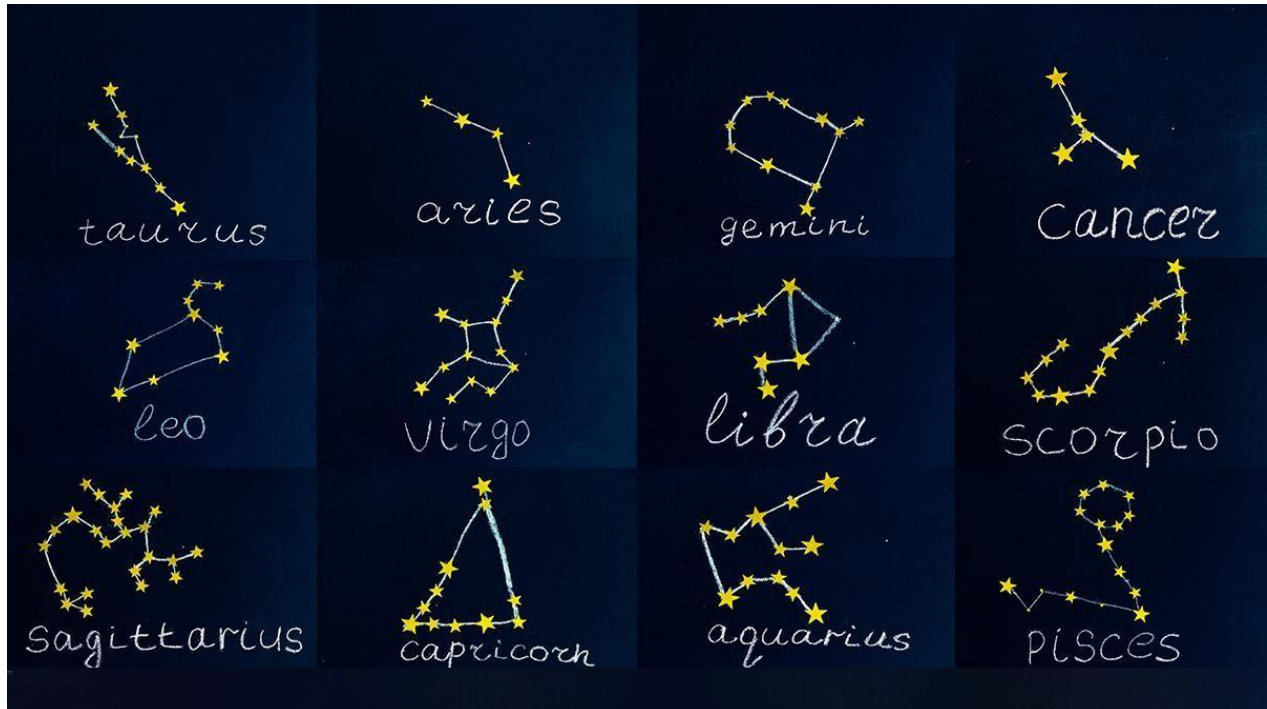


Hazel Smith-Foley

# No One Cares That You're a Virgo: The Idiocy of Zodiac Signs

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While I'd love to brag about the fact that Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, Harry Styles, and I all share the same zodiac sign, being an "Aquarius" actually means nothing. According to virtually all horoscope websites, I am supposed to be honest, creative, passionate, sociable, mysterious, and altruistic... But so is my mailman, the owner of my local deli, and much of the human population. In recent years, young people's fascination with star signs, horoscopes, and zodiac signs has grown tremendously. From BuzzFeed quizzes to zodiac-themed room decor, absurd uses of zodiac signs are everywhere, and young people's obsession with them has

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permeated through much of my generation's sociability. Even Snapchat has enabled a horoscope feature that compares your "compatibility" with other users based on both users' birthdays. Such personality traits assigned to each of the twelve zodiac signs are so broad, there is no doubt we can identify with nearly all of them in one way or another.

Western zodiacs can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians, whose astrology was later added onto by the Greeks. The twelve astrological signs are Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. The practice of astrology is a pseudoscience, and each of the signs correspond to constellations that appear in the sky within a range of certain dates. The signs are divided into four groups that correlate to the natural elements; fire, water, earth, and air. Astrologers expect air signs to be social, earth signs to be practical, water signs to be empathetic, and fire signs to be spontaneous. Therefore, people are led to believe they share commonalities with others who share the same sky constellations from when they were born.<sup>1</sup>

Today's scientists mostly refute claims that zodiac signs have any real meaning, due to the fact that it lacks any true scientific basis. Even NASA has elegantly shut down zodiac sign star theories, and laid out differences between astronomy (real science), and astrology (wacky pseudoscience):<sup>2</sup> "Astronomy is the scientific study of everything in outer space. Astronomers and other scientists know that stars many light years away have no effect on the ordinary

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<sup>1</sup> Weinhofer, C. (2021, February 8). *Your zodiac sign means nothing, even science says so*. The Current. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from [http://www.theonlinecurrent.com/opinion/your-zodiac-sign-means-nothing-even-science-says-so/article\\_5c1bb1c8-6a5c-11eb-b079-4fa85415a3aa.html](http://www.theonlinecurrent.com/opinion/your-zodiac-sign-means-nothing-even-science-says-so/article_5c1bb1c8-6a5c-11eb-b079-4fa85415a3aa.html)

<sup>2</sup> Locker, M. (2020, July 17). *NASA elegantly shuts down those new Zodiac star theories*. Time. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://time.com/5867647/nasa-zodiac-star/>

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activities of humans on Earth.”<sup>3</sup> Then, NASA explained the scientific basis behind earth’s shifting axis, and the discovery that the constellations don’t actually correspond to the same time periods that they did for the Babylonians.

Now, 3,000 years later, the sky has shifted and Earth’s axis does not point in the same direction as it once did. Furthermore, the Babylonians chose to ignore a thirteenth constellation called Ophiuchus, so that they could preserve their twelve-month calendar. They also failed to consider the fact that the sun doesn’t line up with each constellation for an equal amount of time, so each constellation seldom fits neatly into a one-month period. NASA explains, “The line from Earth through the sun points to Virgo for forty-five days, but points to Scorpius for only seven days.”<sup>4</sup> It also didn’t help astrologers’ cause back in 2011, when astronomers from the Minnesota Planetarium Society discovered that, due to the moon’s gravitational pull on Earth, the alignment of the stars had shifted, and an entirely new astrological sign (Ophiuchus) was found; thus moving everyone’s sign from its original, mythical position.<sup>45</sup> Following this line of thinking, those who followed Virgo horoscopes might actually be Leos, and so on.

Throughout my life, I’ve met a countless number of people who tend to make brief judgments about others solely based on their zodiac sign. And if that isn’t enough, horoscope websites that tell your romantic “compatibility” with others have infiltrated the modern-day dating scene in a damaging way. Tinder, Hinge, Bumble, you name it, are swarmed with profiles including zodiac signs, and users who are willing to cast away a potential partner “because

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<sup>3</sup> Dickerson, K. (2021, May 22). *Astrology is bullsh\*t. NASA's scathing takedown perfectly explains why*. Mic. Retrieved November 2, 2022, from <https://www.mic.com/articles/155350/why-is-astrology-fake-nasa-tumblr-post-explains>

<sup>4</sup> Dickerson, K.

<sup>4</sup> Gizmodo. *Why believing in astrology is not as harmless as you think*. (2014, June 25). Retrieved November 4, 2022, from <https://gizmodo.com/why-believing-in-astrology-is-not-as-harmless-as-you-th-1595802206>

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they're a rising Capricorn". But believing in astrology is far more harmful than one may think; It is damaging to our understanding of science, sociability, relationships, and even our place in the universe itself. In fact, the entire premise behind astrology is predicated on absurd and flimsy parameters; what we consider to be "months" are actually cultural constructs, not cosmological ones. Our understanding of the expanding universe we inhabit is in a constant state of flux, and putting any credence in astrological thinking is not just wildly misguided, but it is also harmful.<sup>6</sup>

A recent poll by the National Science Foundation (NSF) showed that more than forty percent of Americans believe astrology to be a real science, and the NSF uses surveys like these as a metric for "the public's capacity to distinguish science from pseudoscience." Other surveys also show that women tend to be more drawn to astrology than men. The very practice of astrology is an unempirical epistemology that is even marketed to women; just open up a "woman's magazine" and you will be sure to see at least one page dedicated to a daily horoscope, or other ridiculous fallacies. Conceptually, beliefs in astrology imply beliefs in cosmological predestination, which is a completely fictitious one at that. It seems to lend significance to the routine of our daily lives, and allows believers to feel personally connected to their signs, and the universe. In the original *Cosmos*, astronomer Carl Sagan words it perfectly; "If our lives are controlled by a set of traffic signals in the sky, why try to change anything?"<sup>7</sup>

While there is no scientific evidence that the constellations that were present on the day a person was born have any effect on their brain chemistry, their zodiac sign does on their personality... Because they allow it to. People control their beliefs and behaviors, thus molding

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<sup>6</sup> Gizmodo

<sup>7</sup> Gizmodo

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their personalities.<sup>8</sup> So next time you know someone who blames their grumpiness on “Mercury being in retrograde” or their sibling’s temper as that of a “typical Scorpio” I encourage you to direct their attention here.

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<sup>8</sup> Russ, C. (n.d.). Zodiac signs believed to affect personality; not scientifically proven. Common Sense. Retrieved November 4, 2022, from <https://woottoncommonsense.com/8356/features/zodiac-signs-believed-to-affect-personality-not-scientifically-proven/>