Mission Critical: What Does My Horoscope Tell Me?

At face value my horoscope should everything the celestial bodies have in store for me. I checked mine today. It prophesized the following:

“You may have recently inherited either some money or some free time. This is a real gift, and if invested wisely, it could lead to some important self-discoveries”.

Now I’ll say that both today and recently I neither have money or time by virtue of this celestial “inheritance” or from work, or from any Mars in retrograde or what have you. This is not the objection I draw. Mine is that by making such bold assertions and in such confidence as if it was true or based in fact, horoscope.com in all its ethereal wisdom did not tell me why this is or how they or I know it.

Dr. Ware gave me an article by Karl Popper –a revered 20th century philosopher of science- which argues that “the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability” (Popper, 1963).

We’ll treat the horoscope as a theory, like a scientific claim. Let’s focus on its falsifiability. The theory quantifies itself on ambiguity. The money, the time, and even the timeframe are all conditional to “may”. So how does this affect falsifiability?

If this “may” is true then an “if” is true, then a “could” is true. The point here is that it makes no real claim. All it says are possibilities without true assertion. Assertion looks like you DID recently inherit money... it WILL lead to important things”. The argument is not easily falsified by virtue of a lack of it arguing anything at all. All it argues is something “may” have happened, which is true no matter what!

It’s also not inherently testable due to its ambiguity. Given that knowledge of a theory makes its confirmation easier, what if I thought back to payday which was last week? Wouldn’t this make it true? Or what if I waited? Maybe then it would be true? We see
that there is no viable method of testing the theory as is, how is, and where is. There are only methods for testing the theory under circumstances which would make it true.

Horoscope.com also told me that because I’m a cancer I’m prickly and standoffish as well as sensitive which is not wrong, and they’d likely argue that because I’m a cancer I have these beliefs which confirms their aggregate theory about all our loci of control being dependent on stars and such. This is called circular reasoning, which is something we can talk about later. The image I used for this is from when I camped in Vermont a few weekends ago.

Sources:


https://www.horoscope.com/zodiac-signs/cancer

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