



Psychological Astrology as a Diagnostic and Therapeutic Tool

By Boris Matthews, PhD

As a psychotherapist and depth psychologist I have been fascinated by astrology for a long time. Yes, for many people, astrology is a column in the paper where you can read something about your sun sign and have a laugh. For others, astrology is the gold standard of superstition. But both reactions miss something important: the astrological birth chart holds a wealth of information beyond the sun sign. The birth chart—the natal horoscope—can be understood as a map or diagram of the basic pattern of an individual's personality. This is a map or diagram that can be very useful to an individual in understanding himself or herself and to an appropriately trained therapist in working with a client.

I'll try to explain --

Wouldn't it be wonderful to see who we were before the experiences of life altered and shaped our behaviors and habits? A psychological reading of the natal horoscope can show us the fundamental patterns that mold our behavior, our emotions and our beliefs. For example, it can help us understand and move beyond the types of experiences we repeat and in which we get "stuck". In the natal horoscope we can see the areas of life that are especially important to us: important because that is where we put our energy as well as well as where we run into difficulties.

Since it diagrams the basic pattern of the personality, each of us will experience the various facets of the horoscope many times in the course of life. But this is not a fatalistic statement! Knowledge can liberate us from blind, uncomprehending repetition. The natal horoscope can provide the accurate self-knowledge of patterns in our essential personality. With this knowledge we can more consciously work on removing obstacles that hinder us; we can better understand our vulnerabilities; we can gain greater self-acceptance. We can become more integrated within ourselves.

All this is likewise valuable to a psychotherapist appropriately trained to understand a client's birth chart. The astrologically trained psychotherapist can utilize a client's birth chart to identify the essential structure of the personality. More, from the client's horoscope, the astrologically trained psychotherapist can recognize where the client gets stuck or wounded and what sort of experiences and areas of life are especially important, meaningful or problematic to the client.

There are many books about astrology on the market, including psychological astrology,

on the market. A quick search on Amazon.com will bring up many titles. For readers who want a systematic and rigorous grounding in psychological astrology, I can highly recommend *An Introduction to AstroPsychology: A Synthesis of Modern Astrology & Depth Psychology* by Glenn Perry. (Full disclosure: I am currently studying with Dr. Perry.) In his book, Dr. Perry integrates astrology and depth psychology, producing a theory of personality that is useful to the individual who wants to understand himself or herself, as well as to the clinician who recognizes the diagnostic and therapeutic value of understanding the client's natal horoscope.

I find the marriage of depth psychology and psychological astrology offers a synergy and opportunity for more precise diagnosis and better targeted treatment in psychotherapy. As I persevere in my study of psychological astrology and begin to introduce it into my practice, I am repeatedly amazed by the abundance of information it brings to light and how consulting a natal horoscope can help me see the crucial issues and areas in my clients' lives more quickly and clearly.

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