

Speculative vs. Realized Astrology



In the process of completing my MA in The Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination at the University of Kent, Canterbury, I had the good fortune to be taught by some amazing people. One of my Professors, the acknowledged (if not renowned and famous) astrologer Geoffrey Cornelius, conducted a seminar on the difference between Speculative and Realized interpretations of an astrology chart.

A speculative reading occurs when we understand the symbol and give a literal reading of it and all the possibilities involved. This is the scientific, rational, intellectual approach to astrology, where an aspect is recognized and then the textbook interpretation provided. A speculative reading calls for a technical understanding of the craft, and then goes about interpretation in a technical manner.

For example, those familiar with astrological interpretation may recognize a conjunction of Venus and Pluto if they were to see one in a natal chart. The speculative interpretation would be to consider that Venus represents our expression of love, desire for pleasure, and mode of attracting what we want. Pluto in a chart represents where we experience the impetus to change on deep levels and feel things in a very intense, obsessive, or fated way. These superficial descriptions of these planets could be merged to interpret this conjunction as meaning that the person with this aspect will likely experience fated attractions that are felt on deep or obsessive levels. The house position would then be examined to provide more details into the life of the native. This is a very speculative interpretation of an aspect in a chart.

A realized interpretation is very different. It is an experience. When an interpretation is realized, we understand the technical in order to use it as a symbol. Through the symbol, we are able to give life to aspects that are evident in a birth chart. Speculative readings are always one-off situations, so that the same aspect seen in different charts is not going to mean the exact same thing. It is in realized mode that the birth chart is not seen as something that has a scientific basis, for it does not. Astrology is recognized as a form of divination, a method used to allow the diviner to “divine oneself”, to access energy and wisdom that is not available through our usual patterns of thought. When a reading is realized, through the technique a symbol is seen, and through the symbol we find its’ meaning in a way that connects to the person who is represented in the birth chart.

Let us return to our original example of Venus and Pluto conjunct in a birth-chart. A realized reading would see the aspect and house placement, and its speculative interpretation, as only the beginning. While the technical basis is there, there is an understanding that knowing the technique is only part of the ritual, and the speculative is

only the place from which you “jump”. A realized reading touches on the intangible and perhaps sacred. It is the realized reading that leaves one moved and changed, both the native and the reader. During a realized reading, the diviner sees him or herself as practicing divination, and so trusts their intuition and insights. From this framework, a skilled and realized astrologer will recognize, perhaps, the native as displaying patterns of intensity in relationships and being drawn to the darker aspects of desire. This making the aspect “as” the person and not just a series of likelihoods is the difference between a reading which is merely speculative, versus something that is meaningful, insightful, imaginative, and realized. With a realized reading, the symbol comes to life and is communicated in a way that is deeply meaningful for the native and the astrologer.

The most significant aspect in a realized interpretation is to acknowledge and practice through symbolic vision. This is a vision that is intuitive, makes use of our sixth senses, and has been described as clairvoyance. Though we begin with speculating about the Venus and Pluto conjunction, as we hit on accuracy, we can enter what I call a “flow”. It is in this space that the speculations we make are accurate, because we are in line with a divine aspect to our being. In his book “The Moment of Astrology”, Geoffrey has described this as a “bodily sense, indescribable to one who does not experience it”. We may feel tingles or our hair rise. We may feel our heart beat faster or slower. Either way you are in the zone of a realized reading. For some, like myself, it is a high like no other.