

A Bit About the World of Astrology

Astrology for Soul Evolution

Kathleen M. Goodyear

Tapping astrology's wisdom
for personal and planetary growth

Consultations, classes, workshops, articles

www.kathleengoodyear.com

From an e-mail I wrote on July 17, 2008, to someone newly interested in astrology.

Astrology is based on a holistic view of life. Its wisdom is a collection of empirical observations which have been made for thousands of years. A modern mathematical concept I liken astrology to is fractals, wherein the geometric pattern described by an equation repeats on microscopic as well as macroscopic levels. And because everything is connected, subpatterns resonate with their counterparts on every level.

The planets don't make anyone do anything. But their energies equate with the dance of certain large-scale archetypes which are a part of our makeup as they are of all of life. By tracking patterns in the sky, the ancients discovered that there is a correspondence with simultaneous human experience.

Free will is inherent in the worldview for a great many of us astrologers. (Yes, there are some who are still fatalistic, but they are in the minority.) Many of the leading astrologers of any age seem to have believed in free will as inherent in the fabric of life. When we face choices in our lives, our decisions affect everyone else, and their decisions in some great or small ways affect us as well. It is all one web of existence.

The great thing about astrology is how much it can clarify complicated situations people find themselves in. What they decide to do with that clarification is up to them. I've been doing astrology for almost 30 years now and still am constantly amazed by the depth of insight it provides. It sheds light not only on outer situations, but also on our inner natures and potentials.

Planets: The "personal planets" (sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, and Mars) correspond with major parts of our individual personalities. (Yes, we know that the sun and moon are not planets from an astronomical standpoint, but the word "planet" comes from the Greek word meaning "wanderer," and from our earthly perspective, they wander through the sky, too.) Jupiter and Saturn as somewhat slower planets correspond with both personal and societal patterns, especially in the vocational and economic realms. The planets from Uranus on



out relate to cycles in which larger and larger groups of people are involved because they move so slowly. (Pluto is used most often to refer to generational cohorts.) Asteroids and other smaller bodies fill in the major picture with rather amazing detail.

A note: Among the bodies I use are eight “Transneptunian” or “Uranian” planets, which many astrologers do not use because astronomers have not found them (yet). The origins of our knowledge of them is controversial. I use them because they work, often giving me insights into a person’s experience which may not be accounted for by the standard planets. I also use some of the asteroids. (I wish I had time to use more, but there are over 100,000 of them now!)

Signs: The signs of the zodiac, the twelve main constellations on the ecliptic (the sun’s apparent path throughout the year, really where the earth joins in the solar system plane) describe twelve stages within any cyclic pattern. But while Aries describes the energy of beginning and Pisces the energy of ending, among other things, Pisces is also the launchpad for the beginning of a new cycle in Aries. In other words, cycles are more than circles – they’re spirals.

Many of us modern astrologers really wish that one particular astrologer, Alan Leo in England, around the turn of the 20th century, had not introduced the notion of sun-sign astrology. While he was trying to get people to pay attention to astrology’s wealth by simplifying it enough that it would catch folks’ attention, sun-sign astrology is way too simplistic and has also served to make astrologers look like charlatans. Most astrologers in prior eras were also scientists and/or mathematicians; some were priests. Astrology is a very complex science/art. I was originally going to go into astrophysics, and from my perspective today, I actually view astrology as possibly more complex than physics. Being a good astrologer requires years of study, a lot of technical knowledge, an ability to analyze and synthesize large amounts of data, and a developed intuition in order to sense how the varied potentials of the symbolism fit with the client’s actual life experience.

Houses: If the person’s birth time is known, a full chart can be run which illustrates the sky pattern the planets and other bodies were making to the person’s birth place at the time of birth. For example, if he/she were born at sunrise, the sun will be on the eastern side of the chart (left in astrology – south is at the top, as we in the Northern Hemisphere look southward toward the planets). Another person born that same day but at noon will have the planets in the same degrees of the zodiac (other than the moon, which moves about 13½ degrees per day), but at noon the sun is at the high point of the chart. Dividing the chart into twelve pieces results in the houses, each of which relates



to areas in our lives in which the planetary archetypes in the house operate. For example, a person born in the late afternoon would have his/her sun in the 7th house and would likely be an other-oriented person – partners and friends would likely be very important to him/her. A person born in the late morning might be a leader. Someone born just after midnight may be a teacher of children, speaker/writer, software engineer, close to his/her siblings, etc. A person born with Jupiter at the highest point in his journey across the sky that day might be a visionary leader, university professor, philosopher, priest, world traveler, etc. So people born on the same day of the same year may have some things in common, but they likely experience the archetypal pattern in very different parts of their lives.

There are numerous house systems, i.e., systems for dividing a chart into twelve sectors. Each house system has its own logic, equations, and advocates. Some of us believe that various house systems may provide different perspectives and that there isn't necessarily a "correct" house system. Nevertheless, the subject of house systems has been controversial for a long time.

The houses are numbered according to the flow of the zodiacal signs. The first house is the first sector below the ascendant (point on the left of the chart), and the others proceed counterclockwise from there. Paradoxically, during the course of a day, because the earth turns in the opposite direction, the planets appear to travel through the houses in backward order – they rise above the horizon (ascendant) into the 12th house, move through the 10th house right before noon, move through the 7th house before setting, etc.

Aspects: Aspects are merely angular separations between two bodies and/or points. As in geometry, the circle is divided into 360 degrees (12 signs x 30 degrees per sign). For example, if two planets square one another, they are 90 or so degrees apart. The word "aspect" comes from Italian and Latin words meaning "see" – the notion is that the planets "see" one another. Their angular separation gives us clues as to how the corresponding archetypes are relating to one another. For example, someone born with the sun trining Saturn (120 degrees of separation), depending on the rest of the chart (always!), may be a down-to-earth person who can get things accomplished. In contrast, someone born with the sun opposite Saturn (180 degrees apart) may have found him/herself having to rebel against parental control in order to express his/her own individuality; the problem is that the person may end up being hampered by always rebelling against authority – by owning one's authority for one's own life, with patience and the willingness to grow, that person could turn a difficulty into a dynamic asset and could become a wise parent/mentor for others.



Retrogradation: Periodically all the planets other than the sun and moon appear from the earth's standpoint to turn backward for a spell. While this is an optical illusion resulting from the relative motion of that planet vis-à-vis the earth's motion (see Einstein's two-trains model in relativity), the experiencing of the planet's archetype does change. Symbolically a planet's retrograde cycle relates to (1) moving ahead without sufficient preparation, (2) turning inward/going underground to do the necessary cleanup and prep work (this is when the planet actually appears to go backward), and (3) growing and harvesting the fruits of the prep work (when the planet appears to retrace its steps). While this type of cycle is vital to evolutionary processes, retrogrades often are not much fun, mainly because we erroneously expect that energy to work the same way it usually does. For example, Mercury, the communication archetype which also relates to children, turns retro three times a year for about three weeks. During that time, computers often crash, baggage is lost, people miscommunicate with each other, it may be hard to think straight, etc. For most people (there are exceptions), Mercury retro is not the time to sign contracts or to make long-term commitments, mainly because later on it may become apparent that one did not have sufficient information at the time to make a good decision or that someone involved may have been deceptive. However, Mercury retro may be a great time to do some inner work re resolving old parent-child issues or to pick up an unfinished effort and finish it. How we as individuals experience a particular retrograde cycle depends on how that cycle interacts with our birth chart.

Retrograde planets in a birth chart are indicated with an "Rx" after the position, the same symbol as is used for prescriptions.

Transits, directions, and progressions: Transits are where the planets are currently – e.g., transiting Pluto recently retrograded back into Sagittarius. I believe that comparing where the transiting planets are with someone's birth positions is the most powerful tool in all of astrology – it helps to illustrate so much about what the person is going through at the time. Other timing techniques such as various types of directions and progressions enable us to track evolutionary developmental cycles as they flow out of the birth chart itself.

So that's a bit about the world of astrology.