

The Gauquelin Effect Explained? A Rejoinder to Ertel's Critique

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In his critique of my approach to Gauquelin's discovery of planetary relations, Ertel disagrees with six issues. My view of what he finds fault with is as follows:

Regarding Point 1

Ertel asserts that the planetary effect is unrelated to planetary temperament, and that therefore the problem of temperament does not actually exist. In my view this is a somewhat hasty judgment.

Gauquelin held that certain professional groups, for example champion sportsmen, display certain character or temperamental traits more distinctly and frequently than the general population. This assumption is reasonable and has been confirmed empirically. Successful sportsmen are generally ambitious, strong-willed, and have a high level of stamina. Since Mars is often present in the plus zone at birth times for this group there must exist some correlation between the traits associated with this group and Mars' position. This does not of course apply to every individual case, and in various sub- groups of sports champions the degree to which this association emerges may vary. Nevertheless, the general statistical trend must point in this direction. This seems to me a logical conclusion.

Ertel refers to the fact that his own critical tests as well as one investigation carried out by myself (Miiller 1992) failed to confirm the validity of such a correlation—he concludes that the character trait hypothesis has not been validated by the tests.

We must first consider to what extent the methods used are actually reliable and valid. With his character trait method (extraction of trait-related expressions from biographies) Gauquelin obtained results which fitted in well with his overall theory, such that his method seemed to be valid. Its weaknesses were first brought to light by Ertel's critical tests (1990). He showed that Gauquelin's positive results were caused by deficiencies in his method; in particular, they were clearly affected by the investigators' expectations, a bias involved in the extraction of character and behavioral traits from biographies. However, since Ertel had to take over Gauquelin's method in order to test it, his own tests remain susceptible to another potential weakness of Gauquelin's procedure: character traits

are taken out of their biographical context, thus losing much of their shades of meaning. This may seriously detract from the validity of trait extractions.

In my own test mentioned by Ertel (Müller 1992) I had attempted to avoid these deficiencies. After reading biographies of famous personalities, raters were asked to judge the total information on five scales of temperamental criteria, disregarding any particular wording. Here, the relationship between planetary position and character traits did not show up either. However, this may be due to the fact that, for the samples used in this study, planetary relationships did not differ even among professional groups. That is to say, that the planetary effect may, for whatever reason, have been absent in this data sample.

In one of his studies on character relationships, Ertel applied a procedure resembling the present "global" method (1987). Here again the character trait hypothesis was not confirmed. But in this particular case it was the Moon effect with writers which was under scrutiny—an effect which my own tests (Müller 1991) have called into question.

Overall it seems to me that Ertel's reliance on the critical tests thus far, seemingly giving full support to the professional difference hypothesis and no support at all to the character traits hypothesis, is not justified. This could be clarified by a control experiment applying my global rating procedure or one like it to data which shows a definite professional planetary effect. The very first sample for which Gauquelin found a planetary effect, viz. 576 members of the Académie des Médecins, appears to be particularly suitable. The data is homogeneous and striking deviations from chance expectation had been obtained for three "effective" planets—Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

Regarding Points 2 and 3

There are lower-than-expected planetary frequencies in Gauquelin's data, the most conspicuous statistically being the effects for Mars and Saturn with artists. Disregarding for the moment the questionable (positive) Moon-effect with writers, we may state that artists differ from all other professional groups in that for them no higher-than-expected planetary frequencies have ever been reported. We may perhaps generalize as follows: Talent associated with positive planetary effect = power-exerting personalities (men of action, sportsmen, doctors etc.), talent associated with negative planetary effect = non-power-exerting personalities (e.g. artists). History shows that artists were rarely drawn from ruling or dominant classes (Müller 1990, p. 195). Thus, in the case of highly talented artists, a temperament associated with Mars, Jupiter or Saturn is less likely to be present—excluding individual personalities of artists who may deviate from their respective group. The existence of negative eminence effects is therefore reconcilable with my model.

Reversed or paradoxical eminence correlations as reported by Ertel (1989) are a special case. Saturn at the births of scientists is a remarkable example. Across all subgroups of eminence, scientists show higher-than-expected frequencies (increased kS%) for Saturn. However, kS% does not increase with eminence—instead, the trend is downward. That is to say, for lower eminence levels 1 and 2

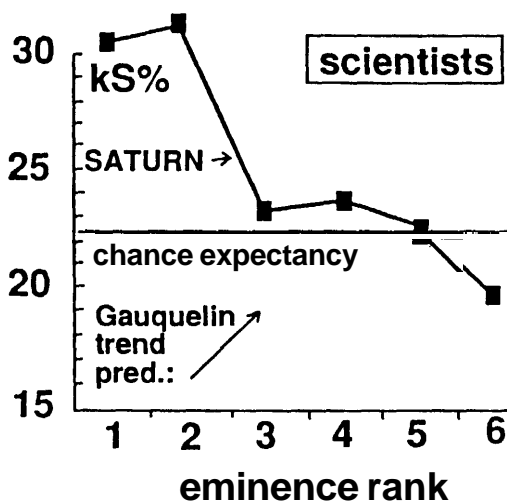


Fig. 1. An example of a negative and reversed planet-eminence relation for Saturn at the births of scientists ($N = 1193$). The result is statistically significant with $p = .005$. (According to Ertel, 1989).

Saturn deviation is high, whereas for higher eminence levels, Saturn deviations decrease continuously (see Figure 1).

These findings are curious. Ertel offers no explanation either. Apparently, Figure 1 does not tell the full story: the correlation is not linear, it must be expected to be curvilinear—Ertel's graph does not deal with very low eminence scientists who would have to be placed to the left of eminence rank 1. Ordinary people or amateur scientists would be expected to have Saturn on the level of chance expectancy, i.e. 22.2%. However, aside from the problem of explanation, there are grounds for not accepting curvilinear planetary relationships too readily. The sample of scientists studied by Ertel might be an aggregate of very heterogeneous subsamples. In addition, Gauquelin reported, for scientists, a positive eminence trend (1988, p. 108), i.e. low kS% for lesser-known scientists and pronounced kS% for the famous (e.g. members of the Académie) in the case of Saturn.

For the time being, reversed eminence correlations should be regarded as questionable and therefore unsuitable as a means to question the validity of my model.

Regarding Point 4

For the time being, the question of whether a heredity effect really exists must be left open. The summary of Gauquelin's three experiments demonstrates, even after computer reanalysis, a clear trend—at least for Mars, Jupiter and Saturn—which in the summary, is statistically significant. It is agreed that if the heredity effect could be disproved, then my model would lose its basis. This would simply make the planetary effect more puzzling than before.

Regarding Point 5

Venus, as the goddess Ishtar, fulfils a double role for the Babylonians: as the evening star she is responsible for fertility, and as the morning star, for combat. Only later is she singularly established as the goddess of love, particularly by the Greeks and Romans. This shifting of Venus roles in mythological pre-history might have hampered the development of an unambiguous planetary temperament for this planet.

Furthermore, as far as astronomical conditions are concerned, Venus is similar to Mercury, in that both planets, viewed geocentrically, have limited elongations from the Sun (Venus' maximum elongation being 48°). Birth frequency distributions on Gauquelin sectors for Venus must therefore inevitably approximate to that of the Sun, which would impede any autonomous effect.

Regarding Point 6

It is true that the assumption, that there must exist some kind of as yet unknown rays, waves or fields emitted by the planets, is one weakness in my model. In this respect, my approach does not differ from any other attempt to explain Gauquelin's planetary effect on a scientific basis.

Having assumed the existence of an appropriate physical medium, Ertel then goes on to find fault with my not having explained why mankind has become sensitive to electro-magnetic waves or similar stimuli at all. The mechanism of conditioning as advanced by my model, he says, would presuppose some prior evolution of a general faculty to perceive those energies.

However, the evolution of appropriate physiological mechanisms are conceivable within the scope of my model. Perception of a planet may originally have been limited to its visibility. Prior to the planet's rising, however, or with bad or even zero visibility, as was often the case in Mesopotamia due to swirling sand on the horizon, channels of non-visual perception could have emerged, providing some biological advantage. Furthermore, in my model, contact with the planet serves solely to localize it; above all, to identify its presence in the plus zone; its waves (or whatever other stimuli) are not required to evolve physiological reactions for triggering labor and birth. The problem is thus less complex than for Gauquelin's midwife claim.

Empirical Verification

I cannot but welcome Ertel's call for a control experiment on the Mars effect for athletes. As a matter of fact, even though we have Gauquelin's birth data of 25,000 prominent people at our disposal, the supply of empirical data is still insufficient to develop and test a really workable theory. The material does not allow for all of the possible variations of experimental conditions which are needed to test specific predictions. If Ertel's experiment were to show that the Mars effect is not reduced by obstetric drugs, this would unquestionably contradict both Gauquelin's and my own explanatory approaches.

Concluding Remarks

Of Ertel's six objections, both the "invalid heredity assumption" (point 4) and the allegedly inadequate proof for a suitable physical medium (part of point 6) are in fact well-founded, but they have already been discussed in my previous article. It is agreed that the character trait hypothesis (point 1) is still in need of empirical support. The remaining three points, however, do not in my opinion invalidate my previous conclusions.

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