

Astrology¹

Founder: No one individual.

Founding Date: No specific date; very early in mankind's history.

Definition: A method using the position of the planets, sun and moon at the time and place of birth as signposts to explain the person's character, life and destiny.

Philosophical Basis: The occult belief, "As above, so below," holds the view that man and the universe are connected by a mystical force. Therefore, man is a microcosm of the patterns of his planets at birth, and the planets reflect one's inner self.

HISTORY

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 these early peoples noticed the rhythmic movement of certain celestial bodies - the planets - in contrast to the fixity of the more distant stars. This movement seemed purposeful, and therefore the planets were ascribed powers and divinity. They were seen as gods or as the homes of gods. Observing the planets' positions, as well as those of the sun and moon, at certain times and connected to events on earth confirmed the belief that the positions and events were cause and effect. Towers called ziggurats were built as observation and possibly worship platforms. The planets were given names and personalities and said to "rule" certain constellations. The quick-moving Mercury (known by another name) was considered a sly trickster and messenger. Jupiter, known as Marduk, was seen as the most powerful. As time passed, the associations between planets and constellations became stronger. This continues today with Mars being considered the ruler of Aries, Mercury the ruler of Gemini, the Sun the ruler of Leo, etc. Eventually astrology spread to other areas of the world, developing differently in the East. After first resisting astrology, Greece later absorbed it. Because of the Greek emphasis on individuality, astrology was personalized for the first time as a tool for the people other than the kings and rulers. The word "horoscope" comes from the Greek "hora" for hour, and "skopos" for watcher, meaning literally a "watcher of the hour". A chart of the planetary position at birth purported to reveal the person's destiny. The Romans later adopted Greek astrology, giving the planets the Roman names by which we know them today.

THE CHART

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 (each one being 30 degrees), and the planets are placed around the chart according to the degree they are in at birth. 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 chart is calculated with mathematical formulas based on local birth time and latitude and longitude of the birthplace. 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, the angles (number of degrees between the planets) must be considered. Ninety degrees, a square, is considered difficult or challenging; 60 degrees, a sextile, is interpreted as harmonious. There are several types of angles. Present and future influences are read 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. This process is called "updating a chart". 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.

TRADITIONAL ASTROLOGY

Astrology was fatalistic until the middle of the 20th century. The chart delineated a personality and course already ordained by the planetary influences. Aspects of the chart were seen as either beneficial or adverse. 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. A major spiritual influence on traditional astrology which continues to shape astrology today was Theosophy, a belief system with origins in Hinduism founded in the 1800's by the occult seer, Madame Helena Blavatsky. Alice Bailey (1880 - 1949), a follower of Theosophy, wrote *Esoteric Astrology* which added in Bailey's own channelled information from her spirit guide, D.K. These spiritual ideas 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 were developed for chart interpretation by prominent astrologer Isabel Hickey (who died in the 1960's). She placed emphasis on reading one's karmic lesson (lessons from previous lives) in the chart, and on spiritual interpretations. These spiritual ideas were the forerunners of today's New Age Movement.

CONTEMPORARY ASTROLOGY

The major influence on the practice of astrology today, aside from New Age spirituality, is humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Humanistic views centered the chart in the person as the master of his/her fate; the chart became a set of possibilities and choices for the self-aware. The psychological approach was first popularized by Alan Leo (1860 - 1917), a member of the Theosophical Society. Transpersonal Psychology, a legacy of Carl Jung and others, shaped the chart into a tool for understanding the self as part of the whole, and how the self connects to the collective

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unconscious, believed to be the common unconscious shared by all humanity. The three outer planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, became the collective planet since they move so slowly rough the chart. Thus, these three planets came to symbolize generational influences, as well as unconscious influences on the inner personal planets. Both humanistic and transpersonal astrology were especially pioneered by one of the most influential astrologers of the 20th century, Dane Rudhyar (1895 - 1985).

In contemporary astrology, the outer planets are seen as powerful and beyond one's control. Yet astrologers believe that one can still choose how to use that particular force, or how to reap growth through an uncontrolled event. Astrologers also believe that sometimes the planetary lesson is to let go of control and merge with the particular energy of that planet (such as learning to be flexible, different or independent with Uranus, a planet of unexpected events and change). Psychology 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 iether beneficial or adverse. Therefore, it is inaccurate to believe that astrologers think they are ruled by the planets. Astrologers see the chart as a blueprint for the self and soul, a pattern that can be rearranged in various ways by the self - aware individual. There is also belief in the concept of synchronicity, the idea that two events occurring simultaneously but seemingly unrelated have a spiritual symbol for that person. This view is highly popular in contemporary astrology and in the New Age Movement. The core goal is to evolve through self - awareness. Astrology is a tool to "know thyself" as well as a tool of divination. 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. Many astrologers are also practicing psychologists.

ASTRONOMY VS. ASTROLOGY:

Early study of the planets and stars involved both scientific observation and measurements as well as divination based on esoteric interpretations. As science developed, astronomy and astrology grew more separate, especially during the Age of Reason in the 18th century. Most astrology today is geocentric, plotting the planets' positions as though they and the sun move around the earth. Due to the precision of the equinox, 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.

ASTROLOGY AND THE OCCULT

Although heavily laden with psychological terminology, astrology is firmly planted in the occult. It is a form of divination, the use of ungodly supernatural forces or the reading of omens for "hidden" information. The occult always seeks hidden meaning below the surface or in patterns that have no apparent meaning beyond the obvious. Astrological symbols are woven into other occultic arts such as tarot cards, palmistry, numerology, the use of sorcery and the Qabalah. Many astrologers are involved in these or other occultic practices in addition to their astrological work. Practicing astrology enhances powers, often brings on supernatural experiences to the reader and the client, and increases interest in the occult. Astrology, although scientifically faulty and often incorrect, seems to work often enough to impress both the astrologer and the client. Astrology likes to pass itself off as a scientific and psychological tool, ignoring its roots in pagan worship of the stars and in occultism.

BIBLICAL RESPONSE

The Bible condemns divination and worship of the heavens, both of which astrology is a part.

1. Occult divination and reading omens is condemned in Deut. 18:9 - 12 and Daniel 5:7a. The Hebrew words "ashshaph" and "gzar" used in these and other Old Testament passages translate as "conjurer", "enchanter", "soothsayer" and "astrologer". Often the translation into English as "conjurer" or "soothsayer" include those who practised astrology.
2. Astrology originated in worship of the stars and heavens which is condemned in Deut. 4:19, 17:3 and Acts 7:42.
3. Seeking guidance from astrology or any type of divination can replace seeking God for advice and is condemned in Daniel 2:27 - 28 and Isaiah 47:13. Astrology is explicitly condemned in the latter passage.
4. Astrology is not 100% accurate and is therefore not of God as described in Deut. 18:21 - 22.

Because astrologers and those who consult them are attracted to the underlying spiritual beliefs of astrology, scientific arguments against astrology are futile. Debates and verbal criticisms of astrology will not convince, because the battle is spiritual. Attacks usually serve to confirm to astrologers that others cannot understand the esoteric importance and meaning of the art due to ignorance. Astrologers believe higher spiritual laws explain the success and value of astrology. Astrologers, like the followers of the New Age, base truth primarily on experience. Having witnessed astrological charts provide some accurate information, astrologers and their clients are convinced the chart is working based on spiritual and mystical universal laws. The problem is that they do not understand these "laws" are operating on demonic supernatural power. Despite this deception, 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. Other problems replace earlier personal triumphs. The incessant emphasis on self becomes empty. The quest for self-fulfillment and spiritual satisfaction only leads to a constant searching, and a thirst that can only be quenched by the living water of Jesus Christ (John 4:14).

RESOURCES

Astrology, Do the Heavens Rule our Destiny? John Ankerburg and John Weldon, (1989). This is the most accurate and well-researched Christian resource, but unfortunately it is out of print. Check your Church library or used book store. Unfortunately there are no other Christian resources accurate or detailed enough to recommend.

New Age Encyclopedia, First Edition, J. Gordon Melton (1990). Detailed history of the influences and major figures in the development of astrology.

Other resources would be interpretation books by astrologers themselves, such as Dane Rudhyar, Isabel Hickey, Marc Edmund Jones, Robert Hand, Stephen Arroyo, Liz Green, Demetra George and Steve Forrest. The last 5 are the most popular writers by astrologers today.