

THE EFFECT of PRACTICING ASTROLOGY on INDIVIDUAL HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

by Robert P. Blaschke

So rarely do we see in print information about the impact on the spirit, body, mind and heart of the astrologer the practice of astrology creates, I have often wondered if it is so subjective and personal a subject that it cannot be translated and articulated into meaningful dialogue amongst astrologers. Astrology, as an intuitive art/science, has an objective reality that can be studied, taught, practiced and observed. What is more difficult to discern is the subjective reality of what happens to the astrologer as one practices this science, and how individual temperament colors the interpretive art of approaching each individual birth chart.

What is astrology • The atomic matrix • The astral/material transition

In the study of the writings of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh¹ saints, one can find numerous references to the structure of creation, both seen and unseen. We find in the writings of these illumined souls, based on their personal inner experiences in meditation, evidence of the physical, astral and causal planes of existence, along with mention of purely spiritual regions that lie beyond the three worlds. Astrology, it appears, is the encodement of the atomic matrix² into a geometric symbol system, or celestial language, that identifies and defines the structure of individual and collective reality, as it descends into physical form from its origins in the causal plane as seeds of karma, and through the astral plane as desire, attachment, fear, pleasure or pain. This atomic matrix, which is invisible to the five physical senses that only operate on the material plane, is part of the metaphysical reality that lies behind and beyond the veil of egoistic separateness, and can be seen in two ways: 1) In its lower manifestation through the use of psychedelic drugs, which alter temporarily the individual consciousness so it can perceive the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and akash (ether) in their colors and geometric forms³ (earth-yellow square, water-white crescent, fire-red triangle, air-blue star and ether-white circle), or 2) In its higher manifestation through sustained meditation, and the subduing of the mind, which allows for penetration through the third eye into the astral region, and there one may behold the thousand-petalled lotus⁴, and the origin of the five elements, which are the power sources that sustain the material creation. The atomic matrix of an incarnation of an individual human life is quite literally what we behold as we gaze into a birth chart, seeking meaning and purpose to present to the client. This birth chart is no more or no less than a map of the past, present and future reality of the individual, as encoded by the celestial influences in place at the time of birth. To study and to read a birth chart is to be at the territorial transition from the astral plane to the material plane. What happens to the astrologer from sustained contact with this transitional territory is the inquiry of this article.

What exactly is happening within as you interpret a birth chart?

After some years of the study and practice of astrology, one finds that one's consciousness is changing; that there is a consequence involved in the use of this celestial language. This is most acutely evident when in the astrologer-client environment, and actually interpreting a birth chart in the physical presence of the client. As you become more and more aware of the effect this produces within yourself, the entire approach to interpreting birth charts changes in direct proportion. As celestial translators, astrologers are posed between two worlds, the astral and material, reading from code the symbolism of an individual life as it descends from divine intent into physical manifestation. What happens to you as a result of prolonged contact with this transitional territory? Am I aware that I am being changed as much as the client is by contact with this archetypal language? As my consciousness reads a symbol in the birth chart and translates it into a framework of human experience, am I aware that my relationship with the divine has moved another inch toward integration? What are my responsibilities to myself when I see direct experiential evidence of the enlargement of my consciousness?

The effect of holism

A circle is the most complete representation of the divine that we have. Astrologers, looking at birth charts through the years of their study and practice, are experiencing a shift in consciousness from objective-subjective differentiation to holistic integration. Holism is the experience of the oneness of human existence, and astrological work is the continual exposure to this presence of the divine. The mind of the astrologer is undergoing a subtle, yet evident, transition from earthbound reasoning to divine understanding. Gazing at the circles of horoscopes through the years is producing a consciousness that integrates intuitive right brain perception with analytical left brain scientific reasoning. Who am I becoming as a result of this prolonged contact with holism? How many clients can I see, and have the privilege of reading their life map, before I see my own life through different eyes? Is my perceptual consciousness changing as a result of this work? How do I feel as I become increasingly aware of my loss of separateness from the divine? Am I filled with joy? Am I terrified? What is the client receiving from me as my interpretations of their birth chart filter their way through my altered perceptions? Can I relate to their human experience? Or do I feel lost in the lonely outpost of the celestial translator, suspended between the astral world of the encoded map I am holding in my hands and the material world of the client's human reality?

The effect of transitory and cyclical awareness

Another occupational hazard of the professional astrologer is the repeated reminder of the ephemeral nature of life. After seeing hundreds or thousands of clients, and interpreting the life cycles of their transits and progressions, the astrologer becomes acutely aware that nothing remains the same, ever. What does this sustained awareness do to my mind? How do I view my life, my changes, what I want to remain the same? Can I switch gears to interpret my client's passing cycles, and return to my illusion that my life will stay as I want it to? Good luck! I have found in my practice through the years that I must have daily contact with my relationship to the divine, or it becomes too painful for me to behold the ever-changing realities of my clients and the impact this has on my perception of life. I cannot tell you how many times I have sat before a client in my office, their transits in my hand, and seeing a transiting Saturn conjunction, square or opposition - asking what was happening seven, fourteen or twenty-one years ago and hearing stories of repetitious life experiences that cement my belief that what is not addressed this year will reappear at the next quarter cycle or half cycle. What is the result in my life of observing this reality over and over in the lives of my clients? How do I perceive my own changes, when I am being paid to explain and empathize with another's changes? The astrologer, by practicing astrology, becomes forced into acknowledging the shifting sands of life. This repeated exposure will change you over time, and one must have a personal spiritual core to withstand the constant reminder of the transitory nature of life.

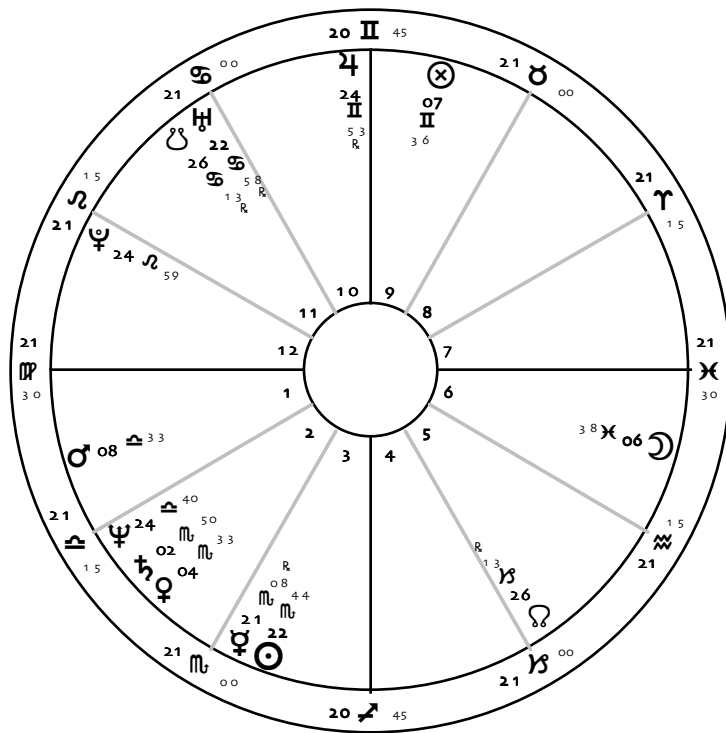
The astrologer temperaments

The subjective side of the practice of astrology is the individual filter each birth chart interpretation must pass through. Owning our bias is crucial to relating honestly with clients. The richness of irony in practicing astrology is that clients will always be mirroring some of your own issues. Empathy, required for loving and sensitive chart interpretation, places us in the responsible role of staying in touch with our own feelings. If we are in any denial, our ability to vibrate acceptance and non-judgment to our client is severely

hampered. To understand our personal bias, there is a formula one can use to determine their astrological temperament. It is a scoring system that takes into consideration the elements of your personal and social planets, ascendant, midheaven and their dispositors. The dispositors use the ancient seven planet rulerships: Sun for Leo, Moon for Cancer, Mercury for Gemini/Virgo, Venus for Taurus/Libra, Mars for Aries/Scorpio, Jupiter for Sagittarius/Pisces and Saturn for Capricorn/Aquarius. An elemental scoring is then calculated [total of 18 points-except when a planet(s) is dignified], and an elemental type is assigned, and from this type one's approach to birth chart interpretation can be ascertained. I will use my own birth chart as an example in determining the elemental scoring and temperament type.

<u>Planet/Angle</u>	<u>Dispositor</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Legend</u>
Sun in Scorpio	Mars in Libra	W/A	F = Fire A = Air
Moon in Pisces	Jupiter in Gemini	W/A	E = Earth W = Water
Mercury in Scorpio	Mars in Libra	W/A	
Venus in Scorpio	Mars in Libra	W/A	
Mars in Libra	Venus in Scorpio	A/W	
Jupiter in Gemini	Mercury in Scorpio	A/W	
Saturn in Scorpio	Mars in Libra	W/A	
Virgo Ascendant	Mercury in Scorpio	E/W	
Gemini Midheaven	Mercury in Scorpio	A/W	
			Totals
			F = 0 • E = 1 • A = 8 • W = 9
			Type Air-Water

There are ten distinct astrologer temperament types, yet some of you will fall into indistinct categories. If so, use the temperament type of just your Sun, Moon, Ascendant plus dispositors to see if you join a more distinct category. The ten temperaments are:



- 1) **The Fiery Temperament**
challenges client to overcome obstacles, learn faith
- 2) **The Earthy Temperament**
teaches client to ground in the present, adopt routine
- 3) **The Airy Temperament**
helps client understand their life path intellectually
- 4) **The Watery Temperament**
supports client in accepting feelings, facing fears
- 5) **The Fire-Earth Temperament**
motivates client to set goals, put plans into action
- 6) **The Fire-Air Temperament**
guides client into identifying beliefs, acting on ideas
- 7) **The Fire-Water Temperament**
nurtures client to listen to intuition, act on the guidance
- 8) **The Earth-Air Temperament**
stimulates client to build ideas into tangible reality
- 9) **The Earth-Water Temperament**
assists client to do what lies in front of them with feeling
- 10) **The Air-Water Temperament**
relates with client in articulating feelings, understanding emotions

It is true that most astrologers will attract a certain type of clientele through the years. Because successful consultations with clients that resonate to a similar elemental emphasis as you will lead to referrals that produce more clients of a like vibration, thus it seems to load up your practice with a majority of clients who are similar in their temperament. However, at times we are faced with clients who are wholly dissimilar to ourselves, and a realistic appraisal of our personal bias is critical in rendering quality astrological service to these clients, who cause us to stretch beyond our natural perspectives to meet them at the level of their life experience. What happens to me as a practicing astrologer if I cannot empathize with certain temperament types and interpret their birth chart in an unbiased fashion? Do I refer them to another astrologer? Do I work at overcoming my bias toward a particular type of temperament? An appraisal of my temperament is required before I can own my projections onto the client.

Separation from reality • Psychic fatigue

The prolonged study and practice of astrology can create an intellectual vacuum, within which the astrologer can perceive all of his, and other's, life experience as symbolic or archetypal, with a resultant separation from his feeling reality. What do I do when the continual reduction of other's life experiences into symbolic language form leaves me feeling empty and unable to relate to my own emotions? Take a vacation? Increase my meditation time? Watch Star Trek reruns on videotape to clear my head? Smoke cigarettes? Seek out peer support that validates my experience in the astrologer-client environment? Work at accepting my own vulnerability so that I can continue to feel empathy and unconditional regard for the client? I have found my answer in the renewed dedication to the humanistic approach my practice embodies. I try not to prepare for a consultation thinking I "know" the birth chart, without yet having had in-person dialogue with the client. This form of disciplined restraint actually helps to preserve the precious content of the intuitive faculty, which is prone to depletion when one is seeing five to ten clients or more a week. All of you who have included taped interpretations for out of state clients in your practice know the feeling of psychic exhaustion after speaking into a boombox for 90 minutes doing a natal, transit or relationship reading without having had the luxury of a letter from the client indicating specific questions. The intuition, working overtime without the in-person dialogue with the client, can leave you feeling fatigued and spent after doing taped

interpretations through the mail in the absence of the client. Some astrologers know their limits and do not include these services in their practice.

Transference and counter-transference

If you pay attention to the synastry between yourself and your clients, as you prepare for a consultation, you will see close aspects between the charts. Certainly, conjunctions, squares and oppositions are felt the strongest. These contact points represent areas of possible transference between you and your client. It is helpful to know before the consultation that you have your Mercury opposing your client's Mars! Then, the many interruptions will not upset you. If you see a Sun-Venus conjunction between yourself and your client, the consultation will be very heart-centered, with much sweetness and kindness passing back and forth between the two of you. Watery temperament astrologers, especially, are vulnerable to absorption of vibrations from clients, and need to learn techniques of releasing energy, both in the moment during the consultation, and afterwards when re-entry into your personal life takes place. Your body will tell you what is going on during a consultation. If you feel a knot in your stomach, you are absorbing the fear of your client. If you feel grief in your heart, you are absorbing the sadness of your client. If you feel anger in your mind, you have absorbed the controlling behavior of your client. What does the practicing astrologer do, as he navigates through the waters of the consultation, when his own emotions are as present as the client's? Counter-transference can occur, from astrologer to client, and is best honestly acknowledged immediately. The admission of embarrassment, fear, confusion, anger or sadness by the astrologer gives the client permission to access their full range of feelings, and feel safe enough to be completely "present" during the consultation. The humanistic credo seems to require a sympathetic, peer approach to astrological consulting, including the admission of the astrologer's vulnerability, if the astrologer is to avoid the slippage into the trap of feeling separate, different, higher, more evolved or more aware than the client.

Living on the edge of the astral/material transition

Once you have identified exactly what it is you are doing in your reading of birth charts, it becomes impossible to go back to earlier perspectives. The study and practice of astrology is forward, progressive and cumulative. If I see each birth chart as an encoded map of celestial intent as it prepares to descend into physical form, then I am hanging out in some pretty strange territory, living on the edge of two worlds. There is an expectation from the client, invested in the astrologer, spoken or unspoken, that places the role of celestial translator directly in our lap. How do I integrate this responsibility into my consciousness? How do I retain humility and an attitude of service toward my clients when I also feel powerful with the access to divine knowledge? Astrology is an exact science, and is to be revered for its precision, wholeness and power to remind us of the divine, yet one in millions will ever master it. We are engaged in a profession that, through the years, forces our mind into submission to the glaring evidence that the more you learn, the less you know. Opening oneself to be a vehicle for cosmic transmission is a sacred trust, and it is healthy to feel fear and nervousness each time a client is about to walk through the door. If that fear is ever lost, you had better get out of the profession, and find another way to earn a living. Computers have dulled the edge of the perceptual knife that cuts into the astrologer's heart and reminds him that he is a pawn in the hand of the Puppeteer. Yet, computers have also allowed the astrologer to stand in awe of the mathematical precision of the universe, witness to the perfect rhythms of Nature that define, shape and evolve the lives of our clients and the unfolding of collective change.

Putting love into your work

The 5th house-11th house axis in the birth chart is what teaches us about love versus knowledge. Astrology is such an intellectual pursuit that one can get lost in their mind and disconnected from their heart. The code of lovers is vastly different than the code of intellectuals.⁵ How can the practicing astrologer put love into his work? How can my heart stay open to my clients? How do I avoid becoming a dry (waterless) intellectual, giving mechanical chart interpretations that lack passion, purpose and compassion? Good questions. The writings of saints and mystics again provide guidance for us. Love only knows how to give. There is no calculation of gain in love.⁶ If in one's own life one lacks love, then love will be lacking in one's work. But, if there is love in one's life, then there will be love in one's work. It seems that maintaining an astrology career through the years will require the presence of love in our lives in order to balance the highly mental side of this work. Do something foolishly romantic each week. Send flowers to your sweetheart. Mail a poem to the one you love. Call your child and tell her you were thinking of her and that you just wanted to say "I love you." Feel your own heart by singing along with a sad song until the tears come. Go sit in the bleachers at a kid's baseball game until you are cracking up with laughter at the spontaneity of children. Do these things often and regularly. Then, when we sit to meditate, or sit in front of a client, our heart will be more open, and believe me, your client will feel what you are saying and not just hear it.

The astrologer's spiritual practice required for personal integration

Without meditation, prayer or contemplation on a daily basis by the astrologer, disintegration of the personality can take place. The evolution of humanistic, psychological and spiritual astrology during this century has placed an additional burden upon the shoulders of the practicing astrologer. Unless one does not mind being a hypocrite, parroting psychological or spiritual jargon in dialogue with a client, the modern professional astrologer is required to walk their talk. This means recovery, therapy, self-inquiry, mindfulness, healing the wounds from the past and an attitude of willingness to face in oneself whatever is dislodged during the one-to-one session with the client. We live in an era of extreme degeneracy⁷, where the pull of the violence and materialism in the world is almost suffocating the faint breath of individual human spiritual consciousness. The astrologer, as modern day healer, has a sacred trust to uphold by representing the wavering connection between the client and the divine. Without asking for help within to perform this duty during these troubled times, the astrologer can feel overwhelmed by the prevailing winds of despair and confusion that currently abound in our culture. To prepare for a consultation by praying for guidance to be of service to the client is equally as important as recapping all the primary birth chart factors on a sheet of paper.

Surrendering to the transition in consciousness

As we travel the road of practicing astrology, we are being changed by the constant exposure to the presence of the divine that we witness in the birth chart. Next time you pull a natal chart out of the computer printer, take a moment and remember just exactly what you are holding in your hand. This is a map from the territorial transition point of the astral to the material, of the individual destiny of your client. The incredible precise beauty of the orderliness of our solar system is brought to you in geometric perfection at the exact moment of the first breath of your client. The astrological bliss state of ecstasy is arrived at when one can feel the loving reminder of the divine by surrendering to this awareness. The practice of astrology is the admission of dissatisfaction with the worldly reality, and the search for deeper meaning by investigating the atomic matrix that lies just behind the veil of the physical creation. I would like to dedicate this article to all my brothers and sisters out there who are practicing astrologers, and who also feel compelled to understand what is happening to them as a result of their profession.

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