

101, An Astrology Primer

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What exactly *is* astrology?

This question will likely elicit a different response from nearly every astrologer you might ask, but the best, most complete answer that I've come across is that astrology is the study of the correlation between celestial and earthly events. Nothing more, nothing less. Things happen on the Earth, and the planets wander the sky and the stars are where they are. Do the things happen on Earth because of where the stars are and where the planets wander? Do the stars and planets indicate that things have happened or are to happen? The truth is that there isn't an answer to these questions. For whatever reason, astrology tends to indicate the likelihood that certain types of things will occur when the planets are in specific signs and locations, making specific aspects to each other and the calculated (sensitive) points in an astrological chart. I will admit up front that there have been few clinical studies to determine the actual statistical significance of the correlations, at least to date, but I will also say that I started my astrological life as a total skeptic, but I was unable to ultimately deny the accuracy that I found. The delineations that modern astrologers attribute to planetary situations and aspects have been developed based on thousands of years of practice and documentation. Astrology seems to have its own unique language and its practice is equal parts art and science.

How long has astrology been around?

Again, this question will bring a multitude of answers, but the truth is that the earliest signs of astrology date back to around 2000 BCE in ancient Mesopotamia (the land that is modern day Iraq). The earliest forms of astrology were mundane, with horoscopic astrology first appearing in the Mediterranean around the 1st century BCE. In ancient times, astrologers were highly revered and highly educated. A strong case may be made that astronomy actually developed out of astrology. Many of the earliest known astronomers were astrologers who began to document the positions and movement of the planets through the stars while also documenting the positions of the heavenly bodies at the times that events were unfolding on the Earth. Astrology has been practiced continuously since, although to varying degrees and visibility due to political and legal "climate changes". Many techniques were lost for centuries following the rise of the Roman Empire and Christianity, and the persecution of astrology. Thanks to numerous recovery projects, many ancient texts are being saved and translated and amazing techniques are finding practice again in the modern age. Many renowned figures throughout history were into astrology. There was Sir Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, Gallileo, Benjamin Franklin, and Carl Gustav Jung just name drop a few. President Ronald Reagan had a personal astrologer, whom he consulted for just about everything!

What can astrology be used for?

Astrology can show clear reasons why your personality, some physical aspects, and career and leisure interests are as they are. It may show how you choose and relate to partners and partnerships, family, and children, and your likely experiences pertaining to other major areas of life. It can show specific periods of time when harmonious, enjoyable circumstances seem to present themselves, as well as times when less pleasant and more challenging times may occur. It is not a crystal ball! It cannot make exact predictions of specific events, but it may point to a period of time and an area of life where something is coming and suggest a range of possible things that may happen as a result! Because we all have this pesky little thing called free will, and we are free to act and react to circumstances as we will, no one can ever predict exactly what will happen in the future! (Astrology can, however, make some guesses as to how one might react to specific circumstances, given the energies in their horoscope! Also, some things probably fall into the category of destiny, so, yeah...) Astrology can indicate times when one would do well to put rubber to the road and make things happen, as well as times when it might be best to slow down, think and re-think things through, and basically go with the flow. Astrology helps us to better know and understand ourselves, how and why we feel, think, and behave the way we do. Once you understand even the most basic tenets of astrology, it is easy to see how and why each human being is so unique and complicated!

++Note++ No reputable, ethical astrologer should read another adult person's chart without that adult person's expressed consent, nor should they ever attempt tell a client when they or another person is likely to die (*I refer here to Western astrologers practicing modern and traditional forms of astrology. There are some Vedic and Indian astrologers who may, as part of their practice, be expected to make such predictions.).

*Astrology is not a religious practice (or "devil worship!"), type of philosophy, method of "fortune telling", nor is it a cult☺

Different applications of astrology (not inclusive)

Natal-the basic birth chart/horoscope

Movement-transits, secondary progressions, solar arc directions, solar returns

Electional-choosing auspicious dates and times for planned events

Horary-answering a specific question, based on the time when the question is asked

Mundane-astrology for countries, organizations, events (including weather + geological events)

Vocational-analyzing aptitudes and interests for career planning

Financial-analyzing + making predictions for financial markets and commodities

Medical-determining best times for elective procedures and making diagnosis + prognosis for illnesses

Astro*Carto*Graphy-determining auspicious locations for specific endeavors, to include relocation

Different astrological traditions (not inclusive)

Modern/Western

Classical/Traditional

Hellenistic/Medieval

Vedic/Indian/Jyotish

Evolutionary

Uranian/Cosmology

Psychological

Esoteric

The focus of this Astrology 101 outing will be on the key players in traditional and modern Western astrology!

In order to calculate an accurate natal/birth chart/horoscope, three things are required: the date of birth, the **exact** time of birth, and the location of birth.

++Note++ Exact birth times are critical because the zodiac "moves" at a rate of about 1 degree every 4 minutes! Calculating an accurate degree for the Ascendant, which will be defined later, is absolutely critical to accurate astrological forecasting! This cannot be over-emphasized!

In modern Western astrology, which is predominantly practiced here in the United States, the horoscope is comprised of four key components: planets, signs (of the zodiac), houses, and aspects.

Planets: In astrology, the planets represent basic energetic drives and needs in human behavior- the *what* if you will. Most astrologers use at least 10 basic “planets”. (I include the “” because the two most significant, the Sun and Moon, aren’t planets at all! They are also often referred to as “the lights” or luminaries, but they are always considered to be the most significant “planets”. In addition to the lights, the Sun a and Moon s, we have Mercury d, Venus f, and Mars g (the inner/personal planets), Jupiter h and Saturn j (the outer/social planets), and Uranus k, Neptune l, and Pluto ; (the modern/generational planets).

++Note++ In Hellenistic and Medieval astrology, the modern/general planets- Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto- are not used. This is because they are not visible to the naked eye and were not yet discovered when those traditions were created. It is worth mentioning that new “planetary bodies” are discovered every day. Astrology, as a science, struggles to decide which bodies to assimilate into practice and how to interpret them. In my mind, and in the minds of a growing population of astrologers, the originals yield plenty of accurate information! Many astrologers are picking and choosing what to throw into the mix in their natal charts. I am not saying this is wrong or right, as long as they practice consistently and keep delineations in an understandable and digestible realm. And that gets increasingly difficult to accomplish the more stuff you try to add. Just food for thought! More to follow...

Signs: The signs represent the *how* in astrology. Signs influence how a planet acts or behaves to get what it wants and do what it needs to do. Most people are familiar with the ever popular Sun sign, that is, the sign that the Sun was in when they were born. Very few people, however, know what sign the other planets were in at that very important time! The fact is that all the planets were in specific signs at the moment of each of our births, and each of those planets in their respective signs, as well as *where* they were, contribute to the overall personality and experiences of the individual throughout their life. And behaviors, moods, and general consciousness can change based on the real time movement of the planets thru the signs and the changing contacts (think influences and relationships) with the important points in the natal chart. For this reason, and others that we will get to shortly, some people barely reflect the typical characteristics of their “sun sign”...another reason why the uninformed may view astrology as invalid! Each astrological sign occupies 30 degrees of the 360 degree horoscope. The astrological signs are: Aries q, Taurus w, Gemini e, Cancer r, Leo t, Virgo y, Libra u, Scorpio i, Sagittarius o, Capricorn p, Aquarius [, and Pisces].(Details about the signs coming soon!)

++Note++The 30 degree division of the zodiac (signs) is symbolic in nature. Astronomically, some signs are much larger than 30 degrees and some much smaller! The current zodiac used in in most modern astrology is called the *tropical zodiac* and is not subject to precession! Precession is a very complicated subject where, in really basic terms, the actual location of objects in the cosmos appear to change (by geocentric observation, anyway) so that they are not in the same position (relative to specific points on the Earth) at the same time over time. And we are talking thousands of years here! Prime example: 1 degree of Aries represents the Vernal (Spring) Equinox, the day that the Sun would be at 1 degree of Aries, thus beginning the annual zodiacal cycle. In ancient times, when astrology was just starting out, the sun would actually be at 1 degree of Aries around the 20-21st of March, which is why that date was originally designated the 1st of Spring. Due to the wobble of the Earth on its axis however, the position of our planet has shifted backward, very slowly over time, to the point that the actual Spring equinox these days would occur sometime in February. A decision was made thousands of years ago to use what is known as the tropical zodiac, based more on the symbolic movement of the Sun through the seasons as reference points. Therefore Spring, represented by 1 degree of Aries, reliably hits the calendar on 20 or 21 March. There is another zodiac, which is typically used by astronomers and some astrologers (primarily Vedic, but some others as well), called the *Sidereal zodiac*. It is based on the true, real time movement of the Sun through the constellations (the stars). **This is a very important distinction!** It means that if you were to look up the Sun’s position in the actual sky at the precise moment of your birth, there is a pretty good chance that the constellation it was in may not be the same as the “sign” of the zodiac that your astrological chart shows! I mention this here only because many skeptics (and astronomers!) believe that astrologers are unaware that precession exists and think that birth charts are wrong as a result. This is certainly not the case! Use of the tropical zodiac in astrology is absolutely deliberate, but further discussion on the subject belongs to another time!

Houses: The houses are the symbolic representation of the areas of life in which the planets act, ie. *where* events manifest and unfold. This introduces another important part of the chart. Referred to as *the angles*, the four houses that fall on the chart's major north/south and east/west divisions (1st / Ascendant (ASC), 4th / Imum Coli, or IC, 7th / Descendant (DESC), and 10th / Midheaven, or MC), are of particular importance. They carry special meaning in delineations as being stronger and more outwardly energetic than the others. The ASC and MC are considered to be particularly important, sensitive points in the horoscope. The basic keyword meanings of the houses are as follows:.

1st House: the self; identity; personality; the physical body and appearance

2nd House: moveable assets; possessions; personal finances/resources for earning; values

3rd House: conscious mind; communication; community; early education; siblings; short distance travel

4th House: roots/home; family of origin; parents (emotional bond); dwellings/real estate

5th House: creativity; children; self-expression; leisure activities/fun; sex/coupling for romance

6th House: habits; day to day work/job; service; duty; health

7th House: partnership, marriage, relationships (of a typically contractual nature); open enemies

8th House: shared resources; taxes; sex/coupling for connection, death (physical/symbolic); transformation

9th House: philosophy/higher minded pursuits; higher education; religion; foreign interests; long distance travel

10th House: career/profession; outward/material attainment; public stage/recognition; status, non-4th parent

11th House: group affiliations; communal efforts; friends and acquaintances; goals; hopes & dreams

12th House: subconscious activity; behind the scenes activities; institutions; confinement; fears; hidden enemies

++Note++ About house divisions...there are many different ways that astrologers accomplish the task of dividing the houses. Many of which are by no means equal like the symbolic 30 degree signs of the zodiac. It is well beyond the scope of this introduction to get into the hows and whys of house division, but I will throw out there that the majority of modern Western astrologers in the US currently use the Placidus house system (a quadrant system), with a rapidly growing number converting to the second most widely reported system in use, Whole Sign houses, which is an equal house system. This is the system that I personally use and that you will see for demonstration purposes.

++Note++ Since we've now covered the common planets and angles, I want to mention some other chart points that you may see in your natal chart, depending on the preferences of the astrologer you choose. Many astrologers use other chart points in delineating a natal horoscope. These may include **asteroids**, of which there are 5 major: Chiron, the most popular, and to a substantially lesser degree, Pallas (aka Pallas Athena), Juno, Vesta, and Ceres, as well as literally hundreds of minors; **fixed stars**, again, there are many; the **Vertex, Part of Fortune**, and many other **Arabic Parts**, which are all calculated points, which will be discussed in more detail soon; and in the case of Cosmology/Uranian Astrology, imaginary, conceptual planets and midpoints of the existing, real planets. Things in astrology can get quite complicated and I just wanted you to know that these things are also out there!

Aspects: Aspects are the actual physical, geometric angles that the planets and sensitive chart points form with relation to each other, both as they did at the exact moment of birth (with respect to the natal chart) and later as "the chart" moves in time. There are many, many aspects, but most astrologers will start out with a basic set of 5 major **Ptolemaic Aspects**. These aspects predict the manner in which the planets making the connections will function in relation to one another. (ie harmoniously, as obstacles, etc.) The 5 major Ptolemaic aspects are:

- z Conjunction (0) +/- 5)) co-located, a blending of the planets energies, the most heavily emphasized aspect
- n Sextile (60) +/- 5)) planets 2 signs apart, typically harmonious blending, represents an opportunity, with effort
- c Square (90) +/- 5)) planets 3 signs apart, a “hard aspect” represents obstacles and cross purposes
- b Trine (120) +/- 5)) planets 4 signs apart, an “easy aspect”, harmonious blending, without effort
- x Opposition (180) +/- 5)) planets 6 signs apart, “hard aspect”, requires compromise/balance

++Note++ These aspects are based on planetary position in longitude. There are two additional aspects, parallels and contra-parallels, that are like conjunctions and oppositions respectively, but by latitude or declination. (The longitudinal aspects are easily conceptualized in a 2 dimensional chart as drawn in wheel form on a sheet of paper. Introducing the aspects of declination necessitates conceptualizing a 3rd dimensional view...follow me?) Many astrologers do not pay attention to these aspects, but because they function like conjunctions and oppositions, which are quite important and significant aspects, they really should be considered. After all, we live in a 3D Universe. (Well, at least 3D! But again, that is discussion for another time! ☺)

****To be clear, the combination of planets, in signs, in houses, with aspects is the *horoscope*. The sun sign column in the newspaper and on websites IS NOT, by any stretch, a horoscope!****

OK! Taking it to the next level...

For deeper understanding, the 12 zodiacal signs are sorted into different groups with common characteristics. One of these groupings, the **elements**, of which most people are familiar, defines the basic temperament. The other, the **quality** (or mode) defines the general manner of operation or behavior.

Elements: (aka triplicities) The four elements are described below, with the signs that are assigned to each:

Fire: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius. Keywords: energetic, enthusiastic, impulsive, intuitive, ardent, forceful

Earth: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn. Keywords: practical, dependable, conservative, sensual, materialistic

Air: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius. Keywords: communicative, intellectual, logical, cooperative, detached, cold

Water: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces. Keywords: sensitive, emotional, feeling, receptive, nurturing, psychic, escapist

Qualities: (aka as modes, or quadraplicities) The three qualities are described below, with signs assigned to each:

Cardinal: Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricorn. Keywords: initiating, action-oriented, dynamic, thrives on crisis; hasty

Fixed: Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius. Keywords: stable, persistent, determined; resistant to change; stubborn

Mutable: Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, Pisces. Keywords: flexible, adaptable, versatile, restless; scattered; unreliable

++Note++ There is only one sign that uniquely combines each element and quality (ex Aries is the only sign that is cardinal fire, Taurus is the only sign that is fixed earth, Gemini is the only sign that is mutable air, etc.). Each sign is unique in and of itself, but the signs also play nicer with some signs than others if they share either a common element or quality.

The signs are further classified, and are subsequently grouped, by “gender”. All fire and air signs are considered to be active, masculine (+), or yang, in nature, and all earth and water signs are considered to be passive/receptive, feminine (-), or yin in nature.

Hey baby! What’s your sign?! Let’s look some unique identifying information, as well as some keywords for each of the signs:

****Quick note!** I first want to stress that in astrology nothing is ever all-good or all-bad! Rather, IT JUST IS! The following list represents some positive, constructive characteristics that are associated with each sign, as well as some that may be less so. All manifestations are important and descriptive, and varying energies may be elicited and influenced by circumstances! That's the nature of life. This list is, by no means, all inclusive. Just a few of the most commonly attributed key words. An entire page, or chapter of a book for that matter, could easily be given to each sign because again, no energy operates in a vacuum. There is constant blending and tempering and exacerbating going on. This is just kind of like shorthand astrological stereotyping.

Aries (The ram, "I am", cardinal fire, +, Mars) out-going, assertive, independent, pioneering, courageous; quick-tempered, self-centered, domineering

Taurus (The bull, "I have", fixed earth, -, Venus) patient, stable, thorough, practical, sensual; materialistic; stubborn, self-indulgent, slow, possessive

Gemini (The twins, "I think", mutable air, +, Mercury) inquisitive, versatile, social, expressive; duality, clever, restless; lacking concentration and follow-through, hyper

Cancer (The crab, "I feel", cardinal water, -, Moon) nurturing/maternal, emotional, home/family oriented; moody, overly sensitive, selfish

Leo (The lion, "I will", fixed fire, +, Sun) dramatic, optimistic, idealistic, generous, creative, fun-loving; egotistical, overly dramatic, pretentious

Virgo (The virgin, "I analyze", mutable earth, -, Mercury) analytical, methodical, discriminating, attention to detail; critical, petty, pedantic, worrisome

Libra (The scales, "I balance", cardinal air, +, Venus) cooperative, diplomatic, refined, peace-loving, mediating; fickle, indecisive, judgmental, hypocritical

Scorpio (The scorpion, "I desire", fixed water, -, Mars) intense, magnetic, probing/investigative, private, deep, passionate; sarcastic, temperamental, suspicious, resentful, jealous

Sagittarius (The archer, "I understand", mutable fire, +, Jupiter) philosophical/scholarly, freedom loving, just, broadminded, straightforward; exaggerative, blunt, impatient, over-zealous, gambling

Capricorn (The seagoat, "I use", cardinal earth, -, Saturn) practical, hardworking, conventional, ambitious, disciplined, social conscious; fatalistic, insensitive, status-seeking, inhibited

Aquarius (The waterbearer, "I know", fixed air, +, Saturn) independent, humanitarian, progressive, logical, original/unique; detached, rebellious; impersonal, cold, individualistic, radical, fixed opinions/closed minded

Pisces (The fish, "I believe", mutable air, -, Jupiter) compassionate, sympathetic, introspective, artistic, sentimental, intuitive/psychic, charitable; escapist; procrastinating, pessimistic, lacking in confidence, melancholy, timid

++Note++Every sign is represented in every horoscope, even if there are no planets in specific signs (and houses!) in the natal chart! There is a sign on the cusp of every house, and the planets are constantly on the move, touching the chart in different ways at different times.

+++Of further note+++The ruling planets listed above are the traditional rulers! In modern rulership, Uranus rules Aquarius, Neptune rules Pisces, and Pluto rules Scorpio...but this too is fodder for discussion at a more advanced time in one's astrological studies☺

++++Of even further note++++And this is REALLY important! Many people who express skepticism about astrology do so because of the *horoscope* columns in the newspaper and on the www and wherever. They tend to say, and often rightfully so, that either the descriptions are so generic that they could apply to anyone, or that they feel that their personal Sun sign horoscope is nothing like them. And chances are they are completely right! I alluded to

this earlier, but it bears a spotlighted repeating: A *horoscope* is comprised of the combined elements and qualities of at least 7, but more likely 10 “planets”, an ASC, and to a lesser degree, an MC ! Presented in signs, in houses, with aspects! At the very least, the signs of the Sun, Moon, and ASC need to be taken into account when trying to *see* an individual in very basic terms! I always tell my clients early on in a reading what sign they would most likely recognize as most closely reflecting their personality and experience when reading sun sign columns, and it is often NOT their Sun sign! For example, my Sun is in Aries but my overall chart tone is Sagittarius, because the predominant energy of my chart, or horoscope, is mutable fire. I have close friends and family that act nothing like their Sun sign by itself. The attributes are always there, but often in very subtle ways only. Another secret is that you are more likely to “see” a person’s ascendant (as opposed to their Sun sign) when you first meet them. It is the mask they present to the world. I am way better at guessing a person’s ASC than I am their Sun sign when I first meet them.

So what about the planets? What do they bring to the party?

As we discussed previously, the planets represent basic needs and drives to action. Like the actors in a play, they each have a role to play in the story of you. They are located in zodiacal signs and they are happier and better able to play their part in some signs as opposed to others, and they have a special responsibility to act in the area of life where they are found natal charts, as well as where they are transiting. The basic energies of the planets are as follows:

Sun: rules Leo; vitality, the self, basic life force, personality, identity, the ego; represents the father and other male influences; Sun illuminates what it transits and shows areas of life where you will shine

Moon: rules Cancer; feelings, moods, nurturing, instinctive response mechanisms and habitual behavior patterns; memories, both of this lifetime and the collective memory of past lives; represents the mother and female influences; shows where ups and downs may be experienced, as well as where we can feel at home

Mercury: rules Gemini and Virgo; rational mind; communication in all forms (speaking, listening, writing, short distance travel/transportation) and interpretation (intelligence, reason, assimilation); represents siblings and people we consider to be “like a brother/sister”; the connection between spirit and material realms

Venus: rules Taurus and Libra; love, sensuality, and attraction (*not sex!), objects of desire/possessions, balance and harmony, values and appreciation; *discrimination*; represents the arts, culture, enjoyment

Mars: rules Aries and Scorpio; assertiveness, outward energy and aggression, courage, adventure, sexual nature, competition. Mars goes out to acquire what Venus desires; struggles-within and with others; place where greatest energy will be expended.

Jupiter: rules Sagittarius and Pisces; expansions, growth, optimism, generosity, good luck/fortune; philosophy, higher minded pursuits, higher education, long distance travel, foreign affairs; also represents the lawmaker/judge; place to be leisure and find good fortune

Saturn: rules Capricorn and Aquarius; structure/form, organization, foundations, discipline, restriction, limitation, inhibition; responsibility; time; Karma, particularly when placed on an angle; slows things down for introspection, deepening, and perfection; a place to focus and assume responsibility, possibly overcompensate

Uranus: sudden, dramatic change (often traumatic!); urge to freedom; the unique, unusual, and/or unexpected; new conventions and inventions; ingenuity, rebellion, revolution, and reform; shake loose and let go; technology and all things esoteric; place where you may do unusual things

Neptune: confusion, fears and doubts, nebulousness, imagination and dreams, idealism, spirituality; hypnosis; drugs, alcohol, and addiction; veil between spirit and earthly realms; giving of spiritual strength or escapist tendencies; place you tend to deceive yourself and/or others, or seek to make ideal

Pluto: death, both physical and/or metaphorical; re-birth and transformation, transmutation, and metamorphosis; (the underworld) afterlife and spirit realm; phobias and obsessions; isolation and solitude; psychology and parapsychology; uncovers and exposes deep, hidden secrets; represents elements not yet assimilated into the collective unconscious; place where you may find complexity and issues that you will need to tackle on your own

++Note++ As we had previously mentioned new discoveries, new planets that you might encounter in a reading or further studies include Eris and Sedna. These planets move so slowly, even relative to Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, that many of us will not live to see them change signs. Relevant and reliable interpretive data is not yet available so I would be very careful what I believe about anything that anyone says about them. I say this as an astrologer who have my natal Sun conjunct Eris by degree. As such, I would love to know exactly what Eris is all about. The data and history just aren't there yet.

What else?? We have already identified *the angles*, the ASC and MC, as calculated sensitive points in the chart. Two more points that most astrologers include in natal chart delineations are the lunar nodes. There is a north node and a south node (their glyphs look like horseshoes!), and they will always be located in exact opposition in any chart. It might be a good idea to reiterate that the lunar nodes, like the ASC and the MC are not actual, physical objects floating around in the cosmos. Rather, they are arithmetically calculated points based on specific criteria involving other actual objects! The ASC represents the point that would have been on the horizon of the earth at the moment of birth. The MC roughly represents high noon in the chart, when the Sun was directly overhead for that day. Finally, the nodes are the calculated points where the Moon crosses the ecliptic (the apparent path of the Sun as it would circumnavigate the earth...if it were circumnavigating the earth. Which it is not, given that it is actually a fixed star. It is good to keep in mind that most of astrology is based in geocentric observation. Much like the retrograde period of planets. Most people have heard of Mercury retrograde. All of the planets have retrograde cycles (with the exception of the Sun and Moon because they are not actually planets!). Planets never actually move in reverse, of course, but from our earthly vantage point there are times when the optical illusion of reverse motion appears. But back to the nodes: the nodes mean different things and carry varying degrees of importance to different types of astrologers, but it is fairly safe to generalize that the north node is typically regarded as a more positive influence (like Jupiter!) and the south node, well, less so (think Saturn!). From an evolutionary astrology perspective, the south node represents where we've been, the north node where we are supposed to be going.

The lay of the astrological land

When you look at a "flat chart" (that 2D chart depicted on a sheet of paper), everything is reversed. The upper half of the chart is the southern hemisphere and the lower half the northern hemisphere. The left side is the eastern hemisphere and the right side the western hemisphere. Again, geocentric perspective! Generally speaking, having a preponderance of planets in the southern hemisphere is considered representative of a more extroverted personality. Likewise, having a majority of planets in the northern hemisphere would indicate a more introverted personality. More planets on the left side indicate a life with more requirement for self-initiation and independence, needing to find you own stuff to get into. More planets on the right side indicate a need to be more reactive and relationship focused, where stuff just seems to find you. Some astrologers liken this difference to fate versus free will, but we will save that discussion for another time!

What's next?

So now that you have all this deeper knowledge about the individual pieces that make up astrology, what is left to know? What do you need an astrologer for anyway? All these pieces of information are necessary and great to know, but up to this point, we have discussed mainly the science part of astrology. The planets and chart points are where they are. They are in the signs that they are in, in the houses that they are in. They are aspected how they are aspected. Yet all these pieces, on their own, really tell you nothing about the owner of the chart. It's time to bring in the art! It takes years of study and practice to be able to synthesize the volume of information, evaluate the many aspects and placements for strength and importance, extract the key features and conceptualize the big picture, then distill the whole down to the main theme (or two), and finally assimilate the most pertinent, need-to-know information into a relatively brief, logical, digestible, and most importantly, **accurate** delineation. A computer can

quickly, efficiently, and accurately calculate and present the necessary parts on the screen or paper, but no computer can produce an accurate delineation. And more importantly, no computer can deliver and discuss the often confusing and sometimes daunting realities of an astrological chart with empathy, compassion, perspective, and encouragement. It cannot answer burning questions. A computer cannot make a decision as to whether Mercury trine Jupiter within 6 degrees of orb is more important to a person than Mars square Saturn within 1 degree, and be able to explain exactly why. It is one thing to spit out a canned statement like “Sun conjunct Mercury in Aries in the 9th House, trine natal ASC”, (not that any computer program would even give that level of detail!) and quite another to be able to translate that as “this individual may think and speak quickly and confidently about higher minded, philosophical topics in a very natural and personable way.” There are just some things that science alone cannot accomplish, nor can a computer provide. Astrology is a perfect example of art completing science!

I hope you enjoyed this primer, found it interesting and/or intriguing, and possibly have a desire to study further!! This was just a scratching of the astrological surface. For deeper study, check further into the history of astrology, the connected mythology, types of house division, essential dignity, orbs, minor aspects and how aspects in general behave, how the chart moves in time and forecasting techniques (transits, profections, progressions, directions, solar returns), eclipses, lunar phases, and wow, just about million other things!! Woo hoo, the journey begins! ☺

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Years of personal class and study notes!