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Rob’s Headland (Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge University): Byrd’s 1926 latitude-exaggeration has long been suspected, but DIO’s 1996 find “has clinched it.”

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British Society for the History of Mathematics (Newsletter 1993 Spring): “fearless . . . [on] the operation of structures of [academic] power & influence . . . much recommended to [readers] bored with . . . the more prominent public journals, or open to the possibility of scholars being motivated by other considerations than the pursuit of objective truth.”
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Byrd’s Bravery & Balchen’s Math Vindicated:

[Note added to 1998 printing.] The two lead DIO articles of this issue both justly (as we now know) questioned Richard Byrd’s success in his 1926 flight towards the North Pole. After this DIO appeared, Byrd’s 1925–1927 diary surfaced at the Byrd Polar Research Center (Ohio State University). The diary showed that Byrd indeed fell somewhat short (as Bernt Balchen’s early data-analyses had accurately contended). However, contra widespread doubt (including those cautiously entertained within DR), the diary made it clear that Byrd was a knowledgeable mathematical navigator, who courageously went most of the way to the Pole and kept his course remarkably well during this most dangerous of all his grand career’s flights. DIO’s private detailed analysis of the Byrd 1926 diary was the cited basis for the New York Times’ 1996/5/9 p.1 story on the diary and the flight. The full 1996 analysis will be published in a future DIO issue [DIO 10 (2000)].

1 Shortly after the Ohio State University archives’ (long-hidden) evidence of the truth about Byrd’s 1926 “North Pole” lie-theft exploded into the world press (starting with the NYTimes), OSU loyalists determined to attempt Lazaran resurrection of the 1926 claim’s corpse. Turning down Cal Tech’s offer of refereeing assistance, OSU instead depended primarily upon amiable on-campus talent to question DR’s report. Though this report was written at white-heat in only 10 days (1996 Spring), OSU has wasted two years seeking its longed-for (but ever-elusive) refutation-chimera. OSU Press has finally (1998) photo-reproduced its commentary-laden reproduction of the Byrd diary. This pseudo-neutral book’s catechismic advocacy is embarrassingly transparent: [a] It refuses to cite the Byrd-cult-reved NYT pageone story (scrupulously written by the NYT Science Dept.’s top writer, John Wilford), or NYT’s simple, irrefutable final-paragraph proof of Byrd’s glaring triple-stage contradictions on his claimed Pole-arrival time. [b] It does not even tell the reader on which pages of the book one may find & compare Byrd’s spectacular (omdag 100 miles) 1926/5/9 7:07:10 GCT sextant-data contradiction — diary (p.85) vs. published report (p.154) — the very DR discovery which triggered NYT’s 1996/5/9 undoing of its own Byrd-glorying 1926/5/10 headline. [c] The book neither reproduces nor so much as mentions two key handwritten documents (both in OSU archives & both cited in DR’s report) which prove that Byrd was meant to compete backwards, deducting 1926/5/9 “data” from story instead of the reverse. [d] The book (p.57) cites two allegedly Expert reports disputing the 1996 DR analysis (though finding no nontrivial errors in it). However, neither author is experienced in the positional astronomy that Byrd navigated by. One of OSU’s two apostol-Experts has such difficulty with spherical trig that his analysis contains none, though it does sport a serious arithmetic error at the heart of its prime (grade-school-level) math argument; he also mis-speels “Coriolis” 3 times out of 4. The other report (dated 1997/7/9) dear to OSU Press is the glacial-pace-learning-experience preliminary production of an OSU astronomy prof whose specialty unfortunately has no relation to the astronomy of this case. (DR’s 1998/3/30 phone inquiries found that his private alibis for Byrd’s three plainest internal contradictions — two not even cited in the prof’s report — exhibit wildly imaginative & generous flexibility. [I hope not to be forced to publish the comic details.] OSU repeatedly refused DR’s requests for access to the prof’s report, even weeks after it was being publicly cited against DR. It was finally released only after Science pressed OSU about the incongruity.) The OSU astronomy prof’s 1997/7/9 report supplies the wrong sign for all twenty-one of its solar hour-angles — and miss-speels “sexstant” twenty-three consecutive times. Bottom line: OSU Press is attempting artificial creation of a sales-boosting Controversy where there is not a shadow of rational basis for substantial dispute. Since DR’s 1996 analysis is variously ironclad, OSU shuns logical debate, preferring instead to trust that ambitious and-or merciful apologists will dream up motley purported refutations, so that OSU can innocently shrug: hey, The Experts Disagree. But, though the years keep passing, OSU still lacks [a] genuine experts who’ll fill its discreditable bill, & (far more germaine) [b] a nonfacial defense of Byrd’s 1926 hoax.

DIO is primarily a journal of scientific history & principle. At present, a good deal of DIO copy is written by Dennis Rawlins (DR) and associates. However, high scholarship and-or original analytical writing (not necessarily scientific or historical), from any quarter or faction, will be gladly received and considered for publication. Each author has final editorial say over his own article. If refereeing occurs (only with author’s explicit permission), the usual handsome-journal anonymity will not — unless in reverse. There are no page charges, and each author receives at least 50 free offprints.

The circumstance that most DIO articles are written by scholars of international repute need not discourage other potential authors, since one of DIO’s purposes is the discovery & launching of fresh scholarly talent. Except for equity-charity reply-space material, disserts & controversy are per se obviously no bar to consideration for DIO publication; but, please: spare us the creationist-level junk. I.e., non-Mufa cranks need not apply.

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This printing: 2018/2/11.
ISSN #1041-5440
encourage scholars to believe that one doesn’t have to cowtow to archons. An intolerable vision.) The upshot is: overarching, ever-present fear of making high-placed enemies—thus, reign-of-terror—freezing of free discourse and equitable evaluation of scholarly output.

The close of Mill’s more-revered-than-read 1859 On Liberty (emph in orig):

The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it; and a State which postpones the interests of their mental expansion and elevation . . . [and] which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes — will find that with small men no great thing can be accomplished; and that the perfection of the machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish.

References

DSB = Dictionary of Scientific Biography, Ed. C.Gillispie. NYC.
Gerd Graßhoff 1990. History of Ptolemy’s Star Catalogue, NYC.
O.Neugebauer 1975. History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy (HAMA), NYC.
Gerald Toomer 1984, Ed. Ptolemy’s Almajest, NYC.

46 [See DIO 6 §1 §36.]
47 Despite numerous obvious non-parallelisms, I am nonetheless reminded of the impassioned closing pages of E.Byck’s History of the Weimar Republic (Harvard Univ 1963, Sci Ed 1967), summing up the suicidal events culminating in Hitler’s Chancellorship (emph added): “The attempt by the German people to rule themselves had failed. A time now came when Germany ceased to be a state based on law. This was the time when German judges allowed their courtrooms to be overrun by [the cult] who drove out the people whose noses they did not like; when the judges saw their independence and security abolished and their professional advancement become dependent on the way their decisions pleased the ruling party . . . .

§11 Concise Chronology of Approaches to the Poles

by R. K. Headland

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(Originally 1 December 1993. Revised 12 May 1995.)

The following Antarctic and Arctic lists give explorations, in chronological order, towards the South Pole and the North Pole, their attainment (air and surface, and by sea in the Arctic), and the first crossings of the regions. There are several claims included for which supporting evidence is insufficient and doubts exist regarding what was accomplished. The units of measurement are in the form recommended by the Systeme Internationale d’Unités, thus latitudes are given in degrees with decimal fractions (arcminutes are not used), and grads follow in brackets [°].

A ANTARCTIC

1603 Gabriel de Castilla (Spain), with a ship’s company, probably penetrated the Southern Ocean south of Drake Passage

Subsequently several merchant vessels reported being blown south of 60°S [66.67°S] around Cabo de Hornos in severe weather.

1773 James Cook (Britain), with companies aboard HMS Resolution and HMS Adventure, crossed the Antarctic Circle (66.53°S [73.92°S]) off Enderby Land, 17 January

1774 James Cook (Britain) on the same expedition reached 71.17°S [79.08°S] off Marie Byrd Land, 30 January

1820 Fabian von Bellingshausen (Russia), with companies aboard Vostok and Mirnyy, sighted the Antarctic continent at about 69.35°S [77.06°S] off Dronning Maud Land, 27 January

1823 James Weddell (Britain), with company aboard Jane, reached 74.25°S [82.50°S] in the Weddell Sea, 20 February

1842 James Ross (Britain), with companies aboard HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, reached 78.17°S [86.86°S] in the Ross Sea, 23 February

1900 Hugh Evans (Britain) and 3 others sledged to 78.83°S [87.59°S] on the Ross Ice Shelf, 23 February

1902 Robert Scott (Britain) and 2 others sledged to 82.28°S [91.42°S] on the Ross Ice Shelf, 30 December

1909 Ernest Shackleton (Britain) and 3 others sledged to 88.38°S [98.20°S], 9 January

1911 Roald Amundsen (Norway) and 4 others dog-sledged to 90°S [100°S], 14 December
B   ARCTIC

1553 Sir Hugh Willoughby (England), with companies aboard Bona Esperanza and Bona Confindencia, reached 72°N [80°N] on Novaya Zemlya, 14 August

1587 John Davis (England), with companies aboard Elizabeth, Ellen, & Sunshine, reached 72.20°N [80.22°N] off Greenland, July

1594 Willem Barentsz (Netherlands), with a ship’s company, reached 77°N [85.6°N], rounding Novaya Zemlya

1596 Jacob van Heemskerck (Netherlands), with companies aboard 2 vessels, reached 80.18°N [89.09°N] off Svalbard, 17 June

1607 Henry Hudson (Britain), with company aboard Hopewell, reached 80.38°N [89.31°N] off Svalbard, 16 July

1766 Vasily Chichagov (Russia), with companies aboard Chichagov, Panov, and Babayev, reached 80.47°N [89.41°N] off Svalbard, 16 July

1773 Constantine Phleps (Britain), with companies aboard Racehorse & Carcass, reached 80.80°N [89.78°N] off Svalbard, 27 July

Subsequently many whaling vessels reached high latitudes

1806 William Scoresby (Britain), with company aboard Resolution, reached 81.50°N [90.56°N] off Svalbard

1827 William Parry (Britain) and party, with 2 sledge boats from Hecla, reached 82.75°N [91.94°N] off Svalbard, 25 July

This position is farther north than the area inhabited by the Polar Eskimo of Greenland

1876 Albert Markham (Britain) and 2 sledge parties reached 83.34°N [92.60°N] off Ellesmere Island, 12 May

1882 James Lockwood (United States) and 2 others dog-sledged to 83.40°N [92.67°N] off Greenland from Fort Conger, 13 May

1895 Fridtjof Nansen and Hjalmar Johansen (Norway) dog-sledged to 86.22°N [95.80°N] from Fram in the Arctic Ocean, 8 April

1900 Umberto Cagni (Italy) & 3 others claimed to have dog-sledged to 86.57°N [96.19°N] from Zemlya Frantsa-Iosefa, 24 April

1912 Robert Scott (Britain) and 4 others sledged to 90°S [100°S], 17 January (all perished during the return journey)

1929 Richard Byrd (United States), with an aircraft crew, claimed to have flown over the South Pole from the Ross Ice Shelf, 29 November

1947 Richard Byrd (United States), with an aircraft crew, flew over the South Pole from the Ross Ice Shelf, 15 February

1956 John Torbert (United States) and 6 others flew across Antarctica over the South Pole (Ross Island to Weddell Sea and returned without landing), 13 January

1956 Conrad Shinn (United States), with crew of an aircraft, landed at the South Pole, 31 October; a permanent station was then established, sustained by aircraft

1958 Vivian Fuchs (British Commonwealth) and an expeditionary party reached the South Pole by surface and many have made one-way surface journeys departing by aircraft

J   The Rule of Law: a Fading Memory

J1 Most current scholars cannot remember the day when science-journal refereeing was not anonymous. However, a half-century ago, nonanonymous refereeing was common procedure for the American Physical Society.

J2 And what is the standard modern archon’s excuse for today’s norm of star-chamber refereeing? Answer: referees must be promised anonymity if they are to comment frankly upon papers authored by those who can affect their careers. Not only is this a classic band-aid approach to a deep-rooted problem, but it is an agenda-jobbery-hilarious — in the clumsiness of its devastating implicit admission of the central reality, namely, young scholars are terrified that unseen archons could sever their livelihood (§G14): the grant-funds & publication they must have to survive in an era when even tenure doesn’t mean much anymore. (Another reason DR must be stamped out: if his defiance succeeds, this could illusoriness of all apparent contradictions in Ptolemy-worship? [b] If OG was certain from the outset that there MUST be equally convincing alternate explanations — even though he can’t find them! — for all evidence that seemed to contradict his views, then he must have known positively from the outset that his scholarly position was correct. So we all await impatation of the precious secret (possessed also by hero Ptolemy — as well as by a fellow specialist in Christian apologia & other fiction, C.S.Lewis: fn 42) of how to KNOW the answer to a problem before investigating the evidence. (See Princeton Institute-Muffa-godpop’s 3rd-grade-math-level screw-up-of-prejudice [DIO 6 ¶1 [H4]. See also Princetutted-funded Britton 1992 p.xvi’s regrets that R.Newton’s accursed “work has proven difficult to dislodge” [emphasis added] — a Muffa phraseology which inadvertently gives us a glimpse within the Inquisitional mind, whose aim is not openminded pursuit of truth but rather: the Extirpation of Sacrilegious Evil. [See DIO 6 ¶3 fn 6] This is the key to all a priori genii throughout history: they treat incoming evidences not as the ultimate arbiters of truth but as low, subsidiary junk — which acquire significance only when they are finally [if ever; DIO 6 ¶3 fn 6] fit to the pre-known Higher Truth. Final question: Why are faith, slander, & misreportage ho-hum-tolerated in the US’ top scientific councils? [See, e.g., www.dioi.org/fff.htm#pprs.]
On 1994/5/8, when publicly challenged by DR from the oor, at the M.I.T–Dibner Inst meeting, neither Toooner nor OG would claim these discoveries for themselves. And DR proposed that, after 14 years, there should be public acknowledgement of the identity of the true discoverer of solutions important enough to be featured by Toomer in a special final Appendix C to the standard modern edition of the Almajea. This reasonable suggestion has met with silence since. DR has requested leading Hist.sci persons to inquire of Gingerich about the matter (to push OG to make up his mind as to whether he wishes now to claim nonreceipt or subsequent misplacement of the 1980/4/13 DR letter to him). None has reported doing so. [No Mulfiosi asked; but in 2003, D.Duke asked for a copy, and OG sent one. (To DR, not Duke; but we’ll assume here that OG is now acknowledging receipt.)] This, in spite of DIO 2.1 §3 C’s extensive publication of the historical record of this appropriation.

OG’s 1983/7/23 reaction to DR’s §1 planet-mean-motion solutions? Same ploy\(^{41}\) (echoing SH5): there’s got-to-be-an-easy-alternate-explanation. (Question: why has Muffia output, e.g., §§B4, not been suppressed on similar grounds? I.e., the alternate-solutions gambit is an argument for skeptical discussion, not for suppression. And this conveniently-broad alibi can kill any paper an editor dislikes: in the entire history of science, no one who found a solution to an empirical problem has ever been able to pre-guarantee that another solution [whether valid, plausible, or just an Occam-nightmare contraption] won’t fit the same data. Should one have suppressed I.Newton’s corpuscular optics just because the wave-theory provided an alternate explanation?) [Note added 2003. Though the OG & Moesgaard Mars solutions were indeed false (& grossly nonfitting), DR’s perfectly-fitting Mark solution has also turned out to be invalid, and the Jupiter one as well: see A.Jones’ true solutions at DIO 11.2 p.30 and \(\S\)4 eq.31&45. Jones’ finds prove positively that all 5 motions are based on period-relations (as DR was 1st to propose: 1980/4/13), so there is no longer any doubt (contra Toomer 1984 p.672) that the revolutionary 1980/4/13 DR solutions for the other 3 planets are correct. And, along with most scholars in the field, Gingerich appears (if DIO 11.2 p.30 item [a] is true) to have at least implicitly acknowledged that the above (§H5) alternate-theory alibi against DR’s Ancient Star Catalog analysis is dead.] Comments: [a] Does occultist-level invincible-unfalsifiability alibi-wriggling-out get any funnier than the there-must-be-an-answer\(^{42}\) bedrock of OG’s faith in the mere-
Byrd, Balchen, & the North Pole

by Rawlins

A1 On 1926/5/9,1 airmen-lobbyist Richard Byrd claimed to have made the 1st flight to the North Pole, from Kingsbay, Spitzbergen, in the Fokker trimotor airplane Josephine Ford. Various oddities of the claim have caused widespread skepticism of it. But too much2 of that doubt is based upon B.Balchen’s long-after report3 of an alleged detailed confession by Byrd’s co-pilot (& Balchen’s very close friend)4 Floyd Bennett.

A2 After 3 crashups left Byrd sleepless (fn 13) about getting off the ground at all (Byrd Skyward NY 1928 p.183, he) & Bennett finally “sneaked to the plane” (NYTimes 5/16:3:4=s=5) and lifted off on 5/9 at 00:50 GCT. They disappeared to the north, lost radio contact,5 & returned unexpectedly early (with a leaking engine) 15/1/2 later. Debt-ridden Byrd profitably claimed they reached the Pole but, while filming the scene, forgot (Rawlins 1973 p.264) to drop their cargo of hundreds of US flags, potentially visible to the dirigible Norge at the Pole (3 hours later) during its pioneer flight across the Arctic Ocean.

A3 Byrd’s sole companion Bennett (died 1928/4/25) told his closest friend, the great aviator & WW2 hero B.Balchen (1928 Feb, Chicago), that: “the truth about the North Pole flight . . . would shock you through your heels. It makes me sick to think about it.”6

A4 So much is credible. But the same §A3 passage continues with a revealing fact: “By some kind of silent agreement we never mentioned this subject amongst us any more.” Thus, Balchen’s much-later detailed embellishments (fn 3) upon the brief statements of §A3 must be regarded as simply his own theory of the truth of the 5/9 trip (which he believed Bennett wanted to tell him), put into Bennett’s mouth for effect.

B1 The Josef’s takeoff time from Kingsbay (78°55′N, 11°9 E) was reported as 00:50 by Wm.Bird, the NYTimes correspondent with the Byrd expedition.7 Byrd’s 5/12 telegram (NYT 5/13:3:2) to SecNavy said he reached the Pole c.9:15. Curiously, he later8 altered

1 All dates here are 1926 unless otherwise stated. All times are GCT (Greenwich Civil Time).
2 DR’s initial (1972) skeptical paper on Byrd (Norsk Geogr Tidsskr 26:135) was not based upon Balchen’s testimony. DR’s Peary . . . Fiction Wash 1973 Chap.21 used some late Balchen data, all of which should be treated with caution Unless verifiable from contemporary records or an independent source. E.g., his decades-later report (Balchen Come North With Me NY 1958 p.43) of the time of Byrd’s return (16:07) is simply Byrd’s own final version (§B1) takeoff-time (00:37) plus 1½ hours. However, this was confirmed by (NARS autobio Intro B p.3) that Byrd did no celestial navigation in the Antarctic is verified by US-born Dean Smith & Larry Gould (E.Rodgers Beyond the Barrier USNavist pp.188-189). And the slowness of the Josef (which Balchen noted while he & Bennett together later flew the plane around the US to promote Byrd) is confirmed by the mean 78 knobs ski-less long-distance speeds of its “sister” Fokker (piloted by the great Chas.Kingsford-Smith: see A.Fokker Flying Dutchman NY 1931 p.281).
4 A Norwegian-born protege of Byrd’s Norse competitor R.Amundsen. Ultimately, Balchen & his former employer Byrd (whom he flew to near the S.Pole in 1929) were enemies, though not necessarily when §A3 was written. A far more able airmen than Byrd (though lacking the gumption to be born a top Senator’s brother), Balchen was a man who, frustrated by years of power-suppression of rational debate: [fn 24] nally tried to defend a higher truth (Norge’s record: [a] no (explicit) retractions, & [b] 1984 publication (Toomer 1984 App.C) of most of its “sister” Fokker’s testimony. (which Balchen noted while he & Bennett together later flew the plane around the US to promote Byrd) is confirmed by the mean 78 knobs ski-less long-distance speeds of its “sister” Fokker (piloted by the great Chas.Kingsford-Smith: see A.Fokker Flying Dutchman NY 1931 p.281).
5 The exact time of the last apparent radio-message is variously reported. (E.g., Baltimore Evening Sun 5/10:1:1; Pravda 5/12:2:6.) In any case, no pole-attainment message survives from anywhere near 9:02. (So Byrd was for awhile not committed on key parts of his story.) By contrast, Amundsen’s Norge told the world immediately of its success by radio, direct from the N.Pole: NYT 5/11:2 headline.
7 NYT 1926/5/11:1:7. Oslo’s Aftenposten 5/10:4:6 has 00:55 GCT.
8 London Times 5/28:3:6-4, NatGeogMag 50:385&373, and Byrd unpublished typescript (carbon at NatArchiv, found by Herman Friis) of 1926/11:24 navigation report [BUR pp.2&6. Note: this report’s “easy-to-manufacture” sextant data (the original records of which have never been found) exhibit a remarkably small mean error, for solar altitudes alone.) Balchen was also an American-born (buried with a 1919 vintage (BUR p.1) bubble-articial-horizon. (Byrd’s detailed 4-part NYT 4/17 account describes use of his de-instruments [drift-indicator & compasses]; but his sole mention of the sextant during the flight just says it got broken: NYT 5/17:1:3=4.) Compare to the truth of Byrd’s real if inexact 1929 S.Polar flight: Rodgers 1990 p.189. Note: for the suspect N.Pole claims of Cook, Peary [DOI 1.1 §12 & DOI 2.2], & Byrd: all sextant data were taken by the leader of (and chief investor in) the expedition: none shared with companions. (In contrast: Amundsen’s S.Pole & N.Pole trips were both verified by shared sextant data.)
Mr.Rollins [sic] has almost become paranoiac about this, so if you turn it down in its present form I hope that you will be extremely careful in framing your letter.

Gosh, what a nice guy. So, even back in 1977, just as soon as JHA’s O.Gingerich saw DR’s horrible absent-error-waves test (later Rawlins 1982C) and before he even understood it, he was already stating privately in writing that (though he claimed to find no factual or technical error in it [note added 2009: its validity is not even controversial anymore]) there MUST be an alternate explanation. And, he of course helpfully added that DR was crazy — a desperate (failed) ploy to prevent DR’s critical discovery from ever being published.

DR’s private reaction follows.

This Referee Report uses libelous personal statements to cast doubt upon the validity of scientific conclusions which are embarrassing to the Referee’s own preconceived public stance. In this way, he avoids dealing with the technical content at all — which is perhaps fortunate, considering that not one factual statement in the Report is accurate. . . Literally. (Incredible? — not if you know the Referee’s record re fluffs, in both astronomy and gossip.)

[1] I have never had a verbal argument with 0. [Several friendly chats.]
[2] He has confused two papers of quite different date, subject-matter, math-level, and method of analysis.
[3] The Star Catalog tests were conceived and executed entirely subsequent to the IAU section on Ptolemy at Grenoble, so their alleged obsccurity cannot possibly have been the cause of the first paper’s non-presentation, which OG’s own 1976/9/15 letter to me ascribes to lack-of-time (he ought to get his papers straight). The earlier paper was 3pp. and its basic equation was arithmetic. No-time? Not-clear to OG? Well . . .
[4] OG’s failure to present the first paper at Grenoble (1976/8/31±1) can hardly have been the cause of my criticisms of ancient-astronomy-historians' cohesive non-reply (to R.R.Newton’s demolitions of Ptolemy) for the very simple reason that my censure of this behavior was right in the addenda to the Grenoble paper! (Mailed to OG, 1976/8/19)
[5] It is amusing and ironic that OG should now attempt to brand as mere Conspiratorial Dementia these conservative appraisals of historians’ systematic peculiarities re Ptolemy (and re RRN, whom they then refused to discuss in print, while regularly reviling him behind his back — still the case with Neugebauer and his disciples Aaboee & Toomer). The fact is that everyone familiar with this cult’s introverted ways was aware of the realities (and freely discussed them, privately). For example, the scholar who first (Science 1976/8/6) broke the Ptolemy-defenders’ 2 year public silence (re RRN’s 1973/12-1974/6 QIRAS papers) later wrote me (1976/9/15): “So far the Neugebauer camp has not been heard from. Perhaps my merely mentioning Newton in a review of Neugebauer has placed me beyond speaking terms.” The identity of this, [my fellow paranoid] Owen Gingerich. . . .

I am reminded of the exasperation of a recent critic of other irrepressible Independent Thinkers who have plumaged astronomy (generally from the outside) — he notes wearily how much time, labor, and page-space are required to set straight only a paragraph of pseudoscientific mis-statements. I [had] taken similar pains once previously with OG; his reply, unable to refute a single one of a long string of demonstrations of factual screwups, instead simply went off in other directions — and launched a whole new thicket of misinformation!

And I always thought it was we Paranooids who were out of touch with reality.
§13 Scrawlins

A Squeezing Out Suicides

If legislatures wish to stop Jack Kevorkian (“Dr.Death”) by outlawing assisted-suicides, then those laws should also apply to tobacco companies. Otherwise, we have a situation where: it’s illegal to help pain-racked elders to die, but legal to help healthy & wealthy youngsters to die.

Another way of interpreting Kevorkian’s persecutors: it’s illegal to end agony, but legal to cause it. Just like the political consistency one expects of a nation whose laws are written by “legislator”-puppets, whose actions are responsive to those whose cash pulls the strings. (See, e.g., DIO 2.1 §1 §A5 & fn 5.)

Why has a decent and selfless martyr such as Kevorkian been pilloried so often in the press — where lobbies can slant “news” so easily? Partial explanation: about 20% of all medical billings occur in the last 6 months of life. So Kevorkian is seen by medbiz as confronting them with a stark choice, i.e., do doctors want to: [a] keep Hippocratically refusing (to this day) to acknowledge the force of its arguments. After treating the paper so badly, to now admit its value would implicitly reveal how untrustworthy the Mufa’s pretended expertise can be. (This is not to imply that the Mufa’s work & judgement is worthless. Far from it. But its suppressive policies are as unreliable as they are unethical & transparently motivated, particularly the skewed policy of citing heretics’ supposed errors, not their useful contributions [DIO 6 §3 fn 6]).

Next, DR — realizing that Hist.sci was simply incapable of evaluating his star-catalog statistical arguments — submitted the paper to a real science journal: the Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, which — after long delays due to OG&co — published it in 1982. (Meanwhile, the paper was strongly endorsed36 by the great Bart van der Waerden, author of a classic Springer-Verlag statistics text.)

One of the anonymous PASP referees chose was none other than O.Gingerich. Now, most scientists believe that a referee’s job is to analyse the technical aspects of a paper. But OG didn’t bother with any of that. What follows is the full text of OG’s referee report, which was expected to remain forever secret from DR & the rest of the academic community:

1 [Note added 1995.] A cute play by Susan Smith’s lawyer has been to generate court sympathy by saying she’s so depressed that she’s tried to commit suicide. I.e., don’t kill her because: she wants to die. [See DIO 6 §4 A.]

2 [Note added 1995.] Baseball and tennis are fading, evidently from insufficient violence to sate the booboos. [DIO 2.1 §1 §B3 asked readers to ponder the evolution of a network-TV ad that scotched at men who complain about soap-opera-addicted wives while they themselves watch 5 hours of wresting. If the ad (as originally written) scotched at the situation of women who are widowed to football not wresting, then it would probably be altered — for the simple fact that football has become so critical, to distinguishing network TV from smalltime TV, that it is beyond attack.] Thus, baseball & tennis are increasingly dependent upon celebrities. (The celeb-factor makes baseball vulnerable to strikes. Audiences will watch anyone anytime or play football. Not baseball, which is dead without its big-draw stars.) The trend has reached the point where even stars in the audience are used. But this can backfire. While the Atlanta Braves were vainly fighting for their lives in the 7th game of the seemingly endless 1991 World Series, their owners-in-attendance (Tarzan & Jane Turner) were viewed by national TV audiences vainly fighting off sleep. So it shouldn’t have required the 1994 strike to dampen buyers’ enthusiasm for paying $100,000,000 for ball clubs. But all-day-5-set-obsessed men’s tennis has ingeniously turned its draining interminability to its ad: during the 1995 US Tennis&Tennis Open, CBS cameras kept sneaking up on players’ girlfriends at ringside (usually B.Shields) to broadcast them yawning or nodding off, evidently with the idea of thereby enlivening the proceedings with candid-camera surprise-entertainment — i.e., using the spectacle of sleep to keep the TV audience awake.

3 [Note added 1995.] In the city known for dressing charm & waving slums, Baltimore baseball shortstop & longstreaker (2131 straight games played), admirably-square Cal Ripken, is paid $40,000/hit: more than former-record-holder Lou Gehrig was paid in an average year. (World Series lifetime slugging averages: Rip .167, Lou .731.) If Rip played a full career at this rate, the cost would exceed $100,000,000, easily enough to attain major political office. Hmmm: the agent (R.Shapiro) who arranged Rip’s 5-year $30,000,000 contract is also the scal power behind Baltimore’s mayor. What a clever way to grow money. If Rip’s conscience is twinged by Ripken? (Let’s hope he doesn’t end up with the dullest record in the Senate. He’s already got it in baseball.)

4 On the other hand, some Gowdy alterations of trite phrases were excellent. He was at his best in his 1976 rewrite of an overworked&divisive reference to gentleman Joe Louis, whom Gowdy re-dubbed: “a credit to the human race.”

B Shorts

B1 Gowdiamus. David Balderstam reports that a condition for baseball player Joe DiMaggio’s appearance at any function is that he be introduced as: the greatest living ballplayer. This is presumably what triggered my favorite Gowdyism, when sportscaster Curt Gowdy blurted out that DiMaggio was: “the greatest living ballplayer of all time”.

To: PASP

From: Owen Gingerich

Professor of Astronomy & the History of Science, Harvard University

H Referee Anonymity Abuse: Backshooting-Slander as Peer Review

1 Soon after, DR learned that JHA Editor MAHoskin had called, for early 1977, a meeting at the Royal Astronomical Society, where R.Newton’s work was to be attacked — but to which RN was not invited! Upon learning of this, DR immediately sent MAH Rawlins. I have had long telephone arguments with him about Ptolemy’s work & judgement is worthless. Far from it. But its suppressive policies are as unreliable as they are unethical & transparently motivated, particularly the skewed policy of citing heretics’ supposed errors, not their useful contributions [DIO 6 §3 fn 6].)

2 Next, DR — realizing that Hist.sci was simply incapable of evaluating his star-catalog statistical arguments — submitted the paper to a real science journal: the Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, which — after long delays due to OG&co — published it in 1982. (Meanwhile, the paper was strongly endorsed by the great Bart van der Waerden, author of a classic Springer-Verlag statistics text.)

34 See DIO 2.3 §8 §C10-C15. [Cause of JHA-HAD lockjaw-catastrophe: www.dioi.org/cot.htm#ksw.]

35 See fn 25.

36 The private letters of van der Waerden were highly supportive & helpful. See also his Die Astronomie der Griechen Darmstadt 1988 p.175.

37 Astronomers may judge the DR 1976 paper’s clarity & value by an excerpt from its most technical section, published at DIO 1.17 §F3 (as part of DR’s 1990 lecture, delivered by invitation to the Amer Astron Soc).
G6  RN mentioned that John Britton (another Aaboe protégé, who had since become a stockbroker)31 had invented a way to explain Ptolemy’s erroneous obliquity (Britton 1967,32 Britton 1969); but Britton’s theory didn’t answer the question that applies throughout the Almajest: why did Ptolemy’s “observation” of the obliquity perfectly agree with an erroneous value, pre-established long before (by Eratosthenes, in this case), while disagreeing with the real sky by an amount far larger than Ptolemy’s own (Almajest 1.12) estimate of the measurement’s error (the same situation as for the solar observations)?

G7  On 3/9, after another chat with OG, I phoned Aaboe and asked some of the same questions I had put to Henderson. No problem here, regarding shyness: he filled me in with the greatest of confidence and ease. Superficially, he was far more impressive than RN (whose voice was very quiet and carven terror and all of the texts and with the entire Ptolemy Controversy. A pleasure to listen to as he rolled along.

G8  However, aside from his confident air, he had no convincing answers to the question of the agreement of Ptolemy’s allegedly outdoor astronomical “observations” with his indoor tables. Aaboe spoke of errors of observation, instruments, calculation, & rounding. Perhaps these dodges would work with a neophyte science reporter, but they of course could not persuade physicist DR, since they did not address the central point (§G2[b] & §G6).

G9  When I then asked Aaboe about R.Newton (wondering why mere disagreement had led to such bad feeling), he said that RN’s research was: “incompetent work in my realm”. The proprietary message (§C4) outwights even the arrogance. (I hope that a lasting achievement of DIO will be the establishment of a forceful public reminder that: those who banish scholars are gambling; they are gluing their reputations immovable to the inevitably risky evaluation-prediction that the exile is utterly worthless and will forever remain so — that is, he will never make a single valuable discovery throughout his entire career. [Thus, if he does, the banishers must forever fake its worthlessness: DIO 4.2 69 [§T; DIO 6 63 [B2].]

G10 Three days later, I attended a Hist.sci conference at Johns Hopkins and there met a Mufia protégé, whom we will call W. I also supped with a leading mogul (Hist.sci, Yale Univ), who defended W.Heisenberg’s infamous attempt to build an atomic weapon for Hitler with a novel line of exoneration: well, Heisenberg had to do something. This archon steadfastly refused to own that Heisenberg had done anything amiss. (Other than fail.)

G11 A week passed, and yet another archon (since deceased) from Yale’s Hist.sci Dep’t visited the JHU campus for a Hist.sci event. I asked him (skeptically) about Ptolemy’s astrological work Tetralobril; he replied that at least it was astrology at a high level.33

G12 Ten days later, another Mufia protégé — whom we will call W — joined me (1976/3/29) in a clandestine visit to R.Newton (at his Silver Spring home), whom neither of us had ever met. It was an entirely amiable chat. W asked about a single RN slip (cited at DIO 1.3 §O3) which has become a Mufia favorite (since so few other slips can be found in his Ptolemy work). RN openly discussed it (as also at R.Newton 1977 p.130). Later in our chat, he enlightened both his visitors by pointing out an astounding error of arrogance by O.Neugebauer. (See DIO 1.3 in 284.) The 3-way conversation lasted from about 20:30 EDT until around midnight.

G13 As we left and got into my car, W said that I must never tell Aaboe of our visit to RN. (DIO will continue to protect W’s identity until receiving clearance to do otherwise.)

G14 Soon after, I phoned shy W’s colleague L (who had already known of the visit before it occurred) to find out what the problem was. I was told, in so many words, that W

5 The founder of the society that gave us ancient knowledge’s pinnacle (3rd ec BC Alexandria) was the general and scholar Ptolemy L. And those who damned Gen. Dobbs’ 1952 presidential candidacy may be enlightened by comparing the mental health of the modern Japanese state (which he designed) to that of US society. (DIO 1.2 in 45 praised the prose skills of Rommel and Grant-Badeau-Twain, but the dramatic-poetic style of MacArthur’s dying speech to West Point — fortunately surviving on film — is the most affecting in the history of the US military.)

6 Since leftists/Rightists preach that making poverty, race, & class frictions atrophy requires education, then: why do their policies guarantee that the maximum number of children will be born to parents with the least education?

7 Why has the brave&independent US press reserved this term strictly for Rush L’s audience, when most mass-political<tag value="special"&gt;&lt;tag value="special"&gt;Strangers on a Train, & Dial M for Murder. Contra the popular-poster-stereotypical image of female logic: the ingenious schemes behind two of these 3 great films were (long before quotas) the creative productions of women. (Agatha Christie, Witness; Patricia Highsmith, Strangers.)

8 The three cleverest-logic murder-film plots of the 1950s were: Witness for the Prosecution (remake by M.D.Fuhrman!); Strangers on a Train, & Dial M for Murder. Contra the popular-poster-stereotypical image of female logic: the ingenious schemes behind two of these 3 great films were (long before quotas) the creative productions of women. (Agatha Christie, Witness; Patricia Highsmith, Strangers.)

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11 Since leftists/Rightists preach that making poverty, race, & class frictions atrophy requires education, then: why do their policies guarantee that the maximum number of children will be born to parents with the least education?
welfare, & race-preference schemes), the real GOP platform would instantly be revealed nakedly for all it actually is, namely, a money-is-the-root-of-all-good-program to make the super-rich even richer. (Not a crusade which, unadorned with anti-welfare-loafer whipped-cream, is likely to attract more than 1% of the vote.) So, for the GOP to ensure that welfare-related diversions will continue indefinitely, two prerequisites must be met: [a] abortion, RU 486, & Norplant (& thus women’s freedom) must be suppressed, & [b] enough whipping-boy-Dems have to be kept in office to make it seem credible that the right-thinking GOP is (contra fn 21) doing its darnedest to wipe out social degeneracy, but those sneaky Liberal incubi somehow keep foiling them. (Does the GOP really want Clinton out of the White House?) It’s theatre-mythology that will persist indefinitely until retired by electoral intelligence or (less unlikely) a violent coup.

B6 If Jesse Helms, the Republican Senator from Tobacco, is so much more upset at sex (e.g., the late R.Mapplethorpe)11 than at his lovable weed’s continuing enslavement of kids and torture-massacre of millions of adults annually worldwide, then: why is Helms not horrified at the vital support which tobacco-ad funds regularly provide the glossy skinmags? (Losing this support — perhaps 1/3 of the latter’s ad-billings — would be crippling.) Mapplethorpe doesn’t sully even a hundredth the number of innocent youngsters they do. (Which is exactly why the youth-targetting tobacco industry supports the glossies & not the artist.) So, we’re waiting for the kickoff of Jesse’s no-doubt imminent decency-crusade for an industry-wide tobacco-ad boycott of porn. . . .

B7 TV snews-Balance Unbalance. In the US, when it’s a matter of press-coverage or legal adjudication of cases such as those of TonyaH, MTyson, or OSimpson (where, coincidentally, millions in profits are to be made), we’re told that every side — even the scummiest — merits a fair hearing and a tediously complete defense. (Which gives an open, just image to The System.) Question: why isn’t this same fine, noble principle12 applied to: [a] politically-incorrect heresies (persons & ideas), [b] modest-sized dissenting political parties, and [c] those who question the US’ religiosity?

B8 At the 1994/5/6-B Dibner conference at M.I.T., I mentioned to Muffia capo Noel Swardlow my delight at his entirely original solution of some Hipparchan numbers. (See DIO 1.3 fn 277 & fn 280.) He replied with admirable modestly that it was a “lucky” hit. (See similar self-deprecation by Aubrey Diller at DIO 4.2 Competence Held Hostage #2 p.55. See also DIO 1.2 [D2 & fn 49.] But the comment reveals the very opposite of NS’ genial implication, and we may formulate a general principle regarding the process:

The cleverer a discovery is, the more the discoverer feels it was lucky.

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11 This, even though the Lbs are always hugely outspent by the GOP. Our rulers’ desire for cover-maintenance of Plunkittese (fn 17) electoral pseudo-choices is the only barrier that prevents Toles’ recent Buffalo News cartoon (reprinted: Nish Post Weekly Ed 1995/5/18) from coming true. (Out in public, that is. In private, it’s already effectively true; though not literally, since neither party’s polls are running anything. Except errands. For forces even wealthier than themselves.) The cartoon envisions a near-future here’s-the-latest-from-business announcement on TV snews: “[We have a new merger to report. It] makes good business sense, encouraging a creative synergy. We can keep our core areas of traditional revenue, but add potential for a new customer base. While in the past we had periods of intense competition, in today’s climate we have to look at our common bottom line: money. That’s why this Republican buyout of the Democratic Party is such a terrific deal for both the players and the American public . . . . (Voter layoff notices will be mailed out shortly).”

12 [Note added 1995.] Simply, creationists affect love of free speech when trying to push creationism into bio classes, and the Roman Church (forgetting-for-now alof of sacred history: $15 fn 33) loves freedom of religion (pope, Baltimore, 1995/108). So, will both cults be inviting representatives of dissenting organizations (including atheists) for open debate in classrooms?

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1994 December  DIO 4.3 §13

between V.Stefansson’s rôle in it, and OG’s rôle in the Ptolemy Controversy.)29

F7 OG is #2 editor at J.Hist.Astr., whose Editor M.Hoskin (Cambridge Univ) & Hoskin’s best friend Olaf Pedersen (Univ Aarhus; long an Editor of Centaurus) also have aided the Muffia tactic of destroying dissent on Ptolemy. Thus, I include them & theirs under the Muffia banner, as well. (That does not imply that the central Muffia exactly reveres Hoskin or Pedersen. See, e.g., DIO 1.1 §5 fn 6.)

G  Fear & Dissembling

G1 On 1976/3/2, a few days after my first talk (§D7) with R.Newton, I again tried & failed to reach Henderson at CUNY (Queens). On the evening of 3/3, I phoned OG about the review. He told me that Henderson was a protégé of Aaboe, himself a protégé of the ultimo in these matters, Otto Neugebauer, whose name I knew quite well and for whom I had at the time the highest regard. OG acted not sympathetic to the noncitication approach, one of a number of comments he made which had me for quite a while hoping that he was trying to encourage free debate on the Ptolemy issue.

G2 Later that evening, I finally reached Henderson by phone in Queens and asked her: [a] why she hadn’t cited the R.Newton papers I’d seen in QIRAS, and [b] how she accounted for the suspicious agreement which R.Newton had demonstrated between Ptolemy’s allegedly outdoor “observations” & his indoor tables, especially30 for the Sun. (E.g., was this correlation being explained away as due to Ptolemy’s data-selection?) We also discussed the fact first pointed out by R.Newton 1973-4 (p.14): that the framing instrument allegedly used by Ptolemy for measuring lunar zenith distances (Almagest 5.12-13) would instantly reveal that the Moon’s distance from Earth did not vary by a factor of nearly two (!), as the Ptolemaic lunar theory required. (Neugebauer actually believed Ptolemy knew of this error: §G12.) And I raised an amazingly revealing bit of evidence, which though long known, has been insufficiently emphasized by skeptics, and which is to me by far the strongest proof that Ptolemy never observed: he didn’t even know his one of a number of comments he made which had me for quite a while hoping that he was trying to encourage free debate on the Ptolemy issue.

G3 But it was equally obvious from Henderson’s replies that: she didn’t even pretend to know the answers; i.e., she didn’t know what the justification for her ignoring R.Newton was. Surreal. All she could say in response to questions of astronomy & statistics was that: her mentor Asger Aaboe knows the answer; let me give you his phone number! (It all reminded me of a longago conversation with a young nun whose defenses of the deity were entirely: speak to my priest.)

G4 It is worth adding that, given O.Gingerich’s good relations at this time with S&T, it is likely that he was involved in the selection of this cipher as a reviewer.

G5 I spoke to RN again 3/3. When I brought up the possibility of a verbal debate, he was not sanguine about the idea, largely because he had been earlier invited to a gathering where he was to be the sole skeptic and his paper was to be shown to the other side without reciprocation! He also had been quite ill at the time. (Curiously, the next time he was invited by OG to speak, 1984/6, he also happened to be ill. Though he was [in the event] able to talk, no debate was scheduled — despite my 1984/46 urging of this to OG. By contrast, I am always healthy; and OG has never invited me to talk anywhere.)

29 But whereas VS wanted to be known as a freethinker, OG prefers posing as a practicing Christian.

This seething clique has made genuine contributions to knowledge — including my own knowledge. For this I have for over a decade repeatedly published my appreciation (entirely unreciprocated); and I shall naturally continue a policy of even-handed citation, since that is the heart of honest scholarship. It is on this point of policy (citation of those with whom one simply disagrees) that the Neugebauer clique most blatantly exhibits both its scholarly & temperamental shortcomings — and reveals a cohesiveness of purpose which I will unashamedly but quite justifiably refer to as conspiratorial. (Written confirmation of this assessment will appear below, from an unexpected source: the Neugebauer clan’s most loyal public toadie, O.Gingerich.) The group’s other characteristic is its innocence of the techniques & openminded attitude of modern science — a precious ferity which has led it into so many entertaining howlers, omissions, & muffs in matters of astronomy, mathematics, & statistics, that readers will understand why DIO regularly refers to this gang as: the Muffia. (See 45-item catalog of Muffa muffs at DIO 4.1 §4.)

I do not mean to imply by the foregoing that the Muffia’s historical accuracy is a whole lot better than its science. The clan’s greatest scholarly strength — especially Toomer’s — is probably bibliographical. But Muffa affinity for deliberate noncitation of heretics is obviously fatal to one’s trust even in that.

The Muffia currently explains its reluctance to cite heterodoxy by complaining of DR’s behavior. (Class self-fulfilling prophecy: my criticisms are entirely in reaction to the censorial behavior now justified thusly.) The problem with that alibi is obvious: R.Newton never reacted as forcefully as I have to Mufflost. But a Muffia citation-blockout (Rawlins 1991W §D4) was applied to him for about a decade — abandoned only when R.Newton 1977 (The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy, Johns Hopkins Univ) became widely noted in the popular press. (See D6 & DIO 2.3 §6 [E3].) (Remark added 1995.) Likewise, genteelly Hugh Thurston is now attacked, shortly after he committed the heuristic offense of publishing the irresistible [DIO 6 §1 fn 137] heresy that DR had solved the source of the Babylonian System B yearlength: §E3 & [DIO 6 §1 fn 16]. Earlier polite scholars, who became victims of Muffa anti-heresy assaults, are listed at DIO 1.1 §1 (C5.)

So explaining years of Muffia noncitation of RN will require a different ad-hoc excuse, a situation that creates an Occamite problem which we will also encounter in the evidential pros&cons of the Ptolemy Controversy itself: Muffia attempts to answer the charges against Ptolemy (invariably appearing in arenas where reply is highly unlikely to be published — e.g., book reviews) always concentrate largely upon just one single sector of the evidence. Thus, a reader will not realize that the unlikely alibi generated for this special part of the Ptolemy problem is inapplicable to Ptolemy’s other fabrications. Each ad hoc scenario (e.g., Evans 1987) seems less grossly implausible in isolation; for, only when one sees, all at once, the whole crazyness of unattested Muffia hypotheses (applied to the task of resuscitating Ptolemy), does one discern just how unlikely they are in conglomerate.

The scholarly acumen of O.Gingerich (Harvard & Smithsonian) is not much respected by these Muffiosi capos, but OG’s unrequited loyalty [Gingerich 1976, DIO 2.3 §6 fm 17-18] is such that I will loosely speak of him as an adjunct member anyway. (Has OG imagined that backing Muffio might land him a permanent Princettitude post? [Contra Rawlins 1991W §B3’s jest: not even Inst critics think its standards have come to this.]) Note in passing: those familiar with the hidden politics of the Peary affair will find a parallel

25 See Rawlins 1991W fn 16 & fn 174 for extensive lists of examples of DIO’s recognition of & gratitude for Muffia contributions and discoveries. [See also ibid fn 2.]

26 [Note added 1995.] The 1995 JHA has finally acknowledged a few corrections [DIO 6 §3 [A1], but there is still (ibid §§G-H) no Muffia admission of DIO contributions. Indeed, despite the collapse of lead-paper-billed “proof” that Greek trig orbits couldn’t be fit to Greek solar data, the Muffia still coherently stands behind its incoherent (DIO 1.2 fn 209) Babylonian arithmetic purported solution of the trois A&K data of the trigonometrician Hipparchos (ibid fn 75). The mental requirements here are as obvious as absent: common sense, testability, & generosity. I.e., nothing essential has changed.

27 See §§18 item [5]. Also §§B5-B6, B8, G13-G14, DIO 1.1 §1 [§A8, DIO 1.2 §D4 & DIO 6 §1 fn 7].

28 See DIO 1.2 fn 92 & fn 116.
E  Getting the Best Hope for Cutting the Poverty-Cycle

Margaret Sanger promoted birth control primarily in order to help the poor out of poverty. (No other social-improvement program can long succeed if population control fails.)

However, modern political and religious leaders have outfoxed her (with ever-loyal media assistance):

E1. Doling out welfare-pittances to subsidize poverty, barely enough to keep ever-abundant that immortal potential-scape cheap-labor-pool which US employers encourage, in order to beat down laborers' wage-demands. (Coincidence: the US' interest in spending gov't funds on welfare only began shortly after birth control's use became legal & effective.)

E2. Keeping RU 486 (mifepristone, aka "the Death Pill") from US women for a decade regardless of whether the President is (purportedly) feminist or no. (How much longer is it given women get suspicious of the deep state's commitment to this issue?) Note the provocative circumstance that RU 486 has been systematically kept from the citizenry of only one top nation, the US — which also just-so-happens to be the nation most unremittingly targetted by the foetus-hugger anti-abortion lobby.

E3. Virtually banning from guyprop and from TV 'snews (excuse our redundance) discussing birth control and/or abortion in any context but that of individual rights — not as part of a social-repair strategy. (See DIO 2.3 §7 §A6 & DIO 4.2 §9 fn 44. According to Willspeas and Newspeat, 20 the only permissible policies for dealing 21 with the US'

18 §B3. DIO particularly stresses societal, not just individual, birth control for this reason — and because arguing its need (& the social consequences of ignoring it) is now almost as banned from popular US media as it has been under explicitly theocratic dictatorships.

19 This has reached the point where (E3) young men can now be held legally hostage for eighteen years at the whim of a deific father whose wish, e.g., to prey with holey condoms — whether she is seeking to bind the man (out of love) or to drop out of school into motherhood-as-a-paying-job (out of stupidity). If the father-to-be doesn't want the child, why can't the govt. tell the mother-to-be that it's up to her to either: Support or Abort. A society that did not want more low-prospect children would entertain that approach. Instead, such an obvious & central idea isn't even mentionable (in 25) in the US' self-congratulatory Free Press. (And poverty continues to expand, as "leaders" [D3] shake their heads in mock perplexity.) I note that one of the prime secular promoters of this almost priest-like letter-of-the-natural-law lack of perspective, ACLU (which never objects to US media promotion of Ptolemy as "the greatest astronomer of antiquity") may get, it cannot be allowed that the very astronomer repeatedly puffed by the Hist.sci topic [of Ptolemy's manipulation of his material] into disrepute (Toomer 1984 p.viii). But, the evidence has gotten so unfriendly to the defenders that many now content themselves with an increasingly watered-down version of the former position: Evans, Wlodarczyk, & O.Gingerich have essentially, though not as explicitly as acknowledged homepaths, been reduced-diluted just to arguing that the manifold evidence convicting Ptolemy is not utterly conclusive. That is a long way from the confident Gingrich 1976 assertion that Ptolemy was the best thing that ever happened to ancient astronomy. Such transformations are among the nuttier features of The Controversy — the nuttiest being that many Muffiologists will deny there has even been a transformation.

20 At least Newt's orphanage-proposal faces (& hopes to sever) the self-perpetuating & cyclic nature of welfare-subsidized poverty. But it still falls short of asking why we must tax (into [relatively] low-fertility) providently-loving middle-class parents, in order to support the issue of improvident parents. I.e., the welfare-rem's-vs-orphans "debate" is (since neither option can stem the US' ongoing massive tide of careless parents' unplanned children) as phony as the parallel Dems-vs-GOP "debate". Just as the US needs a genuine: DIO 2.3 §6 fn 23 3rd party, so it

21 [Note added 1995.] According to 1995/9/13 SeeBS-News, it was a "historic" occasion: the Senate changed on Hartley Avenue. The PU connexion (Hitt 1995 p.96): for years, "it didn't hurt to be a professor at Princeton (where foundation president Adele Simmons once served as a dean). In fact, five of Princeton's many MacArthur geniuses . . . all live on Hartley Avenue." (This doesn't sound much like the original MacArthur intent of aiding needy nonestablishment geniuses: Rawlins 1991W fn 236.) Systematic catering, to the tenets of archon-angels who arrange such manna, is a plague whose side-effects include a lingering inability of Hist.sci (with its high Princeton Inst contacts: DIO 1.1 §7 §B, Rawlins 1991W fn 7.) I.e., a national TV 'snews network characterizes those pushing continued tax-subsidization for the poverty-bredre-men profession as: "moderates". Note the ironically perverse upshot of the GOP's imposable marriage-convenance between welfare-loafer-haters & foetus-huggers: if welfare for the jobless is now shrunk, then even more tragically poor folk (than previously) will, in short-term-thinking desperation, feel limited-option-corinded into having kids just to get AFDC-pittance-cheques, hoping to fend off the wolf-at-the-door; thus, the slum-cornucopia of a doomed-poverty-infants (with parents just that forward-looking) may get even worse. This is "historically-moderate"?" (Well, the pol responsible for the final bill is named: Dole.)

down by association with such embarrassments.

E6 Therefore, if Hist.sci promotion of Ptolemy as "the greatest astronomer of antiquity" is a horrifically ironic mistake (whether originally by well-intended folly or no), the awful truth cannot be admitted (at least on the record). The stakes are too high. Important faces are too deeply into potential egg. No matter how clear & potent the still-incoming evidence may get, it cannot be allowed that the very astronomer repeatedly puffed by the Hist.sci establishment as The Greatest of all ancient astronomers is in fact the biggest faker of the lot. The irony is too gross. Too perverse. Too hilarious. Too damaging to the whole Hist.sci business, whose topmost 22 Ptolemy expert decreed that R.Newton 1977 "tends to bring the whole topic of Ptolemy's manipulation of his material into disrepute" (Toomer 1984 p.vii). But, the evidence has gotten so unfriendly to the defenders that many now content themselves with an increasingly watered-down version of the former position: Evans, Wlodarczyk, & O.Gingerich have essentially, though not as explicitly as acknowledged homepaths, been reduced-diluted just to arguing that the manifold evidence convicting Ptolemy is not utterly conclusive. That is a long way from the confident Gingrich 1976 assertion that Ptolemy was the best thing that ever happened to ancient astronomy. Such transformations are among the nuttier features of The Controversy — the nuttiest being that many Muffiologists will deny there has even been a transformation.

F The Muffia & its Godpop

F1 The above-cited notoriously contentious & turf-possessive Muffia clique was fathered by (& long godfathered by) the late Otto Neugebauer, of Brown U & the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, who for decades Princetituted his own talents & his colleagues' reps to the curious cause of glorifying the most transparent faker of ancient science, C.Ptolemy. (The common factor in this & ON's other odd fixation, Babylonian math astronomy as source of Greek [DIO 6.11 fn 27], is: self-convincing modern academe's grant-dispensers that ancient astrologers' texts are high-science, which thus merit high-funded, high-expert-Muffia analysis.) ON managed to breed & plant at prominent universities a small but virulent clique of Clonies: Asger Aaboe (Yale), Bernard Goldstein (UPitts), & Gerald Toomer (Brown, Harvard). Each of these breeder-reactoners has in turn attempted to clone further grad students.22 (Yes, it sounds like bad science fiction. And it is.)
WW1 (Germany actually do this?) As a conspicuous tactic of the Neugebauer cult, attacking others’ alleged incompetence appears to be one of a number of manifestations of what the psychologists call “projection.”

E2 The attempted shift of opinion in Ptolemy’s favor has never really taken hold outside Hist.sci; but even the partial success was a definable Achievement of the Muffa, which made it feel Important. Since there was never any strong evidence for Ptolemy, the cult went far beyond reasonable conclusions from evidence, in order to prove its case. It is possible that an early conscious realization of a key fiscal & careerist reality played a role in the sham this group has perpetuated upon the scholarly community. That reality: how can one raise funds for research in a field where the central document is a clumsy fake? And, even assuming the best initial Muffia motives, the abortion problem lingers nonetheless: when a Cullleader & followers have for decades damned all dissenters as fools & knaves, the cult acquires a huge stake in making its position look valid.

E3 [Paragraph added 1995.] Thus, there is no way that such instinctively-turf-sensitive, gang-warring parties can independently choose to make peace. E.g., at the very moment when the JHA was making the potentially-fruitful (if insultingly handled [DIO 6 §3 [C5]] gesture of creditably acknowledging DIO’s math-correctness on a single point, the Hist.sci Society re-opened hostility (in the Hs’s Isis 86.2:309; 1995/6) by using ‘nonmathematician Muffioso Alan Bowen (who co-vested the very JHA 1991 elementary-school mis-math which the 1995 JHA was now correcting!)’ to pass off, as virtually worthless, Cambridge University-trained mathematician Hugh Thurston’s valuable,25 genteel, openminded, & highly capable Springer-Verlag book. (Which has won well-deserved praise from the Road Society!) Hence, the B.Religion at Nature 370:339. [We are happy & obliged to here thank Nature for listening to DIO 1.2 fn (25-96).] Bowen’s unproven ([F4] denigration of non-Hist.sci-cultist Thurston naturally has no relation to: [a] Hist.sci’s professional-survival-instinct desire ([C4]) to insist that scientists can’t do history as well as the Hist.sci cult. [b] Springer’s recent dropping of Muffia-capo G.Toomer’s valuable 1984 Almajest (an event which, despite the book’s flaws & Toomer’s seething, irrevocable loathing of DR), GOUNI genuinely deems regrettable. [c] Thurston’s temerity in defying a private Muffia warning never to cite DR [DIO 6 §1 fn 7 & §3 [E2]]. (Understand: Thurston’s text only mentioned two DR results, while repeatedly and respectfully citing numerous Muffia achievements. But 90% assent is not enough. Just as no medical procedure can permit mere 90% sterilization. The book-burner mind won’t tolerate ANY heresy.) Not to mention: [d] Thurston’s JHA note [DIO 6 §3 [C]] correcting a Bowen-vetter’s error.

E4 The unbridgeable barrier that prevents any progress towards compromise here is that, at this late date, if Ptolemy’s fraudulence is even seriously considered21 by academe (much less generally accepted), the loss of face by the Muffa cult would humble its precious pretense to expertise. And it knows it. Indeed, the effect on the viability of the whole insecure field of Hist.sci could be unpleasant. And Hist.sci knows it.

E5 Reality: if a couple of rogue physicists (RN & DR) could be right after all, while the cream of Hist.sci experts could have been (even might have been) adamently & sandunerously wrong for decades, well — Hist.sci archons don’t need to be told what questions will immediately surface. Each of the several (very few) major universities that have established Hist.sci departments could start asking why the university’s reputation need be dragged

18 See AmerPhys. 55:235 (p.236 item 4) or DIO 4.2 §7 [B23 item B ii]

19 Designating a Muffioso to review Thurston is about as innocent as deeming Wilberforce to review Darwin.

20 See DIO 3 §3B & DIO 4.2 §6 fn 1.

21 i.e., decades of uncompromising Muffia archons have infallibly established the orthodoxy that Ptolemy was The Greatest. Thus, the Muffia’s high priests have locked themselves incautiously into rejecting even mild, almost inane against this subject. Consequence: religiously-obsessive inability to compromise with either heretics or heresy; i.e., the Muffia’s years of unbending decrees (& cumulatively dishonest pretense that heretics contribute nothing) have forced it to continue striving for complete & utter expurgation of dissent (& all disobedient dissenters) on Ptolemy. (Such poison infects even a productive scholar like Britton: §1) .) Meanwhile, Muffosi slanders (e.g., DIO 1.1 §1 [C7 §3 §3 [D2-D3]) paint the skeptics as the rigidly nutty side of the Controversy!

bystardy-tidalwave are more-of-ineffectual-same: Dem postnatal [i] AFDC,22 [ii] rehabs,23 and [iii] deadbeat-talk-compromised; and or GOP prenatal [i] punitive-example24 AFDC shrinkage & [ii] insanely quixotic just-try-no-to-abort attempts to stifle poverty-area youngers’ natural erotic drive.

E4 The Making-Murderously-Inclined-Women-Into-Moms Movement [MMIWM]. How can TV ‘snews take seriously a GOParty that claims to be anti-welfare even while it fights abortion? A crusade that effectively forces unwanted children upon unwilling parents (for their-own-good and/or as punishment for carnality), and then affects pernixity at slums’ immortalty. In this connection, we note that, by their own abortion-is-murder logic, interceder-pro-lifers are insisting that pregnant potential murderers MUST become mothers, whether they like it or not — a highly efficient prescription for creating child abuse & poverty — one finds on a massive scale, normally, worldwide, in areas dominated by such pious MMIWM mentalities. (See fnn 15&17.)

E5 Rendering Underachievers More Well-Rounded. Will the US’ virginity-as-the-cure-for-poverty-growth26 copulation-control crusade culminate in a GOP rewrite of the civil-rights hymn? All right-thinking-Americans ardently await the international-satellite-televisioned spectacle-finale: an entire football stadium (loaned by the mob-affiliated NFL), jammed with flagwaving, certified-pure teens, throat-sellling the monkish remedy envisioned — as THE prime solution to the poverty cycle — by those upstandingly-religious conservative-thinktanks currently inspiring Congress. And now, ladies & gentlemen, let us bow our unworthy heads, still our too-worldly mouths, & listen, as Nancy Reagan leads the ten-thousand-throng Chorus of Undelivered Orices, singing their platinum hit:

We Shall Undercome

22 Question that effectively wonders just who really designs US inner-city disaster programs: Why is it that the very leftists, who swiftly realized that pouring money into late 1940s China wasn’t helping the Chinese, have — even after 40 yrs — still not figured out that pouring money into inner cities (DIO 2 §11 fn 5&9) is equally counterproductive? In both cases, so much of the money has systematically ended up in corrupt gangsters’ & druglords’ hands, that they live in splendor while the poor remain poor. Final question of our little quiz: who do you suppose has paid off Congressmen to continue such policies, [a] the allegedly-intended-beneficiary poor, or [b] the corrupt warlords?

23 [Note added 1995.] As a USA Network 1995/8/30 spot (attacking racism as an adult sickness) unconscious: “It’s much easier to build a child than to repair an adult.” Just as Christian cultists will often get selectively agnostic when asked about god’s post-life intentions for less-fortunate but morally-blameless folks who lived&died without knowledge of Jesus, so bleeding hearts will selectively face rehab’s limitations — when confronted with the prospect of rehabilitating anti-rehabbers. (See DIO 2 §13 [H1])

24 Question: how many of these purported “deadbeats” ever wanted the child in the first place? (See fn 19.) I.e., how many are actually victims of the bastardy lobby — of those who wish to encourage accidental pregnancy because the gov’t is too cheapskate to arrange longterm rational encouragement for parenthood, and so depends upon the imprudence to produce plenty of new kids regardless. (The effect of this upon the nation’s mean cultural level is too obvious to require detailed comment.)

25 True, the punitive approach may dampen rational folks’ fertility. But how does it deal with the very, very occasional citizen who may be a trifle less than rational and forward-looking? What is the objection to fn (19) the imposition of limits, upon numbers of children born to those members of the population that (even if they bothered to marry) aren’t anticipating how many kids they can afford? (Society negligently sets limits upon these same citizens’ amounts of less important creations than children, e.g., food, housing, & automobiles.) A societal blind-eye (actually, dereliction), at this critical stitch-in-time juncture, is a prescription for either brutal mass-starvation or (more likely) an even higher shrinkage-rate for the intelligent fraction of the population than already holds. The disastrous effects (of this trend) upon the rationality & vanity of US politics are already oppressively ubiquitous — and indeed are now probably irreversible by purely democratic or laissez-faire means. This is, of course, one of those instances where it’s not merely a matter of starting a trend but of reversing one, since at present it is impermissible in establishment public forums to propose (fn 19) that any poor mom, no matter how degraded her situation, should consider (or have considered) having an abortion. What is the societal use of having the technical right to an abortion, if it is off-limits publicly even to suggest, to those most in need of abortion-access, that they take advantage of that right?

26 This approach is fine for the provided middle & upper classes. (Whose members are so endearingly prone, to project their own refined but rather innocently-insulated values onto the poor, that they don’t understand why such crusades never make any headway against poverty.) Teen virginity is a commendable guard against (not only pregnancy but) disease — and against diverting&frittering-away kids’ energies at a time when they should be concentrating more upon studies than upon premature hedonism (§C5). But, as a remedy for slums’ poverty, such a programme accomplishes nothing beyond playrights’ ultimate nightmare: the tragic face (§B3 & fn 25).
F  Trillions vs. Peanuts
The US military officially spends about 1/4 trillion of our tax-dollars per annum. (And its favorite GOP pols unfailingly wish to increase this paltry sum, so that the poor Pentagon can do more than — as now — just barely scrape by.) Why this monster outlay? Facts:
F1  Nobody is invading the US. Except Mexico.
F2  Foreign spies (e.g., Russian, Israeli) can buy a billion-dollar US weapon's plans for ordnance 1% of 1% of the funds we were taxed to pay for it. (i.e., $100,000.)
F3  And the US pols who rule the weapons' use can themselves be bought-controlled by foreign bribes, for similarly trivial outlays. (Ever wonder why Japan: [a] doesn't bother with massive military junk, & [b] is more prosperous than those nations who do?)

G  Who Says Our Taxes Are Wasted? Three Trilling Adventures
It should comfort all of us to learn that three difficult US problems can be solved by annually spending, on each, merely about a trill apiece: $1,000,000,000,000.
G1  We know [DIO 6 §4 §C7] that a defense-lawyer-clan-subsidy trill can ensure that no one will ever go to jail again — so long as he's good-looking. And, as part of the US' medical trill (§G3), we can guarantee all citizens the plastic-surgery they need to get handsome enough to survive any jury's fussiness in such a critical department. (How to pay for the needed surgery? Simple, since we're not going to need prisons ever again, we can cancel all the current cruelly-anticrime era's outstanding orders for prisons and instead devote the funds to the doctors-of-beautification.)
G2  And, of course, we ought to throw another trill/year at the Pentagon (§F). Look at it this way, wouldn't you spend anything to ensure that Clinton not only rules us but the whole world?
G3  Finally: most medical plans the gov't is now mulling over will cost several thousands of dollars per year per insuree. Multiplying by the number of US citizens, we find that proper medical care will cost27 the US ordmagn a trill a year. Now, finally, we can close in on the true unspoken goal (of expending ever-more-astronomical portions of gov't treasure upon medical care): no one will ever again die. Instead, at roughly age 100, we'll just transform permanently (§A4) into immortal senility — wedded forevermore to artificial hearts & whatever.
G4  A striking addendum to §G3: the US is the most totally & aggressively religious of all technologically advanced nations. The great majority of its citizens will swear to any pollster that they do verily believe in the standard Christian bye&bye—skypic:28 eternal life. The deal being that, as soon as they die (if suitably confessed&blessed by an establishment-religion priest), they join Jesus in heaven and become angels who live in eternal bliss forever after. Despite the purported attractiveness & much-vaunted ethereal beauty of said vision, the US citizenry appears prepared to spend a trillion dollars/year to pay our doctors to forever bar us from entering this heavenly goal of our lives. Instead, we will linger on, for eternity, upon our soiled Earth. As ever-undead vegetables. Well, if the US is going to go bankrupt, at least it'll be for an upbeat vision of the future.
G5  We can put this more succinctly and thereby face starkly what happens to logic when there is a conceptual conflict between two potent lobbies (in this case, medbiz & godbiz): the US is outspending all nations, in order to stay out of the Holy-Heaven paradise which it, above all nations, allegedly longs for.

27 The medical establishment frequently gets roasted in these pages. However, [a] DR is not a proponent of kook "alternative" medicinal treatments. [b] He is well aware of the benefits of US medical research, which is the best anywhere in history. (In addition, only a very flush lobby can take on the tobacco industry — so even the fat in medbiz has at least one key side-benefit. Note a bit of ironic justice: the more people tobacco slowly tortures to death, the richer its medical-lobby enemy gets.)
28 D. Hammett Maltese Falcon 1929 Chap.19: "Spade laughed [at fastalking Gutman’s glittering promises]. "I know you'll give me millions later . . . but let's stick to this now. Fifteen thousand?"
D Censorship Encountered

D1 Over a year went by with no involvement of myself at all in the Ptolemy matter. That changed (faster than) overnight due to an incident that finally smelled odd enough to alert me that something seriously wrong was going on. The 1976/2 Sky & Telescope carried a virtually ad-copy review by CUNY’s Janice Henderson of A Survey of the Almagest (Pedersen 1974), authored by a prominent Hist.sci prof who then ran Centaurus, a journal which has carried a number of pro-Ptolemy papers but never one by the center of the skeptical contingent. (Still the case — 20 years later! Same for the equally captive reviewing journal, Sky & Telescope: fn 12. After 2 decades of such utterly one-sided promotion of Ptolemy, both journals now have accumulated an enormous face-investment in continuing to suppress the truth about the greatest faker in astronomical history.)

D2 What struck me right away was that the S&T review did not even mention the existence of R.Newton’s work, simply noting that there used to be doubts about Ptolemy but that “Pedersen’s book goes a long way toward reestablishing” the reputation for integrity that Ptolemy deserves.

D3 Henderson 1976 was not merely an ad for Pedersen’s book. It was an even more enthusiastic ad for Ptolemy’s Almagest: “the greatest astronomical treatise of antiquity, a cornerstone of all mathematical astronomy known at the time”, and (quoting Neugebauer 1957) “one of the greatest masterpieces of scientific analysis ever written.”

D4 When I learned that Henderson was a Yale protégé of Aaboe, I realized that a revealing re-write of OG’s 1974/11/15 confident assurance had since taken place: OG had said at that time that Aaboe would publish evidence showing R.Newton was wrong; but, over a year later, Aaboe had published nothing (& never has in the 2 decades since) in reply to RN; instead, his personal henchperson was scoffing at RN’s position while entirely ignoring RN’s evidence — not even telling S&T’s readers why they might consult it. I did not yet realize that noncitation had already for seven years been standard policy among Ptolemy’s defenders, being just about the only weapon they felt comfortable with. (Besides private slander of dissenters — which needn’t be accurate, since the party discussed is never on hand to correct errors.) Nor did I realize that attack by protégé-proxy was equally standard.

D5 Question in passing: would a clique with confidence in the evidence for its position behave this way? Would it for 20 years evade repeated suggestions of face-to-face panel discussion or debate? (The most public pre-DIO debate challenge is published right in the AmerJPhysics: Rawlins 1987 p.236.)

D6 Two decades ago, O.Gingerich was involved in the AAAS scientists-vs.-Velikovsky bearbaiting episode (which, for courage, matched the US invasion of Grenada); thus, we conclude that he is not unwilling on principle to endorse or even arrange such debates. (Likewise, O. Neugebauer published, in Isis, a review of Velikovsky — but would not answer R.Newton.) Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to conclude (from OG’s approval of debate with V but not with RN & DR) that OG is not unafraid of debate when he knows the evidence is in favor of orthodoxy. (One recalls that during the Watergate impeachment days: those who knew the law were openly saying that the Nixon defense lawyers’ strategy only made sense if the defense believed its client was guilty.) Another question is raised by this contrast: does OG believe that Velikovsky is worth more attention than the leading world controversy in ancient astronomy? [The Ptolemy controversy’s heaviness-primitiveness was later...

D14 Recovering Hipparchos’ Last Lost Lustrous Star

In DIO 4.1 §3 fn 20, DR suggested that the Ancient Star Catalog’s star PK964 (listed magnitude m = 3) was either δ Cen (pre-extinction magnitude m = 2.60) or μ Vel (m = 2.69). I there reasoned that PK964 was probably the former, because that hypothesis required but one error by the cataloger.

I now realize that, while connecting PK964 to μ Vel indeed requires presuming 2 errors, these errors are not independent — to the contrary, they’re the very same error: an easy confusion of step-number with step-interval.1 (Similar modern confusion-opportunity: an apartment’s 5th floor is usually only 4 floors above ground.) The sole difference in the 2 mistakes is the reference frame: equatorial in one case, ecliptical in the other. As previously noted (idem), δ Cen is already accounted for by star PK906, whereas μ Vel is the only star brighter than 3rd magnitude certainly missing2 from the Catalog. Details follow.

Zenith distance $Z$ was pretty accurately recorded as 75°, giving (for Cape Praszonesi’s presumed 35°/56 latitude) declination $\delta = -39^\circ 1/6$. The rt.asc $\alpha$ was observed3 as 9h7/12 — and thus recorded as 10° step plus 8°/3/4. This was erroneously converted to pure degrees by addition: $\alpha = 10^\circ 15^\prime + 8^\circ 3/4 = 158^\circ 3/4$. Transformation to ecliptic coords (using Hipparchan obliqui $e = 23^\circ 1/12$) would rigorously produce longitude $\lambda = 179^\circ 56^\prime & 0^\prime$ & latitude $\beta = -43^\circ 44^\prime$. Anciently, this was: $\lambda = 13^\circ 15^\prime$ step plus 0° & $\beta = -43^\circ 3/4$. Conversion of $\lambda$’s steps into degrees involved the same mistake (as for $\alpha$), so $\lambda = 13^\circ 15^\prime = 195^\circ$. And Hipparchos’ position for PK964 is in fact: $\lambda = 195^\circ & \beta = -43^\circ 3/4$.

This reconstruction provides a neat resolution of the last major identity-anomaly in Hipparchos’ great Catalog.

[Note added 1995.] Incidentally, it now goes without saying that the Ancient Star Catalog is Hipparchos’. (As proved in 1977 by R. Newton Crime of Claudius Ptolemy & DR in Skinq 2.1:62 p.73 n.6.) The curious 1989 paper4 of Fomenko et al, which dates the Catalog to the Arabic period, is inexplicably cited (as a solid contribution) in the otherwise high-quality paper, van Dalen 1994 (n.1). The Fomenko et al paper’s incredible date is based upon several lapses of procedure, most notably the authors’ mistaken use (when going from their Table 1 to Table 3) of the Catalog’s 900 AD obliquity-error (21°5′: cited at their p.225) as a constant in time. (Since the 900 AD obliquity was 23°35′, this error corresponds to the zodiac-cataloger’s asterole-obliquity-setting = 23°56′ — a result already derived by DR & published in 1982 at eq.27 of PASP 94(359).) Give the multiplicity of indiscia (DIO 2.3 §8 [C22]) showing that the Catalog is Hipparchos’, it is now way past time that the Catalog controversy be regarded as concluded. To yet continue stubbornly flying in the face of these evidences is to carry unfalsifiability to kook dimensions — and to raise the question of whether it is worth discussing historical issues at all. (Of course, one may easily understand why certain parties might wish to render reason and competence irrelevant to the evolution of ideas in this field.) For, if even the most logically & evidentially one-sided controversies are to be decreed5 as indefinitely irresolvable, then — why investigate anything?

1 In ancient spherical astronomy, a “step” equals 15°. See idem.
2 Excluding stars whose light was either much dimmed by atmospheric extinction or totally blocked by the horizon.
3 This is about 15° high. There are other Catalog errors this large, especially in the south (e.g., the latter stars of Cen). But it must be noted that the $\delta$ Cen hypothesis requires presuming less $\alpha$ observational error (6° high). In g-circ measure, both errors are ording 1°.
4 A.Fomenko, V.Kalashnikov, & G.Nosovsky Acta Applicandae Mathematicae 17:203 (1989). (The paper fallaciously damns the same 1987 study by Yu.Efremov & E.Pavlovskaia, and ignores an independent finding [Rawlins 1982] of the Cataloger’s epoch. [And site. Higher precision at DIO 4.1 §3.] I understand that this citation was prompted not by van Dalen but by a Muffa-circle advisor.
5 E.g., by N.Swerdlow. (See DIO 2.3 §8 [C20&C25].)
Naked Came the Arrogance

Shunfight at the 0G Corral: Portrait of an Archon
The Reality Behind Academe’s Free-Discourse Pose
The Mufa at the Dawn of the Ptolemy Controversy

A The PRIMO Principle


A2 My inductive ability bears a debt to their wisdom which I cannot adequately measure, let alone express. But, remarkably, not one of these eminent thinkers’ publications ever mentioned the PRIMO truth-determination principle — a principle that over-rides ALL the refined-scholarship rules and guides which naively earnest university students (such as DR) have foolishly spent years of labor (and thousands of dollars) to learn.

A3 This precious principle is marvellously simple & clear — and it positively resolves any controversy. Instantly. No matter how complex the facts may be or seem to be. The PRIMO-principle is simply this: the side that’s telling the truth is the one with the most money. (Note that the PRIMO-principle is indistinguishable from the way TV ’snewts decide truth for us: whoever’s selling Truth best is telling it best.)

A4 History-of-science’s Princeton Institute-Mufa-O. Gingerich [PRIMO] combine has been teaching this principle to DR for two decades. (A kindness which is due to the combine’s recognition that, in a soft field [DIO 4.2 fn 46] like History-of-science, the PRIMO-principle is the only principle.) But, unfortunately for this distinguished cult, it is dealing with an invincibly-unteachable pupil: a political moron.

A5 And Mufosi have their own learning difficulties. Even aside from inability to recognize compelling discoveries by those who dissent from Muffthought, they also have yet to perceive the unattractiveness of gang-bully cohesiveness. There is an admirable Biblical saying (Exodus 23.2), long a favorite of Bertrand Russell’s family (of DR):

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

B Ringo Newton, There Ain’t Room Enough on This Here Planet for the Two of Us

Few followers of the Ptolemy Controversy have the faintest idea just how long ago the Mufa began hating and sandering the work of the highly capable and respected physicist R. Newton. (You don’t know what started Animal House’s food-fight?)

1 You know you’re getting on in years if these are your first identifications: [a] Ringo was an OK Corral-gunfight baddie, [b] Madonna refers to Jesus’ stage-mom, [c] the biggest Aug. 16 celebrity-death was Babe Ruth’s, [d] Sitzkrieg was the 1939-1940 “phony war”. (You don’t know what started Animal House’s food-fight?)

2 Readers not familiar with the Mufa are referred to §§F1-F2.

10 If it is under 20 pp, DIO would be happy to publish Aaboe’s attack on R. Newton. (This suggestion is not purely libertarian; I would expect Aaboe’s comments to contain worthwhile material & reflections.)

11 Still a sickness at S&T, I’m sorry to report. On the other hand, it must be said: whatever Joe’s oddities, he was a marvel of astronomical lore, and I miss his ‘Scrapbook’ entries in S&T. (See Sam Goldstein’s 1987 appreciation in JHA 108:147. I even agree with Sam’s choice of Joe’s best entry: on solar oblateness.) He has been a comfort to me that, at the time of his justly-lamented death, we were back on good terms. (Reconciliation was triggered by a funny incident — cited at DIO 1.1 fn 9A — which Joe took in just the right spirit. We remained friends from then until his death.)

12 DR had criticized S&T for its ludicrously-supersitious censorial policy of refusing ads for the nutty Velikovsky journal Prima, so an enraged S&T had tried to wreak vengeance by putting in print a review (1979/738) implying that DR’s new polar book, Peary... Fiction was unreliable. (To JA’s dismay, no one paid the slightest attention to his piece. Fiction is now regarded as a standard in its field, cited even in Encyclopaedia America’s Peary entry.) S&T then added to its glory by: [1] suppressing DR’s reply to the review, and [2] refusing (for all time subsequently) to besmirch S&T’s pages by citing DR’s work. E.g., S&T has for nearly a decade suppressed the fact (provably known to S&T: its letter of 1987/3/2) that the famous compact refraction-correction format (now found in top astronomical books & navigational manuals the world over) was invented & (1982 April) first published by DR. (See Rawlins 1982C eqs 8A & 8B. For improved DR refraction & extinction formulas [of professional-level accuracy], see DIO 2.1 fn 17 of other fnn there cited.) In 1986 July, S&T’s (whose Editor co-publishes with Gingerich) instead credited S&T 72:170 the format to two later scholars. Apparently, in certain archonal circles (not exclusive to Cambridge MA), if one simply doesn’t like an inventor, no consciences are bothered when his due credit is stolen for a decade. (If now independently confronted with DR’s priority, I suspect that agile S&T will go in another direction: losing interest in the invention’s worth.)

13 Sherman also offered (1865/4/19) the most admirably generous peace in the history of warfare.

14 But see DIO 1.3 fn 223 for citation of a key observation (which I believe should be credited to OG) that helps to narrow options for alibiers of Ptolemy’s fakes. (See also where OG was right against an incorrect DR theory: DIO 11.2 p.30, even if evidently by politically-inspired accident: DIO 1.1 fn 9.)
Another pre-Controversy happenstance: around 1974-5, I became interested in the modern Media-hustled revival of astrology and other occultist garbage (ESP, UFOs, etc). CSICOP’s Ray Hyman warned me that learning the particulars of astrology would be useless since believers were invulnerable to evidence. And Ray was right. But the excursion turned out to be a twofold godsend when I later got into the Ptolemy Controversy. [a] I had learned that astrologers need only three manuals: [i] astronomical tables, [ii] geographical tables, and [iii] an interpretational rulebook. When I later noticed that Ptolemy’s prime works were just these three (Almajest, Geographical Directory, & Tetrabiblos), I gained an unsubtle clue as to his goals & priorities. [b] It was helpful to have experienced, firsthand, just how remotely far-out cranks’ evidence-immunity can go; so, fortunately, my later encounters with the Mufa were something less than a complete shock.

But, for me, this history actually starts in 1965-6, when I first got to know the Johns Hopkins University Hist.sci Dep’t and its history-of-physics professors Kargon & Spencer; the latter often repeated (even on the athletic field) his favorite saying:

We don’t want the history of physics to be written by senile physicists.

The proprietary nature of this guiding principle afforded useful later insight (§G9) into the actual psychological mechanics underlying the purported reasons for Hist.sci resentment of the terrible bottom line of the Ptolemy Controversy: mere physicists, not Hist.sci specialists, discovering some of the prime secrets of ancient astronomy.

[a] Always friendly in a personal way with the JHU Hist.sci crowd in those days, I later played alot of softball with Kargon on the Hist.sci team. In 1984, about the time I’d become a political untouchable in the eyes of the JHA Editor, Kargon suddenly concluded that my facile switch-hitting habits were “obnoxious”. (His newfound partiality was especially weird since Kargon was the first Hist.sci person who had warned me of the peculiar bigotries of the Mufa, and had described Hoskin to me as just a power-operator who was trying to get his then-young journal off the ground.) Considering the sharpness of language Kargon had routinely used when discussing other scholars (e.g., Aaboe; and see DIO 2.3 9 §F1), I was not especially surprised at the tone of his disapproval of DR. (Another possible factor in his alienation: I had around this time informed Kargon that the Ptolemy Controversy was becoming a lesson-rich war of two worlds — scientists vs. Hist.sci. From this time, a one-sided chill settled into our relations.)

The first detailed R.Newton papers proving Ptolemy’s fakery were published (1973-1974) in the Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society. (All Fellows of London’s Royal Astronomical Society receive its house journal, the QIRAS, as a perc of RAS fellowship. That is how I first heard of the Ptolemy Controversy.)

Without reading the articles carefully at the time, I presumed that there must be something to the exposure. But about the only specific datum I initially absorbed from the material was the information that R.Newton worked nearby. (I lived in Baltimore, less than an hour’s drive away.)

On 1974/11/15, I met with the wellknown Harvard & Smithsonian astronomer & historian Owen Gingerich at Goddard right after he had delivered a talk there, and since JHU-U is very near Goddard, I asked OG (as we chatted in the right half of the audience area of the hall) whether R.Newton had also come to hear the talk. At the sound of R.Newton’s name, OG reacted with a strange look, replying: no, but-why-do-you-ask? I

7 Astrologers’ geographical manuals are not (like, e.g., Strabo) concerned with descriptive geography, but are mere lists of longitudes and latitudes. Ptolemy’s “Geography” (Geographical Directory) is of the latter type: c.8000 sites’ longitudes & latitudes, by far the largest such compendium surviving from antiquity.
8 The criticism of Aaboe was that his œuvre was inappropriately slim. This represents a failure to understand that Aaboe’s work is largely inductive (not merely slapping together a biographical piece on someone: the standard Hist.sci project); thus, a huge amount of mental effort will inevitably produce just a few pages of results, but such results may represent much more novelty & intelligence than the Hist.sci norm.
9 I had first met OG on 1974/2/11.

Written on either Dec.3 or Dec.4, 1968. That is, either on the day of the call or the next day. This note was added Feb.21, 1969.

The proprietary nature of this guiding principle afforded useful later insight (§G9) into the actual psychological mechanics underlying the purported reasons for Hist.sci resentment of the terrible bottom line of the Ptolemy Controversy: mere physicists, not Hist.sci specialists, discovering some of the prime secrets of ancient astronomy. [a] Always friendly in a personal way with the JHU Hist.sci crowd in those days, I later played alot of softball with Kargon on the Hist.sci team. In 1984, about the time I’d become a political untouchable in the eyes of the JHA Editor, Kargon suddenly concluded that my facile switch-hitting habits were “obnoxious”. (His newfound partiality was especially weird since Kargon was the first Hist.sci person who had warned me of the peculiar bigotries of the Mufa, and had described Hoskin to me as just a power-operator who was trying to get his then-young journal off the ground.) Considering the sharpness of language Kargon had routinely used when discussing other scholars (e.g., Aaboe; and see DIO 2.3 9 §F1), I was not especially surprised at the tone of his disapproval of DR. (Another possible factor in his alienation: I had around this time informed Kargon that the Ptolemy Controversy was becoming a lesson-rich war of two worlds — scientists vs. Hist.sci. From this time, a one-sided chill settled into our relations.)

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B7  (The force of this threat was largely negated later in the conversation. It appears, still according to Gingerich, that Neugebauer is feeding the Babylonian occultation data to a graduate student at Yale as fast as he establishes it. Thus I would not have any access to the data before the astronomical analysis of it is published in any case. Once it is published, I cannot be denied access, whatever access may be worth at that point. I refrained from pointing out to Gingerich that this information negated his threat.)

B8  In sum of this part of the conversation, the Gingerich-Yale-Brown axis intends to exercise control over my publishing in the field of ancient astronomical observations. It was not clear to me whether I was being forbidden to publish only about Ptolemy or whether I was being forbidden to publish at all.

B9  The conversation closed with reference to my claim that there are errors in the [D.Menzel-O.Gingerich] Preface to the [1962] Dover edition of Oppolzer’s Canon. In my opinion, he continued to show the same lack of comprehension [C12] of the subject matter in conversation that he did in the Preface. He tried to maintain that Fotheringham’s big paper (1920) on solar eclipses is full of references to the Canon, and that he knew this because he had just finished rereading the paper. A look through Fotheringham’s paper shows that Gingerich’s claim is false. He tried to maintain that the whole line of work of Fotheringham and others on finding the secular accelerations was inspired and made possible by the Canon. He seemed to be ignorant of the work before the Canon was published, such as Newcomb’s 1875 paper, and he also did not know that Martin at Yale is re-analysing the occultation data used by Newcomb. He felt that the error about the saros has been made so often that it has become correct, and that it is beyond all question that he was correct in his usage of the word. [Note by DR: I side with OG on this one.]

B10 (According to the biographical sketch in American Men of Science (does this list any women?), Gingerich has been a lecturer in the history of science at Harvard several different years. This accounts for his feeling that he is an expert on the subject.)

B11 The timing of Gingerich’s phone call with respect to the [1968/11/25] letter from Nature, and the uncompromising nature of his call and of that letter, suggest an hypothesis: Gingerich, or a friend of his, blocked publication in Nature by writing a letter to them warning them that my papers on the subject are no good. He received notice of their action, and knew that I had received and been “softened up” by the rejection, and chose that time to call.

B12 I am trying to test whether Gingerich indeed speaks for the Yale department by a letter I have written asking for information about the dissertation.

B13 Since Gingerich is at SAO [Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory], I would expect that he can and will block publication in the Smithsonian Contributions to Astrophysics. Further, Dumcombe will almost surely turn to this axis (such as Clemence at Yale) for review of the big paper [see [B16], so there is a good chance that it will be rejected by the Naval Observatory. I must probably find an alternate source of publication and try to manage for review by [Sir Harold] Jeffreys . . . or some other charitable soul.

B14 RN later added the following comments, entitled “Explanation of the Accompanying Notes on a Telephone Conversation with Owen Gingerich”, dated 1980/11/17.

C God Save the Grand Inquisitor

C1 At DIO 1.2 §11, it was recounted that, on 1976/11/12, a few days after DR mailed Science the first précis of his least-squares analysis of the Ancient Star Catalog, a man phoned c.8PM for DR from Cambridge (Mass) and — finding DR not at home — grilled DR’s wife for details regarding his person & plans. The caller did not leave his name. However, in light of the foregoing and the common factor of post-submission timing (see §§B1, B11, & B18): is anyone now incapable of inducing the caller’s identity?

C2 Since there are those who wish to blame the unpleasantness of the Ptolemy Controversy upon DR, the reader should be reminded that the foregoing shunning-obscenity (§B) occurred several years before DR had even entered the Controversy. (See also the reception of DR’s occasional attempts at amiability: DIO 1.1 fn 20 & §fn 7, DIO 2.1 §fn 20&31. [Note especially the 1st reference & here at fn §B6: the almost comical perversity of professedly religious OG’s record-setting apogee in vileness-space. No self-respecting fiction-editor would permit such behavior even in a storybook character.])

6 Dated 1976/11/1, the document was the first to reveal DR’s by-now-well-known absent-error-waves test — which flanks both Ptolemy & the Mufa: see fn 34.