

Astrology's Connection to Archetypal Psychology



Introduction: This paper will explore the historical, contemporary, and theoretical connections between archetypal psychology and psychological astrology. Some questions for exploration include: What are the contemporary connections between these two different practices? What is the historical and theoretical basis for these conceptions? Additionally, this paper will explore the role of fate and polytheism in relationship to archetypal psychology and psychological astrology. What is archetypal psychology's connection to predetermination and polytheism, and how does this fit into an understanding of contemporary psychological astrology? My methodology involves considering past and contemporary thinkers for their responses to these questions.

The Roots of Psychological Astrology: History

In *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, Patrick Curry identifies a branch of astrology called "Psychological Astrology". This

stream arose at the start of the twentieth century from the theosophical astrology system attributed to Alan Leo. Curry states that it was Alan Leo who was paramount in a shift that took place in astrological practices. Leo replaced the notions of predestination and power, and in their place interpreted the celestial bodies as representative of temperament analysis and propensity. Leo asserted that it was one's disposition that led to one's fate. Planetary influence, in and of itself, did not decide our destiny. In doing so, Leo did not address the paradigm of predetermination. Instead, he articulated one's personality as the superseding factor between the planets as intermediaries and one's free will to choose one's destiny.

Curry also points out that Leo's position led to astrology no longer being a tool of unchangeable verity or predictive device, because prediction no longer existed in Leo's model. Leo held that the planets only offer advice and guidance as one makes their own choices amidst uncertain prospects. This approach to astrological interpretation can, for Curry, contribute to greater and unneeded ambiguity.

Curry believes this led to a humanistic interpretation of astrology, which remains dominant today. Psychological astrology rose as an aspect of modern capitalism and, in particular, its exaltation of individualism. This is especially evident for Curry through the particular emphasis placed on the Sun, which in psychological astrology is interpreted as a symbol of the core Self. The Self, as symbolized through the Sun, becomes a focus of astrological interpretation to the detriment of other factors that were, traditionally at least, significant as well. Indicators such as the Ascending sign and the Moon were considered a launching point in understanding individual astrological indications. In psychological astrology, this changes.

In *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology*, Patrick Curry recounts a persecution of Alan Leo, involving a legal trial. The charge Leo was faced with was "fortune telling". This court case occurred in 1917. Leo's defence rested on his assertion that what he practiced was not predictive, but rather involved counsel, guidance, and information based

on proclivity. Leo asserted that it was fundamental to his understanding of astrology that autonomy of the client be recognized. Curry articulates that, despite his defence, Leo lost the case against him. If astrology was to survive it had to become reconfigured to represent the psyche, and avoid prediction.

Curry further states that it is this emphasis on the Self that has led psychological astrology to the fore of contemporary practices. By emphasising "Self-knowledge and Self-transformation", psychological astrologers demonstrate the influence that psychoanalysis has had on the contemporary understanding of the stars. Curry asserts that it is largely the influence of C.G. Jung, and his vacillating between spirituality and psychology, and between impartial and particular, that gave validity to the practice of astrology, which has previously been envisioned as bordering on the occult. It was Jung's work that gave permission for spiritual exploration in the western world at a time when the dominance of science had created an ideology, if not religion, of Scientism. This contributed to a contradiction in psychological astrology, which is still evidenced today. On the one hand, there is the aforementioned emphasis on self-determination. On the other hand, astrology borrows from a Ptolemaic model of a predetermined beginning instant, which is that moment of one's birth.

The roots of psychological astrology do go beyond Alan Leo. Astrology's reformulation, so that it may be accepted and survive in the political and cultural climate it is in, can be seen in the time of the renaissance. In Marsilio Ficino, Angela Voss discusses the journey that Ficino underwent as an astrologer who was also a priest. Voss articulates the historical context that gave rise to an appreciation of the human soul as self-governing and divine at once. This was a context that involved the ideology of the Christian church, which held self-determination of the human being and monotheism as important principles. Here we see the beginnings of participating in the cosmos, as opposed to the planets determining one's fate. As Voss states, for Ficino the planets and the

usage of astrology was for the benefit of one's spiritual revealing. The planets are thus emulated and represented in the soul, and their metaphors and symbolism can be used to bring direction and elevation to one's spiritual self. Ficino's work created the groundwork for the joining of astrology and theology, as Patrick Curry has credited Alen Leo for bringing together astrology and theosophy, as foundational to psychological astrology.

Patrick Curry and Geoffrey Cornelius have articulated the connection between contemporary psychological astrology and the very foundations of western astrology, which represent a more fatalistic interpretation of the heavens. In *The Moment of Astrology*, Geoffrey Cornelius asserts that Ptolemy considers the moment of conception and the moment of birth as vital in an understanding of the composition of one's soul, and hence one's personal tendencies. Ptolemy considers this as part of an all-inclusive synchronization of the cosmos, so that it is part of the whole of the collective. In this way, one's individual path becomes integrated and part of a larger cultural enfoldment which begins at a precise moment, thought of as a seed point of beginning for the individual, among many seed moments for all people.

Cornelius uses Dane Rudhyar, as a pre-eminent psychological astrologer, to articulate how the moment of birth is indicative of a representative answer within psychological astrology. The astrological chart that is produced, reflecting one's moment of birth, becomes a map of the potentialities inherent within the psyche of the individual. The birth chart thus contains a code of self-discovery and an individualized blue print of possibilities inherent to the individual. In both the Ptolemaic and Rudhyar articulations, it remains that there is a predetermined and unalterable moment that is the deciding factor, regardless of how the birth chart is interpreted. The birth chart exists and represents a truth that stands outside the action of analysis.

Key People in the Development of Contemporary Psychological Astrology

Patrick Curry identifies several key people in the development of psychological astrology. Among them are Dane Rudhyar and Liz Greene.

Dane Rudhyar's articulation of psychological astrology can be found in *The Astrology of Personality*. Rudhyar argues that the history and changes that have taken place in astrology can best be understood by an appreciation of our changing attitudes towards nature. By nature he means not only our external environment, and our relationship to our peripheral world, but our internal relationship with our instincts, drives, and consciousness as well. Rudhyar asserts that as our understanding of life, and our most recent understanding of our psychological reality, has gone through redefinition and reformulation, so too has astrology. Astrology is only a reflection of our functional beliefs about living. Astrology represents how people respond to life. Rudhyar maintains that what we ask of our astrology must fit into our current understanding of what it means to be human.

Rudhyar further argues that, considering astrology is relative to its time and context, it is no longer relevant to practice an astrology that is based on the Ptolemaic model presented two thousand years ago. Though he acknowledges the contributions ancient astrologers like Ptolemy have made to his field, he also points out that the astrology that has been practiced in the past, and through many eras, involve a completely different psychic, intuitive, and intellectual world-view which, though right for their times, are no longer relevant today.

Rudhyar's central assertion is that astrology is a living practice, which reflects and integrates the understandings and thoughts of the time. Though it is valuable to appreciate the history of astrology in order to place it in context, it is important to astrology's survival that it be thought of as breathing and active, able to accurately serve people with its benefits. It is only when astrology integrates with the dominant understandings of human consciousness that it remains authentic. For Rudhyar, astrology articulates symbols of existence. As symbols, they are in constant evolution and renewal. Astrology cannot be separated from its symbols. Symbols

that are relevant in one context are meaningless in another. Rudhyar carefully conveys how this integration of astrology and current thought has been in relationship through history . He encourages his readers to consider a new paradigm of astrology to allow it to truly serve those utilizing its benefits.

For Rudhyar, the innovations of psychoanalysis have created a new paradigm with which human beings view all aspects of life, including the self. Older models pale in relevance in light of psychoanalytic advancements. Rudhyar further reinforces the relationship between astrology and analytical psychology (analytical psychology as foundational to archetypal psychology). Rudhyar asserts his intention to reformulate astrology to address the needs of the contemporary western mind. Rudhyar states that, in utilizing C.G. Jung's ideas of analytical psychology, astrology becomes a living system of symbols, which can be used to accurately reflect the psyche of an individual represented through the birth chart. By keeping astrology as a living practice, it will accurately fulfil its function of bringing order and wholeness to those utilizing it, which is interrelated to the goals of analytical psychology.

In *The Astrology of Fate*, Liz Greene admits that psychological astrology has sought to disown its connection to the traditional astrological view as put forth by Ptolemy, especially when it centres around questions of fate and free-will. Though Greene acknowledges that traditional astrologers provided predictions that were true in their time, she questions the reliability to their methods in the contemporary world. Greene considers the contextual nature of past astrological methods as pointing towards the changes that have occurred in culture and in the understanding of the fate. Greene asserts that in times when traditional astrology was the dominant model of practice, times when astrology was used largely to reveal symbols of outer events, people were not aware of the depths of the psychological reality that lay within. A person was their assumed role, and was personified by his position in society. The psychological paradigm today holds that people are many things simultaneously.

Greene asserts that astrology had to be more fatalistic five hundred years ago because people of that time lacked the insight into the role that their perceptions have on their external environment. As our awareness of our inner complexity has changed, so too has there been a change in our understanding of what astrological symbols indicate. Greene asserts that this new understanding of the birth chart is done not to escape fate, but rather, in order to understand and relate what the birth chart is representing from an internalized, and perhaps also externalized, perspective.

Greene acknowledges the discomfort that exists within psychological astrologers and the questions of predetermination and prediction. On the one hand, there is the acknowledgement that the birth chart represents a moment of time which is outside of one's conscious control, and therefore fated. On the other, there exists the notion that regardless of what potentialities exist within a birth chart; a person is essentially in possession of a free will and will do what one chooses with the opportunities present at the time of birth.

Greene further articulates two key concerns with contemporary psychological astrology's struggle with the question of fate. The first involves the identification of trends that contain within them the possibilities of what one may experience. The other has to do with separating the body, which is the birth chart, with the spirit, which is essentially free to decide and make its own choices. In one perspective, moments can arise in one's life that appear predetermined. But the perception of the event, how one chooses to interpret what is happening, and the meaning one will derive from it falls into the realm of self-determination. The inner life can be as predetermined as outside events appear to be, and yet at the same time, there appears to be a lot of room for personal choice. In its most hopeful articulation, Greene sees psychological astrology as being able to reveal what it is that one will require to allow the disclosure of one's fate, and thereby a more meaningful life.

Criticisms

Patrick Curry asserts that what is actually in practice within psychological astrology is 'concrete magic'. The birth chart is a map of the Self, presented in a guise that is a part of a one-sided, spiritual prescription that is palatable within a secularized framework. The map of the psyche is no longer a revelation into the soul, as the origin of the word "psyche" would suggest, but is now an internal hierarchy where the Sun, as representing the Self, takes precedence above all else. Curry contends that the planets, as seen within the psychological astrology framework, are not deities that live with and through us, but have become acceptable as psychological aspects of one person, bringing again the reiteration of the exaltation of individualism. The external environment is either downplayed or ignored. Everything we experience in the world is, in this framework, a result of our own internal projections outward. It isn't that events are happening to us. The emphasis is on how we create, perceive, and experience the events that matter. This puts the emphasis on the Self and removes the Self from the world. By becoming aware of what one is projecting, they can, in theory, begin to make choices with greater awareness. A change of choices leads to a change of one's fate, and makes any external force or environment either remotely secondary or inconsequential.

Maggie Hyde believes that psychological astrology splits the Self from the external, participatory world. In *Jung and Astrology*, Hyde articulates the contrasts between psychological astrology and traditional astrology. One of Hyde's criticisms articulates the contrast in how the external environment is understood and represented in these two systems. Classical astrology not only discloses the Self, but the Self within the external world, and the external world itself. By emphasising the internal unconscious and conscious drives of an individual, it is how events are perceived, and not the events themselves, that take on primary significance. The birth chart is thus used to uncover unconscious drives and motivations that are indicating how one may be perceiving events in one's life. In this way, psychological astrology seeks to empower people by

shedding light on what they are projecting. This is what Hyde terms 'psychological reductionism', where everything that happens in one's life can be deduced to what is going on in one's mind.

Cornelius asserts that Rudhyar's psychological astrology, with its emphasis on the Self as centre and further reinforcing the exaltation of individualism, has reinvented traditional models of understanding celestial indicators. What psychological astrology has done is made interpretation a method of spiritual insight and emotional understanding by re-imagining and reformulating the planets as only aspects of one's psyche and removed any notions of externalized events. The emphasis falls towards potential, as opposed to expression and lived experience. By avoiding the question of fatalism, personality astrology seeks to benefit from the foundations and methods of western astrology without the responsibility of precise interpretation and predicting past, present, or future materialization of specific events. Even in this attempt, Cornelius argues that psychological astrology still reinforces the predeterminism inherent in Ptolemy's astrology by considering consciousness as inevitable as events. In so doing, psychological astrology not only stays within the confines of the cosmos as set forth by Ptolemy, but also remains indebted to it.

Archetypal Psychology, Psychological Astrology, and Polytheism

Maggie Hyde asserts that one of the most significant aspects of Jung's work to influence psychological astrology is his theory of the archetype. The main task of a Jungian analyst is to take a symbol being represented, usually within a dream, connecting it to an archetype, and presenting it to the individual being analysed. It is through the symbol that that a reconnection can be made. So it is also with an astrologer, who must look at a birth chart for its symbols and make connections to an archetype being presented, for the benefit and reconnection of the client for whom the chart is being interpreted.

C.G. Jung considered archetypes to be mystical occurrences that are characterized by a surge emotion. Archetypes are simultaneously imagery and sensation. A picture in and of itself has little significance for Jung. It is the adding of sentiment and sensation that gives the image a magical quality, a spiritual power. They are lively and vibrant, with a force that results in a definitive outcome.

For Maggie Hyde, it is the astrological emblem, the mythic icon that is presented in the sky and in one's birth chart that the psychological astrologer hopes to utilize to call forth an archetype, which allows the experience of reconnection to a more meaningful existence that perhaps a client is seeking. It is the concept of the archetype that has been embraced by psychological astrology's practitioners as a way to modernize astrological practice and leave traditional paradigms, with their emphasis on the external, behind. By utilizing interpretation strategies such as metaphor and an articulation of attitude, and through understanding the nature of an archetype as an organizing tenet, perhaps the astrologer can facilitate a state of awareness to be brought about through a reading of a birth chart. In order to effectively do this, the psychological astrologer must be aware of archetypes, their connecting astrological emblem, and the interwoven gods who also connect to the symbol and archetype.

Patrick Curry notes that within psychological astrology a current of pluralism has been influencing the understanding of archetypes since the 1980s. From the inherent monotheistic bias of Jung, which contributed to the over valuing of the Self as Sun, comes a more integrated model which accounts for various influences that could lead to a more diverse model. Curry recognizes James Hillman, a pre-eminent Jungian analyst, as being at the forefront of the integration of pluralism, polytheism, and psychological astrology.

For James Hillman, archetypal psychology allows a recovery of perspectives that polytheism allows. In *Archetypal Psychology*, Hillman states that archetypal psychology benefits the patient of psychotherapy

and our wider culture by embracing the wisdom, which is present for him, in a polytheistic perspective. Polytheism and archetypal psychology, taken together, offer another method of undertaking religious studies and also of understanding religious perspectives. Hillman, while citing others including David L. Miller, calls this a “new polytheism”.

James Hillman did address astrology directly, and astrology’s connection to archetypal psychology and polytheism. In “Heaven Retains Within Its Sphere Half of All Bodies and Maladies”, Hillman calls astrology an archetypal occurrence. Hillman considers astrology to be prevalent, eternal, ageless, expressively undeniable, profoundly reverberating, and impressively risky. For all these reasons he considers it accurate to consider astrology as deeply integrated with archetypal psychology. As an interconnected aspect of archetypal psychology, astrology is permanently a fixture in our culture, just as archetypes, and the deities reflected in them, are forever prevalent and immortal as well. Hillman further asserts astrology as inherently polytheistic, with its integration of myth, poetry, and even fatalism. Hillman’s perspective of astrology allows the cosmos to be intelligent, significant, eloquent, and purposeful. Astrology for Hillman causes people to think in multifaceted ways about the psyche, and is therefore polytheistic. It runs opposite the dominant monotheistic paradigm of the west.

Furthering the perspective of archetypal psychology, Hillman asserts that every aspect represented in astrology, as representing an archetype, contains elements that are open to interpretation and value judgements. Taken another way, what could appear on the surface to be difficult in its shadow side, may on the other hand provide valuable knowledge and benefits to the psyche. Just as every planet represents a curse or a blessing, so too does every deity. Hillman advises a move away from literalism and towards the symbolic image being presented in astrology, and finding correlations to the message the gods wish to deliver.

Hillman addresses the concept of fatalism that psychological astrology has worked hard to move away from. On the one hand, Hillman points to the idea of location. Much like the starting point of Ptolemy, Hillman discusses the birth chart as a place of beginning, which reflects the elemental composition of the soul, seeming to provide allusion to the predeterminism that psychological astrology has been criticised for disinherit. At the same time, Hillman warns against what he terms "astrological literalism". The first type of literalism is identified as "temporal". This is mistaking the ritual of practicing astrology as actual scientific conduct. While the beginning point of the birth chart is important, it is important to Hillman that precision not take the place of the sacrosanct experience of creating and interpreting a birth chart. The second type of literalism for Hillman involves matters of attributing cause and forecasting. This, for Hillman, creates a separation between the experience of the client and what a client may consider to be fated. It is important to stay focused on the experience being symbolized rather than predicting a future that does not take into account the complexity of the current moment. Hillman reasserts that there are no causes, thereby legitimizing psychological astrology's tenet of free will.

For Hillman, archetypal psychology and psychological astrology are linked in that they both provide a way to add a sacred dimension to human experience. It is through astrology that one can reclaim an experience of the divine, for which we are all, according to Hillman, searching for. This explains the feeling of revelation that is experienced by the astrologer or the client when accuracy in interpretation is achieved. But when Hillman talks about accuracy, it is not just technical accuracy he speaks of. When the astrological symbol becomes the voice for living archetype, the representative of a god, is when transformation can occur for both client and astrologer. This keeps the gods alive and well, and makes astrology a sacred practice. It becomes a type of prayer, where the client can see themselves more honestly and in more multi faceted terms, and thereby acknowledge what it is within their psyche that needs to be addressed. In working on the psyche, one is working on something indeed sacred and

sacrosanct. Astrology, with its emphasis on the psychological, ultimately is a sacred occurrence, which brings us in deeper connection and relationship with the larger cosmos. This is a connection with our own daimon of fate, and gives life purpose, meaning, and significance at times when our psyche brings events that appear random and inconsequential.

Conclusions

As thinkers in this paper have articulated, psychological astrology appears to have grown out of a response to a changing understanding of the relationship between the internal human environment and the larger external environment. On the one hand, psychological astrology is perhaps a response to the historical context that astrology has found itself in. Astrology appears to have been asked to adapt if it was to be considered relevant to the various reinterpretations of human consciousness. At the same time, astrology appears to remain true in some respects to the formulations of the past.

Psychological astrology continues to balance the line between predeterminism and self-agency, and between archetypal, and therefore polytheistic understanding of the self within a secular, and perhaps monotheistic, dominant world-view. It is significant that psychological astrology appears to continue to evolve and understand itself in new ways, or perhaps is slowly conceding that it is much more like traditional models than it would have previously felt safe to acknowledge. The connection between archetypal psychology and astrology is that it is archetypal psychology that has allowed astrology a context to further explore itself and its significance in our understanding of the cosmos and its interconnection to the self.

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