

# Astrology—Part Two

By Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. John Weldon

## DIFFICULTIES IN CHART INTERPRETATION

Interpreting the horoscope chart is like interpreting Rorschach “inkblots.” Not only are there all manner of inkblots, but different interpretations for the same inkblot. In the same way there are any number of factors or variables by which to interpret a horoscope chart, and astrologers disagree on many principles of interpretation. The reason for this is that their interpretations spring from their astrological schooling, their personalities, goals, and purposes, as well as many other factors. Joanne Sanders, an astrologer and coordinator of the Washington, D.C., Astrology Forum, believes that astrologers’ “readings vary with the differences in their philosophical outlooks.”<sup>1</sup>

There are several basic reasons why such wide disagreement over interpretations exists. A horoscope comprises 30 to 40 major factors, and the astrologer must also interpret another 60 to 70 minor indicators. As a result, there are almost an infinite number of possible combinations, permutations, and meanings.

Doris Chase Doane, president of the American Federation of Astrologers, has admitted that the chief cause that up-and-coming astrologers fail their entrance examination is their inability to properly erect, or construct, a chart (to accurately list and plot all of the indicators). She confesses, “*This is the most common reason—the Pitfall—for students failing in this and higher examinations. They do not know how to erect a chart accurately.*”<sup>2</sup> She has further calculated the *least* possible number of different combinations resulting from the most basic or simple chart. Given 12 signs, 10 planets (8 plus the sun and moon), 12 houses, and 10 aspects, she arrives at the figure of 5.4 times 10<sup>68</sup> possible minimum combinations. This number is roughly equivalent to the estimated number of atoms in the known universe!<sup>3</sup>

Romanian astrologer Sir John Manolesco has also illustrated the complexity an astrologer faces. He has concluded that of the tens of thousands of astrologers in the Western world there are less than a hundred who can claim to have mastered the subject “There are at least 45 factors—planets, houses, aspects, strengths and weaknesses, ascendant, critical degrees, sun and moon polarities, constellations, etc.—which combine and influence one another in a thousand different ways. In this labyrinth of complexities, the average (still worse, the untrained) astrologer is as puzzled as his client.”<sup>4</sup>

Keep in mind that each astrologer must also obey the cardinal rule of chart interpretation: No indicator can be judged in isolation from any other factor. But it is virtually impossible for any astrologer to know all the indicators, to synthesize the chart “in context,” for he knows only a fraction of the total astrological “reality” before him. And how may any reading be truly accurate when one is faced with contradictory interpretations of the data?<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps an analogy will be helpful. Think of a huge, detailed map of the United States. The facts to be remembered on the map may include 50 states, 5000 counties, and at least 6000 chief cities and towns. Then there are highways, rivers, mountains, lakes, parks, and points of interest. In addition, the map’s key contains many symbols for interpreting the map properly (e.g., symbols for boundaries, distances, city sizes, types of road).

If this map were an astrologer’s chart, how would a person interpret it if he discovered that other maps contradicted this map? What if he discovered no agreement as to the

number of states, counties, cities, or their boundaries? What if each map defined the symbols differently? What could he conclude about using any of the maps? Wouldn't he conclude this to be a hopeless situation?

Many astrologers recognize the problems, and to get around them they turn to another source of information. "Before interpreting a chart, it is very good to do one thing: either silently, or aloud, ask for clear guidance from the powers that you choose to create... from your higher self, from the divine... ask, and you shall receive..."<sup>6</sup> The astrologer's only option, then, is either to guess or to trust in a supposed "higher" power, or psychic revelations, to sort things out. We will see below that this often means spiritistic guidance.

To further complicate matters of interpretation, astrologers have different kinds of charts to choose from, all with varying indicators and rules. One authority lists 14 different charts, such as the "solar return," "lunar return," "solar equilibrium," "ingress," and "johndro."<sup>7</sup> Theoretically, there are as many different charts as there are individual schools or systems of astrology, and since each system or school can develop its own chart, the number of different charts must number in the hundreds.<sup>8</sup> And then there are different types of astrology, such as horary, natal, mundane, electional, medical, and so on. This is why leading authorities advise the following: "As authorities vary in approach to, and rules for delineating the horary chart, you can best prepare yourself by studying one authority in depth."<sup>9</sup> And, "If it works for you, use it."<sup>10</sup>

Viewed worldwide, astrological contradictions are even more apparent. James Braha observes that in India "a seemingly infinite number of rules and astrological techniques have been developed by the Indians."<sup>11</sup> Over and over again he states that they contradict Western methods. In ancient Babylon, the practice of "draconic astrology" (still used today) presents entirely different beliefs, practices and sets of rules.<sup>12</sup> In China there are entirely different astrologies.<sup>13</sup> In Mexico, "Aztec astrology" is different from the above, and so it goes.<sup>14</sup> Within each of these schools, or systems, subsystems also contradict each other

Furthermore, every chart indicator, potentially, has not only an exoteric (outer) but also an esoteric (inner) reality, which supposedly unveils "the hidden meaning."<sup>15</sup> Astrologers believe that "each planet in a sign holds a multitude of implications. Besides each sign having an exoteric ruler, considered to be the pure outer expression of the sign's characteristics, a sign has an esoteric ruler."<sup>16</sup>

How did such a hopeless situation originate? Astrologer Richard Nolle describes the educational "evolution" of an astrologer, which we summarize as: a) begin by learning the "traditional" meanings as they are given (but these are contradictory and the student soon realizes this); therefore, b) assimilate the meanings into "our own frame of reference" to "develop our own particular and unique astrological perspective." In other words, there are no objective standards. Believe whatever you wish. Use the standard text interpretations (which vary), but then feel free to reject the standard interpretations and discover "the answer is within yourselves," and you will be able to "make your own discoveries."<sup>17</sup> This is why Nolle acknowledges there are as many different astrologies as there are astrologers,<sup>18</sup> and that chart interpretation does not utilize "objective laws" but "intuitive selections."<sup>19</sup>

Someone has satirically said that the process of becoming an astrologer is one of beginning with a state of initial confusion, leading to a state of greater confusion, which is finally rationalized by "intuitive insight." Clearly, the theories of astrology, the symbols, the indicators, and so on carry no ultimate definitive meaning. They are merely vehicles to stimulate the thinking of the astrologer. From that point on it is cosmic roulette as to astrological interpretation.

## Notes:

1. Joanne Sanders, "Connecting Therapy to the Heavens," *The Common Boundary*, January-February 1987, p. 14.
2. Doris Chase Doane, *How to Prepare and Pass an Astrologers Certificate Exam*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1985, p. 38.
3. Doris Chase Doane, *Astrology: Thirty Years Research*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1985, p. 1.
4. Sir John Manolesco, *Scientific Astrology*, New York: Pinnacle Books, 1975, p. 130.
5. David and Gina Cochrane, *New Foundations for Astrology*, Alachua, FL: Astrological Counseling and Research, 1977, p. 3.
6. Marcus Allen, *Astrology for the New Age: An Intuitive Approach*, Sebastopol, CA: CRCS Publications, 1979, p. 104.
7. Mae R. Wilson-Ludlam, *Interpret Your Rays Using Astrology*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1986, p. 118.
8. Check the "Astrology" section in a bookstore for numerous examples.
9. Doane, *How to Prepare*, p. 49.
10. Joan McEvers, ed., *Spiritual, Metaphysical and New Trends in Modern Astrology*, St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1988, p. 121.
11. Sabian Publishing Society, *Astrology Books by Marc Edmund Jones: A Commentary*, Stanwood, WA: Sabian Publishing Society, 1987, p. X.
12. Pamela A. F. Crane, *Draconic Astrology: An Introduction to the Use of Draconic Charts in Astrological Interpretation*, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: Aquarian Press, 1987, pp. 1-58, 95-123, 143-189.
13. Derek Walters, *Chinese Astrology*, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press, 1987; Sage Mantreswara, *Jataka Phaladeepika or Hindu Astrology's Light on the Fruits of Action*, Trans. K. N. Saraswathy, Madras, South India: Kadalangudi Publications, 1983; James T. Braha, *Ancient Hindu Astrology for the Modern Western Astrologer*, North Miami, FL: Hermetician Press, 1986.
14. K. C. Tunnicliffe, *Aztec Astrology*, Essex, Great Britain: L. N. Fowler & Co., Ltd., 1979, pp. 1-90.
15. Wilson-Ludlam, *Interpret Your Rays*, p. 34.
16. Ibid.
17. Richard Nolle, *Interpreting Astrology: New Techniques and Perspectives*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1986, p. 1-2.
18. Richard Nolle, *Critical Astrology: Investigating the Cosmic Connection*, Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1980, p. 2.
19. Nolle, *Interpreting Astrology*, p. 84.