

Astrology

By Marcia Montenegro (a former astrologer)

Founder: No one individual.

Founding Date: No specific date; very early in mankind's history.

Definition: A method of using the position of the planets, sun and moon at the time and place of a person's birth as signposts to explain a person's character, life and destiny.

Philosophical Basis: The occult belief, "As above, so below," which holds that man and the universe are connected by a mystical force. Therefore, man is a microcosm of the patterns of the planets at the time of his birth, and the planets reflect one's inner self.

INTRODUCTION - THE CHART

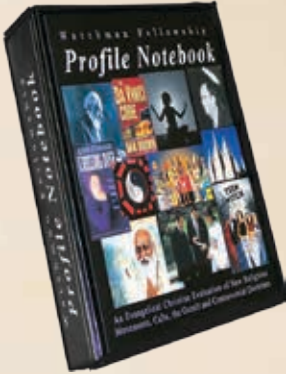
According to astrologers, a chart which can be plotted for any individual may be used to reveal his character and explain his life's path. The chart is calculated with mathematical formulas based on the local time of birth and the latitude and longitude of the birthplace. There are three main components of the chart: the planets (and the sun and moon), the zodiac signs, and the Twelve Houses. The chart contains the 360 degrees of all 12 zodiac signs (each one being 30 degrees), and the planets are placed around the chart according to the degree they are in at birth. For example, one's sun could be at 19 degrees of Virgo, the moon at 24 degrees of Pisces, Venus at 6 degrees of Leo, etc.

The zodiac signs are not the actual constellations, but rather a fixed zodiac belt projected around the earth against which the planets are moving, as seen from the earth. The planets represent people and aspects of the emotional, mental or spiritual self. The zodiac signs describe the way in which the planets are limited or expanded. The houses represent various areas such as self, home, marriage, career, etc. Thus, the planets are "who" or "what," the zodiac signs are "how" and the houses are "where." Additionally, there are several types of angles (number of degrees between the planets) which must be considered. For example, ninety degrees, a square, is considered difficult or challenging; 60 degrees, a sextile, is interpreted as harmonious.

The process of reading present and future influences is called "updating a chart." One way this is done is by comparing the present movement of planets to the birth chart, a method called "transits." Another method, the progressed chart, is calculated with each day after birth equaling a year in real life. Plotting the position of the planets, say thirty days after one's date of birth, would foretell events, influences, etc. for the thirtieth year of one's life.

Three types of astrological charting include the Personal Chart for an individual; Mundane astrology for an event, public figure, country or city; and Horary astrology formulated to answer specific questions such as, "Should I quit my job?" or "Will John propose?" based on the time the question is asked. Although based on similar principles, the methods of interpretation for these types of charts are somewhat different.

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HISTORY

There is no clear evidence of how astrology began, but most historians believe that the Chaldeans were the first to develop it. Speculation is that the rhythmic movement of certain celestial bodies—the planets, moon and sun—in contrast to the relatively fixed positions of distant stars seemed purposeful. Correlating their positions at certain times with events on earth seemed to confirm the belief that the positions and events were cause and effect. Therefore the planets were ascribed powers and divinity; they were seen as gods or as the homes of gods. They were given names and personalities and said to “rule” certain constellations. Today Mars is considered to rule Aries, Mercury to rule Gemini, the Sun to rule Leo, etc.

Eventually astrology spread to other areas of the world, developing differently in the East. In the West, after first resisting astrology, Greece later absorbed it. Because of the Greek emphasis on individuality, astrology became personalized for the common man. The word “horoscope” comes from the Greek “hora” for hour, and “skopos” for watcher, meaning literally a “watcher of the hour.”

TRADITIONAL ASTROLOGY

Astrology was fatalistic until the middle of the 20th century. Until the discoveries of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto (1781, 1846 and 1930 respectively), interpretations were restricted to the inner planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, in addition to the sun and the moon, often known as the two “lights.” The planets symbolized very specific persons or things in the person’s life, and the emphasis was on what would likely happen in the future. The chart delineated a personality and course already ordained by the planetary influences. Aspects of the chart were seen as either beneficial or adverse.

A major spiritual influence on late 19th century astrology which continues to shape astrology today was Theosophy, a belief system with origins in Hinduism, founded in the 1800’s by the occult seer, Madame Helena Blavatsky. A follower of Theosophy, Alice Bailey (1880-1949), added other “channelled” information from her spirit guide, D.K., with her book, *Esoteric Astrology*. She promoted Reincarnation, the belief that one returns after death many times in order to evolve; a spiritual hierarchy of Ascended Masters who guide those on earth to higher spiritual understanding; and Pantheism, the belief that god is all and all is god. Thus, everyone has an inherent divine nature and is evolving toward godhood.

Many of these ideas, forerunners of today’s New Age Movement, were developed for chart interpretation by prominent astrologer Isabel Hickey (who died in the 1960’s). She placed an emphasis on reading one’s karmic lesson (lessons from previous lives) in the chart, and on spiritual interpretations.

CONTEMPORARY ASTROLOGY

The major influence on the practice of astrology today, aside from New Age spirituality, is humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Many astrologers are also practicing psychologists. Psychology has smashed the rigidity and fatalism of earlier traditional astrology. Interpretations are more flexible, and chart symbols are viewed as having both negative and positive possibilities, rather than either beneficial or adverse. Thus it is inaccurate to say astrologers believe they are ruled by the planets. They see the chart as a blueprint for the self and soul, a pattern or set of possibilities and choices that can be rearranged in various ways by the self-aware individual, who thus becomes the master of his/her own fate. The core goal is to evolve through self-awareness. Astrology is a tool to “know thyself,” as well as a tool to foretell the future.

Modern astrology eschews readings of a “fixed future” and prefers to call interpretations of the future “forecasting” or “coming trends,” building on the belief that one has choices.

Transpersonal Psychology, a legacy of Carl Jung and others, shaped the chart into a tool for understanding the self as part of the whole, and how the self connects to the collective unconscious, believed to be the common unconscious shared by all humanity. The three outer planets became the “collective planets” since they move so slowly through the chart. They came to symbolize generational influences, as well as unconscious influences on the inner personal planets. The psychological approach was first popularized by Alan Leo (1860-1917), a member of the Theosophical Society. Both humanistic and transpersonal astrology were especially pioneered by one of the most influential astrologers of the 20th century, Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985).

In contemporary astrology, the outer planets are seen as powerful and beyond one’s control. Yet astrologers believe one may choose to use that particular force to learn or reap growth through an uncontrolled event. Sometimes the planetary lesson is to let go of control and merge with the particular energy of that planet. Another highly popular belief is in the concept of synchronicity, the idea that two simultaneous but seemingly unrelated events have a spiritual connection, making the planetary positions at one’s birth a spiritual symbol for that person.

ASTRONOMY VS. ASTROLOGY

Early study of the planets and stars involved scientific observation and measurements as well as divination based on esoteric interpretations. As science developed, astronomy and astrology grew more and more separate, especially during the Age of Reason in the 18th century. Most astrology today is geocentric, plotting the planets’ positions as though they and the sun move around the earth. Due to the precision of the equinox, the zodiac periods have shifted backwards and no longer correspond to the previous 12 periods of time. The dates for the zodiac signs in the horoscope columns are no longer accurate.

ASTROLOGY AND THE OCCULT

Astrology, though scientifically faulty and often incorrect, seems to work often enough to impress both the astrologer and the client. Indeed, astrology frequently seeks to pass itself off as a scientific and psychological tool. Though heavily laden with psychological terminology today, astrology’s roots and current practice are both firmly planted in the occult. The meaning of the word “occult” has to do with things secret or hidden. The occult always seeks hidden meaning below the surface or in patterns that have no apparent meaning beyond the obvious.

Astrology is a form of “divination,” however much its modern adepts may deny that word or concept. Divination is the attempt to use ungodly supernatural forces for the reading of omens to discern “hidden” information. The nature of that information (whether future “events” or only “opportunities,” whether rigidly delineating a character, or merely suggesting “influences and propensities”) is inconsequential. It is all divination.

As a form of divination, astrology is thus clearly occultic in nature. Its practice often brings on supernatural experiences to the reader and the client, and increases interest in other areas of the occult. Astrological symbols are woven into other occultic arts such as tarot cards, palmistry, numerology, the use of sorcery and the Qabalah. Many astrologers are involved in these or other occult practices in addition to their astrological work.

BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Rejecting the concept of a personal relationship of faithful dependence upon a transcendent Creator, astrology seeks ultimate meaning apart from God, from within the created universe—the heavens. The Bible condemns divination and worship of the heavens; astrology is a part of both.

Occult divination and reading omens is condemned in Deuteronomy 18:9-12. Hebrew words often translated as “conjurer” or “soothsayer” includes those who practiced astrology. Astrology originated in worship of the stars and heavens which is condemned in Deuteronomy 4: 19; 17:3 and Acts 7:42. Astrology is not 100% accurate and is therefore not of God, as described in Deuteronomy 18:21-22. Seeking guidance from astrology or any type of divination can replace seeking God for advice. In this connection astrologers and their arts are specifically mentioned and condemned as futile in Daniel 2:27-28 and not only futile but dangerous, in Isaiah 47:12-15. In the latter passage the condemnation is clearly moral as well as pragmatic.

The Astrologer’s conception of truth is based primarily on experience. Seeing astrological charts provide more accurate information than they believe possible by mere chance, astrologers and their clients are convinced their charts are working, based on spiritual, mystical, universal “laws.” They fail to realize there are also demonic spiritual powers whose activities may account for what they suppose to be the operation of these “laws” (Eph. 6:12). Given the spiritual beliefs underlying astrology and the spiritual power working through it, debates, verbal criticisms, even scientific arguments against astrology are almost always futile as evangelistic endeavor. The battle truly is spiritual. Attacks usually serve to confirm to astrologers and their clients that others cannot understand the esoteric importance and meaning of the art due to ignorance. They believe higher spiritual laws explain the success and value of astrology.

Despite the confidence in their art expressed by astrologers, there is often hidden frustration in the fact that constant chart readings and insights usually do not yield more than a temporary improvement or respite (2 Tim. 3:7). The incessant emphasis on self becomes empty. The quest for spiritual satisfaction through self-fulfillment is self-defeating, according to Jesus (Matt. 10:38, 39). Spiritual hunger and thirst can only be quenched truly and permanently by the living water of Jesus Christ (Jn. 4: 14; 7:37-39).

RECOMMENDED READING

Astrology, Do the Heavens Rule our Destiny? by John Ankerburg and John Welton, (1989). The most accurate and well researched Christian resource, but unfortunately out of print. Check your church library or used book store.

New Age Encyclopedia by First Edition. J. Gordon Melton (1990). Detailed history of the influences and major figures in the development of astrology.

Books by astrologers themselves, such as Robert Hand, Stephen Arroyo, Liz Green, Demetra George and Steve Forrest.



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