, therefore, is to understand a basic episode in the formation of humanity’s outlook on nature, and perhaps, to throw more light on the

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