

# Astrology

**By Marcia Montenegro (former astrologer)**

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**Famous Astrologers:** Nostradamus, William Lilly, Dorotheus of Sidon, Claudius Ptolemy; Alden Taylor Mann, Alice Ann Bailey, Alan Leo, Dane Rudhyar, Isabel Hickey, R. H. Naylor Athena Starwoman and Jeane Dixon.<sup>1</sup>

**Certification:** Astrologers can be certified through the American Federation of Astrologers<sup>2</sup>

**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

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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 (30 degrees each), 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.

## HISTORY

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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.”<sup>3</sup>

In modern times one’s horoscope has been the tool used to bring astrology to the masses. The print medium, newspapers and magazines, attracted readers by publishing horoscopes. The first newspaper horoscope is credited to R. H. Naylor, who was a prominent British astrologer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> In the beginning, the column offered advice for people whose birthday fell the week of the publication. The newspaper wanted a wider reach so in 1937 Naylor began to use “star signs” or “sun signs” which is something that continues to this day. The periods, which will be described later in this *Profile*, were divided into 12 sections that covered the space of the year so that one could see what their horoscope was regardless if it was the week of their birthday or not.<sup>5</sup> This adjustment allowed the horoscope section to grow in popularity. However, the fame of the horoscope has waned over the years. In 1999, the National Science Foundation performed a survey that gauged public attitudes and public understandings. The survey found that, of those queried, “12 percent read their horoscope every day or ‘quite often’; 32 percent answered ‘just occasionally.’”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, only seven percent believed that astrology was “very scientific.”<sup>7</sup> Despite the low numbers the American Federation of Astrologers assert that the popularity has rebounded to as high as 70 million, which equates to 23 percent of the population.<sup>8</sup>

### **Traditional Astrology**

Astrology was fatalistic until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century astrology, which continues to shape astrology today, is Theosophy,<sup>9</sup> a belief system with origins in Hinduism,<sup>10</sup> founded in the 1800s by the occult seer, Madame Helena Blavatsky. A follower of Theosophy, Alice Bailey<sup>11</sup> (1880-1949), added other “channeled” 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 future possibilities.

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<sup>13</sup> and others, shaped the chart into a tool for understanding the self as part of the whole, and how the self interacts with 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 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985).

Even though Pluto has been demoted from its original planetary status to a dwarf planet (or less), it is still used by astrologers since it has traditionally been part of the chart and retains its significance. Pluto is said to be the ruler of the Scorpio, which was once ruled by Mars. When Pluto was discovered, it came to be the ruler of Scorpio while Mars continued to be linked to Aires. 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, a concept from Carl Jung 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**

“Astronomers examine the positions, motions, and properties of celestial objects. Astrology attempts to study how those positions, motions, and properties affect people and events on Earth.”<sup>14</sup> Early study of the planets and stars involved scientific observation and measurements, which developed into the science of astronomy, as well as divination based on esoteric interpretations, which is astrology. As science developed, astronomy and astrology grew more and more separate, especially during the Age of Reason in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The separation between the two, at least in some circles, has grown bitter. One such example is the outspoken atheist Richard Dawkins<sup>15</sup> who stated: “Astrology not only demeans astronomy, shrivelling and cheapening the universe with its pre-Copernican dabblings. It is also an insult to the science of psychology and the richness of human personality.”<sup>16</sup> Most astrology today is geocentric, plotting the planets’ positions as though they and the sun move around the earth. Due to a technical process called the precession of the equinoxes (equinoxes move westward along the ecliptic relative to the fixed stars, opposite to the yearly motion of the Sun along the ecliptic), 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.<sup>17</sup>

## **ASTROLOGY AND THE OCCULT**

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Critics claim astrology is scientifically faulty often produces predictions that are vague or inaccurate. Astrology, however, can be propped up by anecdotal evidence and 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 of 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.

Astrology is a form of divination and is not scientific but is 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 Kabbalah. Many astrologers are involved in these or other occult practices in addition to their astrological work.

## **CHRISTIAN RESPONSE**

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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.

Confirmation bias can influence practitioners to conclude that astrology provides more accurate information than they believe is possible by mere chance. Thus, astrologers and their clients may become convinced their charts are working, based on some spiritual, mystical, universal “laws.” Such anecdotal “evidence” is clearly subjective and inherently unreliable. They may also fail to consider other possible explanations for the phenomena. For example, demonic spiritual powers could account for what they supposed to be the operation of these “laws” (Ephesians 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 Timothy 3:7). The incessant emphasis on self becomes empty. The quest for spiritual satisfaction through self-fulfillment is self-defeating, according to Jesus (Matthew 10:38, 39). Spiritual hunger and thirst can only be quenched truly and permanently by the living water of Jesus Christ (John. 4: 14; 7:37-39).<sup>19</sup>

## Notes

- 1 “Famous Astrologers from the United States,” Ranker, accessed January 9, 2018, <https://www.ranker.com/list/famous-astrologers-from-united-states-of-america/reference>. A separate 4-page Profile has been published on Nostradamus: James Walker, “Nostradamus,” *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2018). A complete collection of Profiles (over 500 pages) is available at [www.watchman.org/notebook](http://www.watchman.org/notebook). The Nostradamus Profile is available at: <http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/nostradamusprofile.pdf>.
- 2 According to the AFA website: “The American Federation of Scientific Astrologers was founded May 4, 1938 at 11:38 a.m. when the organization’s convention was called to order at the Raleigh Hotel in Washington, DC. Incorporation papers were filed simultaneously, and the three incorporators were Ernest A. Grant, Swan A. Erickson and Anna M. Cowan, all of whom were District of Columbia residents. The constitution was amended in 1945, and the name was changed to the American Federation of Astrologers.” Available at: <https://www.astrologers.com/about/>, accessed January 9, 2018.
- 3 Horoscope. Dictionary.com. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/horoscope> (accessed: January 12, 2018).
- 4 McRobbie, Linda Rodriguez. “How Are Horoscopes Still a Thing?” *Smithsonian.com* January 5, 2016, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-are-horoscopes-still-thing-180957701/>, accessed: January 9, 2018.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 National Science Foundation, “Science and Technology: Public Attitudes and Public Understanding: Belief in the Paranormal or Pseudoscience.” Chapter 8 – NSF/NCSES Archives (captured 8/18/2015). Accessed January 2, 2018. <https://wayback.archive-it.org/5902/20150818004135/http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/sei%2Fnd00%2F08%2F08s5.htm#fn37>.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 McRobbie. *How Are Horoscopes Still a Thing?*
- 9 A separate 4-page Profile has been published related to this subject: Viola Larson, “Theosophy,” *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2018): <http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/theosophyprofile.pdf>.
- 10 A separate 4-page Profile has been published related to this subject: C. Fred Smith, “Hinduism,” *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2018): <http://www.watchman.org/staff/jwalker/ProfileHinduism.pdf>.
- 11 A separate 4-page Profile has been published related to this subject: Reba Parker and Timothy Oliver, “Alice Bailey,” *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2018): <http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/alicebaileyprofile.pdf>.
- 12 Taylor, Steve. “Transpersonal Psychology: Exploring the Father Reaches of Human Nature.” *Psychology Today*. September 25, 2015. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/out-the-darkness/201509/transpersonal-psychology>; accessed December 30, 2017.
- 13 Kasprow, Mark C., and Bruce W. Scotton. “A Review of Transpersonal Theory and Its Application to the Practice of Psychotherapy.” *The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research* 8.1 (1999): 12–23.
- 14 Temming, Maria. Astrology vs Astronomy: What’s the Difference? Sky & Telescope. July 14, 2014. <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/astronomy-resources/whats-difference-astrology-vs-astronomy/> accessed January 5, 2018
- 15 A separate 4-page Profile has been published related to this subject: Rhyne Putman, “Richard Dawkins,” *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2018): <http://www.watchman.org/Dawkins.pdf>.
- 16 Dawkins, Richard. *The Real Romance in the Stars*. Independent. December 31, 1995. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-real-romance-in-the-stars-1527970.html>, accessed January 9, 2018.
- 17 Pedro Braganca. “Astrology: Why Your Zodiac Sign and Horoscope Are Wrong,” LiveScience. September 20, 2017. <https://www.livescience.com/4667-astrological-sign.html>, accessed March 13, 2018.
- 18 A separate 4-page Profile has been published related to this subject: James Walker, “Occult,” *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2018): <http://www.watchman.org/profiles/pdf/occultprofile.pdf>.
- 19 For additional information, see: Ankerburg, John and John Weldon. *Astrology, Do the Heavens Rule our Destiny?* New York: ATRI Publishing, 1989 and Chapter 2, “Astrology and the Age of Aquarius,” by Marcia Montenegro. In *On Global Wizardry*, Editor, Peter Jones (2010).



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