

Astrology as Divination



“JUDGMENT must be regulated by thyself, as well as by the science; for it is not possible that particular forms of events should be declared by any person, however scientific; since the understanding conceives only a certain general idea of some sensible event, and not its particular form. It is, therefore, necessary for him who practices herein to adopt inference. They only who are inspired by the deity can predict particulars.”

– Ptolemy, *THE CENTILOQUY*

I write this as Mars has moved into Aries, so it seems fitting to begin with a bold statement; every single major religion on the planet has astrology weaved into its mythology and history. There is not one religion that is spared the influence of astrology as an integral spiritual practice with deeply religious roots. Our practice is inherently sacred, spiritual, and as Ptolemy’s quote suggests, techniques are established

and imperative, but mean nothing without inspiration if we are to make a precise and relevant interpretation.

Inside every astrologer beats the heart of a person who trusts himself or herself, trusts their inner authority, and believes in their right to cultivate a personal relationship with the divine. No matter how unconscious this drive may be, it is this inner drive to experience a personal connection with sacred energy that allows astrologers the confidence required to practice their chosen ritual.

This inner trust in our intuition is what defines the difference between an interpretation of the chart that is speculative versus realized. 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 procedural manner. As Ptolemy, the Godfather of western astrology, states in the quote above, this “conceives only a certain general idea of some sensible event”.

A realized interpretation is very different. It is an experience. When an interpretation is realized, we understand the mechanical applications in order to use it as a symbol. Through the symbol, we are able to give life to features that are evident in a 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 interpretive

technique a symbol is seen, and through the symbol we find its' meaning in a way that connects to the person, place, or event represented in the chart.

The most significant aspect in a realized interpretation is to acknowledge and practice through symbolic vision. This is a vision that is intuitive and makes use of our sixth sense. This is also what Ptolemy indicates when he calls on astrologers to allow themselves to be "inspired by the deity". Though we begin with speculating, 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 and deeply relevant, because we are in line with a divine aspect to our being. In his book "The Moment of Astrology", Geoffrey Cornelius 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 we are in the zone of a realized reading.

As a quick example, we can take the Sun in the natal chart. I have heard and read the Sun described as our core, our center point, the place we find our self, where we shine, find illumination, our rationality, intellect, prophesy point, higher self, Christ principal, ego, identity, consciousness, and our father. All these interpretations are influenced by different schools of astrology and are valid in their own right. However, some of these interpretations do conflict. All these attributes cannot be allocated to the Sun all of the time. Additionally, while there are many astrologers who are faithful to a single system, my informal observation is that most are not. Like other modern New-Age spiritual practices, there is a "cafeteria" element to our practice. Part of the fun of being an astrologer is that there is always more to learn. We are in some way always a student. There are never-ending interpretations and techniques to explore, apply, test, and consider.

If all these interpretations can be applied to the Sun, then which one would be most valid? This is where knowing all the applications of the Sun is valuable because as we approach the chart and begin to speculate, we have the language that would allow us to make the “jump” into a realized interpretation. We understand all the things that the Sun could mean for our client, and then take the leap of faith to speak the thing it does mean in the heart, life, and psyche of the person we are serving in that instance.

If astrology were a practice of divination, dependent on divine inspiration, then why would we bother drawing charts and concern ourselves with the accuracy of place and time if it all comes down to the judgment of the astrologer? We do it because it is a part of the ritual. Astrology is a sacred practice, and to draw the chart with honest accuracy and to care about the integrity of the techniques utilized within the astrological system we practice, means that we are honoring the rites of our chosen practice. It means that we recognize the special place that astrologers have had in the religious and personal history of the people our community has served since the beginning of civilization. To carry that tradition forward in our own modern way involves respect of its rituals, integrity of its techniques, and additionally, trust in the divine impetus within.

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