

relationships have specific chart factors in common.⁵ There is also a coherent theory of how astrology might work, proposed by an astronomer.⁶

There seems little doubt that astrology

will ultimately reveal more of itself, and those counsellors prepared to consider the implication of this will be on the leading edge of a totally new approach to therapy.

1. Hans Eysenck and Glenn Wilson (ed.), *The Experimental Study of Freudian Theories*, Methuen, 1973
2. Eugene Gendlin, *Focusing*, Bantam, 1981
3. Michel Gauquelin, *Written in the Stars*, Aquarian, 1988

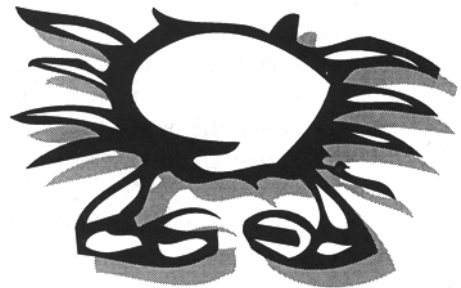
4. Hans Eysenck and David Nias, *Astrology: Science of Superstition*, Penguin, 1983
5. Mavis Klein, *Correlation*, December 1988, Vol. 8, No.2
6. Percy Seymour, *Astrology: The Evidence of Science*, Arkana, 1990

Astrology: Language of the Psyche

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Since Freud's investigations of the psyche and psychic processes a whole new world has been opened up to us. We are now painfully aware of just how much 'we are lived by unknown and uncontrollable forces', to use Freud's words, and we now know that the rational, intellectual part of us is not all there is. We are not masters in our own house. Yet once we can find the humility to acknowledge this we can begin to approach, and learn something of, those unknown forces — and astrology is one means of doing so. Jung wrote, "Astrology, like the collective unconscious with which psychology is concerned, consists of symbolic configurations: the planets are the gods, symbols of the powers of the unconscious . . . What the zodiac and the

planets represent are not personal traits; they are impersonal and objective facts . . . The interpretation of the archetypes (the gods) and their mutual relations is the common concern of both arts".¹ Thus



astrology offers us a means of charting the movements of the psyche, a sort of map of our psychic patterning which can help us to think about and formulate something of what it feels to be alive. The planets and their motions are a part of the external world which can be measured and used as a mirror to our internal world, each planet representing a specific drive within us. We can perhaps compare this to the way in which a young child becomes aware of itself through the experience of being reflected and contained by its mother's loving attention, or the client through the therapist's attentive, mirroring activity. Astrology is based upon the premise that all life is one, so that we can observe the same processes being reflected on different levels — in this case the planetary level reflecting the human.

Working with the birth chart is rather like learning to read a map or a set of symbols. As Jung pointed out, symbols are the psyche's natural mode of communication, something we experience each night when we dream. And symbols put us in touch with our biological inheritance, that part of us which is concerned with birth, growth, change, ageing, illness, death, decay — all those things which make us aware of our mortality and which preoccupy us far more than we realise. Symbols touch us at a very deep level and have the power to stir us to action in the way that conscious will and intention cannot.

Melanie Klein has shown us how our instinctual life spontaneously transforms itself into imaginative, fantasy activity thus linking psyche and soma. We have the potential for meeting our needs, ex-

pressing ourselves, relating to our world in a variety of ways. This is what leads to creative living, the capacity to tolerate frustration without giving up, and the ability to explore and experiment and discover other avenues of expression, that is, to play. If, however, we lose touch with our imaginal world, perhaps through unbearable frustration, then we lose our capacity to play and the mind splits from the body. For it seems that images and symbols perform a bridging function between psyche and soma.

By working with the symbols of the birth chart it becomes possible to increase one's symbolic awareness and begin to heal such a split. For example, if Mars, the aggressive impulse, a warrior archetype, remains inaccessible to consciousness then that part of the psyche cannot grow and develop, to the impoverishment of the individual's life. As Freud wrote, 'impeded aggressiveness seems to involve a grave injury'. This would be represented on the birth chart by means of a particular symbolic configuration. However one cannot just decide to be more assertive. Rather one must alter one's whole perception of oneself, be able to 'imagine' oneself in a new way, cultivate an imaginal perspective. And this is not something which can come about through willing and striving, but by a more reflective mode of being, such as that needed for exploring one's dreams and working with the symbols of the birth chart. This involves letting go of one's usual purposeful mode in order to allow one's images to speak for themselves. This lends itself to a more playful mode, to activities such as writing, drawing, painting, dancing. In order to read a

birth chart one needs to be able to play with the symbols, to allow them to stimulate one's imagination and envisage the possibilities and potential which lie within them.

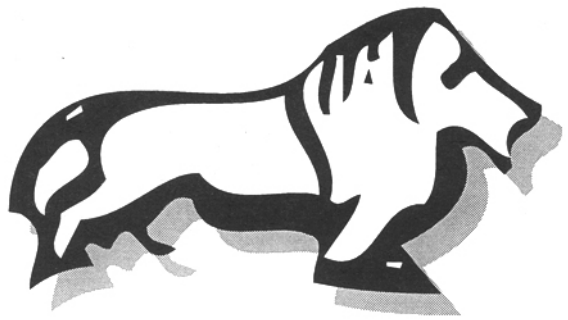
In this way one is offered another vantage point or, in George Eliot's words, 'the sense of our lives having visible and invisible relations beyond any of which either our present or prospective self is the centre'.² The birth chart cannot tell us that this or that will happen or that we should do this or that. It cannot make our decisions for us. Like our dreams it does not gratify the ego, but rather offers us something other than the ego's perspective. For it conveys to us in symbolic form what is driving us, the stuff we are made of, with its challenges, dilemmas and potentials, so that we can begin to glimpse ourselves as we are, rather than as we would like to be. Wordsworth referred to art as 'emotion recollected in tranquillity',³ and in this sense astrology is an art since it offers us a set of symbols which enable us to step back from ourselves yet still remain linked to our own experience.

We are brought closer to ourselves, to the truth of who we are, in a way which can be digested and assimilated. As George Eliot has pointed out, the artist's task is to convey truth, which one of her characters defines as 'the hardest missile one can be pelted with', so that it can be borne. And this is of course also the task of the therapist and of the astrologer.

Thus the symbols of astrology are a means of communicating the psychic truth

that we are all compelled by the same longings, have a common humanity with its roots in nature and the law of the jungle. For example we all have a lunar impulse, the Moon, the drive to give and receive nurture, the needy, dependent, oral part of us, regardless of how independent and self-sufficient we may feel. Indeed, the birth chart being a circle reflects both our potential wholeness and also our incompleteness, the gaps in the psyche.

Every birth chart has its empty spaces, so that we are reminded of the limitations of our human condition, that painful gap between what we are and what we might be. If the fire element is missing the individual has problems accessing the intuitive function. In other words no planet falls in a fire sign, the zodiac of signs forming a sort of backcloth to the planets. So we say the Moon is in the sign of Taurus or Jupiter is in Cancer, as a means of conveying the way in which an impulse may find expression within the individual. Though we each have a lunar impulse we each embody it in different



ways. My style of nurturing and getting my needs met will be different from yours, so that if my Moon were in Taurus, an earth sign, I would tend to take care of myself and others in a very physical, sensual way such as cooking a nice meal, giving or receiving a massage, tending a garden. If however my Moon were in Libra, an air sign, then I might nurture myself by reading a good book, having a serious discussion, sharing a candlelit dinner, activities which feed my intellect and need for companionship.

No two birth charts are exactly alike and the variations are numerous. Indeed each birth chart reveals a complex web of interrelationships, each planet a sub-personality or internal object, the psyche as animistic. Thus we are drawn into the world of Greek myth, our lives as part of a universal drama, our personal struggles set in a wider context which allows us to

view ourselves dispassionately yet with compassion. We begin to see how we have built our inner world on the basis of relationships to people who are important to us, and how we carry these people around with us so that what we do we do *for* them or in conflict with them. As in Greek myth, we experience ourselves as Hero and them as helping or hindering figures, until we can identify them as our own resources.

The birth chart is like a story, an inner drama which becomes fleshed out by those people and events of our outer lives, enabling us to unravel our story and find meaning in it. It allows us a means of rediscovering ourselves as part of a larger whole, of finding a perspective beyond that of our own self-interest, of 'amplifying our experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot'.⁴

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1. C.G. Jung, *Letters*, vol.2, cited in Ean Begg, *Myth and Today's Consciousness*, p.13
 2. George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, p.532
 3. William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*
 4. George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', *Westminster Review*, 66 (July, 1856), p.54, cited in the Introduction to *Middlemarch* by David Carroll

Further Reading

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- George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, Penguin Classics, reprinted 1985
- George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, World's Classics, reprinted 1990
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Wordsworth and Coleridge, Northcote House, 1987