

The Psychology of Astrology

Part 1: Astronomy and Astrology

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Do the planets, on their natural paths, affect the multiple dimensions of the individual as well as our personal and collective destinies?

Solar-system astronomy forms the bare bones of astrology. If you would like to understand astrology's relevance to the modern era, it is important that you have a sound and very practical knowledge about our place in the galaxy. How the galaxy works as well as the history of astrology. As an astrologer-nurse, I offer the first in a series of articles about the ancient study of astrology.

In Part I will give you a basic understanding of how astronomy and astrology (originally one word) work together. These papers are a compilation of old thoughts that I learned through books, the Internet and my private teachers in astrology. Over the course of the last five years, I have experimented and learned great deal about how to use this symbolic art in my nursing practice and my methods are but one way to use this tool.

The following brief history of astrology was just this kind of information that intrigued me in the first few minutes of my initial astrology lesson. It is my hope that your interest will also be piqued and you will have a yearning desire to study the sacred heavens with the same curiosity as the ancient holy people long ago.

As long as 6,000 years ago, Chaldean priests used watchtowers to make maps of the skies. They charted what they saw on clay tablets recording the motions of the Sun and the Moon with extraordinary accuracy. Astronomy and astrology, no doubt, began out of a curiosity and a belief that the heavens influenced the Earth and everything upon it. Early astronomer-astrologers made associations between what they saw in the sky and what was happening upon the Earth. I can imagine that the Moon must have attracted the most attention at first, given its obvious effects on sexuality. Next came the realization that among the fixed stars, which seemed to move across the sky but were stationary to each other, there were five "stars" that seemed to have an illogical motion. Some move slowly about the heavens and others appeared to dart between the others. These five bodies revolved about the Earth in the same direction as the fixed stars but took a narrower course that came to be known as the *ecliptic* (that loops around the Earth at an angle of approximately 23 degrees to the equator). Eventually, astrologers divided the ecliptic belt into 12 sections, naming each after the constellation of fixed stars that fell within each section. The zodiac wheel (below) is a map of the sky with these 12 sections charted. Imagine overlaying this map upon the sky lying upon your back. The ancients made their associations and calculations, and over the course of time, realized that when a planet passed through one of the sections, babies born at that time-shared common characteristics and that certain events were more likely to occur.

For the next, 4,500 years or more, astrologer-astronomers studied the solar system and its apparent relationship to events on the Earth. Egypt and Greece contributed to the theory. For example, Claudius Ptolemy, compiled a catalogue of 1,022 stars leaving us the earliest surviving astrological textbook, the *Tetrabiblos*, written between 139 and 161 AD.

Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, it probably never occurred to astronomers not to study astrology as well. Sixteenth century astronomers Galileo, Kepler, Copernicus and Tycho Grahe, all regarded astrology as an important part of their work. The break came with the understanding that the Sun and not the Earth was the center of the solar system. It must have shocked our ancestors to discover that the universe was not exactly as they thought it was. It was during this “age of enlightenment” that there was increasing doubt that the distant planets affected life on Earth. Very soon, only a few gifted people were willing to risk heresy to carry forth astrology’s treasure trove of information. Also because of them, the study of astrology has seen much refinement over the years.

The discovery of Uranus and Neptune first sighted at the middle of the eighteenth century, seemed to further damage astrology’s claims. In 1930 and 1977 respectively, two tiny planets, Pluto and Chiron (half planet and half comet) were added to our knowledge of the solar system. On one hand, the scientific materialists saw this as proof that astrology was invalid. One might compare this to Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of the blood and how it changed the course of medicine. Astrologers, on the other side, have welcomed the new discoveries because it has filled in certain informational gaps.

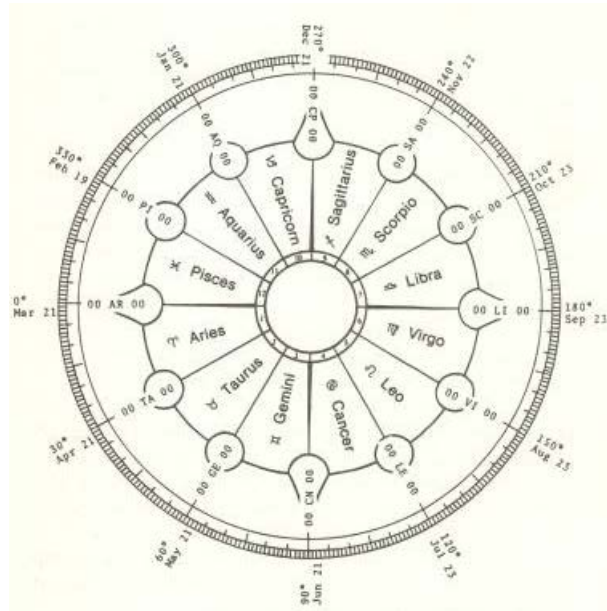
Because of their brightness and movement, five of the planets...Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn have been known since man began looking at the heavens. Four planets...Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and most recently Chiron were discovered after the invention of the telescope.

The interest in astrology died away until it was revived early in the twentieth century. Those interested in astrology in relation to psychology fueled this new interest. Currently, astrology helps us see a bigger picture of ourselves in relation to the cosmos. Some feel that it also may help us direct the events in our life with greater success.

The Zodiac Wheel

The solar system is can be likened to a gigantic plate spinning through space. The planets revolve around the Sun, the star of greatest significance, and on the same plane as the earth. When observed from the Earth, the planets seem to move in a fairly restricted pattern. There are twelve signs of the zodiac is all set within this path. The constellations of stars or signs are a way of naming the 30-degree segments of the sky within which the Sun, Moon and planets move.

The zodiac wheel (pictured), which is also called the wheel of the year, was originally a device for measuring time by particular agricultural activities relevant to certain seasons of the year. Beginning at zero degrees the Sun enters Aries, on March 21st the astrological New Year. It continues counterclockwise in 30 degrees or approximately one-month segments charting the position of the Sun in the sky throughout the year. The wheel also charts the progression of the equinoxes. Eventually, it became involved in the classification of personalities and predicting future events. The first known personal horoscope was drawn up in 410 BC, and the zodiac certainly existed by 500 BC. Evidence indicates that the modern zodiac was in place long before the birth of Christ. Plato wrote about astrology in 365 BC when the signs were thought to be ruled by archetypal gods and goddesses and were linked to myths from Babylon, Egypt and Assyria.



Psychological Energies and the Elements

Today astrological interpretations relate to archetypal mythological concepts that form a background link to human behavior and motivation. Humanistic astrology uses the zodiac of signs as a basic frame of reference because it represents the twelve phases of the cyclic relationship of the Sun to the Earth. It symbolizes the precession of the seasons and the cycle of organic life on this planet.

The zodiac as a whole has been described as being representative of the macrocosm, the Heavenly Man of which our Earth is but a small cell. Every sign represents a release of archetypal energy for the creation of human expression. In *Astrology of the Personality*, Dane Rudhyar refers to the zodiac: “It is an abstraction and a symbol, just as the Holy City with its twelve gates...in Biblical allegory...is an abstraction and a symbol The zodiac is the wall that separates all inhabitants of the Earth’s surface from the universe. Symbolically, this wall has twelve gates, twelve signs of the zodiac, twelve channels through which universal energies flow.”

There are four periods of the year symbolized in the zodiac. The equinoxes (vernal spring and autumnal) and the solstices (summer and winter). The equinoxes are the points of the greatest momentum and repolarization, when the days and nights are equal. The solstices are the points of least momentum, when the days and nights are not equal and the Sun is found to the furthestmost north or south. This is when the polarities

of life are thought to be felt in the purest way. These periods of the year have within them, the four elements of the Earth: Fire, Earth, Air and Water.

FIRE is the life-giving and life-destroying raw creative power of the creator of the universe. It symbolizes the chaos before creation and was understood by the Greek philosophers to be the primal substance of which the cosmos was made.

On the psychological level, fire symbolizes the power of the imagination to generate a reality from within and our lightning quick intuitive abilities. Fire is a symbol of our higher creative power at work in the universe and reflect our aspirations toward a spiritual state, which transcends the limits of our mortal existence.

The Fire signs of the zodiac are Aries, Leo and Sagittarius, which is archetypal energy expressed with color, drama and creative intensity. People with an abundance of fire in their natal astrology may show a marked impatience with earthly limits but if they live up to their potential, they can use the power of the imagination to transform these limits so that the world is filled with the magic of their fiery world within.

EARTH is the densest of the four elements. The earth and all that lives and grows on it form the astonishingly creative intelligence of the life force. Everything is born, grows, matures and dies according to natural laws that govern all living things.

Psychologically, the element of the earth reflects the perception of the senses and the wisdom of direct experience. Earth is a symbol of the five senses, and the world of the earth signs is tactile, sensually potent, self-disciplined and self-reliant.

The Earth signs of the zodiac are Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, which express its archetypal energy in a slow determined, tenacious and gentle unhurried ways. People with a predominance of earth express themselves in sensual ways, face life as it is and seek concrete outlets that anchor their human drives in the structures of the material world.

AIR is the intellectual powers of how we relate to each other and the world. Air is understood to embody the elusive brilliance of the mind and spirit. It is capricious and eternally in flux, yet higher and more noble than the mundane concerns of earthly life.

Psychologically, the element of air reflects the human capacity for understanding, the ability to conceptualize and plan. The mind is not confined to earthly concerns or instinctual limits. It views life objectively and forms meaningful patterns, which can dissolve the imprisoning emotional bondage of the past.

The three air signs are Gemini, Libra and Aquarius. Each distill their mental ideas in different ways and form concepts of how the world should be. They all measure reality against an ideal in order to establish whether a person, object or action is appropriate. The mind has the ability to justify what is fair before what is easy or instinctively gratifying.

The air signs bring our culture forward in order to transform and refine our animal nature so that it serves the human family.

WATER is the element of the vast oceans from which our life on this planet began. It is constantly shifting and can be both repellent and enticing. The rhythms of our oceans reflect the rhythms of our bodies as it relates to the cycles of the Moon.

Psychologically, the boundless realm of water symbolizes the human heart. Water is an image of the depths that lie within and conceal our darkness and our light. As the origin of all life, water embodies the collective psyche from which every individual emerges. It reflects the primal emotions, which we try to take through the efforts of the rational mind.

Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces are the three water signs reflect the shifting world of human feeling that are expressed through dreams, mystical longings and our experience of unity with all of creation. People with a predominance of water signs in their natal chart are emotionally sensitive to the needs of others and feel a deep connection to all of life. This sign can display a wide spectrum of human emotion from imaginative vision and spirituality to the destructiveness of alcohol, drugs and madness.

Part II

In the next issue, Part II delves into the archetypal psychological energies of the planets and how they are thought to express energy onto the earth and all of its creation. I will discuss how I use this information in my life and my private practice.

References

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