

Is Donald Trump Crazy?

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If you're reading this commentary, you probably don't need me to reiterate the litany of statements and responses by Donald Trump that have left people scratching their heads and wondering if Donald Trump is crazy. At any given moment in his ongoing public performance, Trump is liable to say damn near anything.

Some of what Trump says is insightful and incisive in accurately reading the tenor of the times, most typically in articulating the dissatisfaction, anger, and even rage among segments of the body politic, particularly older white males who feel that their privileges have been minimized, lost, or taken away.

Other Trump pronouncements, however, seem utterly divorced from reality. Is he simply out of control and unable to restrain his narcissism? Or is Trump, as billionaire businessman Mark Cuban recently asserted, "bat-shit crazy"?

These questions bring up numerous important and often misunderstood truths about astrology, most of which I've talked about for decades. Donald Trump's behavior — throughout his life in the public arena, more pointedly on the campaign trail during his run for the presidency, and most especially as the brouhaha surrounding his most recent statements reaches fever pitch in the media — gives me yet another opportunity to clarify what astrology is and is not, and what charts can and can't tell us.

Natal charts reveal how individuals are hard-wired. They show us a schematic diagram of the principles, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes out of which we build our personal realities. This is structured in a natural hierarchy of meaning: some parts of our characters are more important than others. Everything in a chart has meaning, but not all meanings carry the same weight. That may seem obvious, but it's often overlooked. Students of the system and even some professional astrologers sometimes amplify the importance of relatively minor configurations in the chart or interpret them in isolation. Both tendencies are understandable, given the complexity of the system and the inherent challenges of verbal or written communication, but each muddies the waters of comprehensive and accurate interpretation.

Every combination of symbols has a set of generic meanings that represents a kind of background tonality, but any combination of symbols in a particular chart is modified by other factors in the chart and by the chart as a whole, effectively adding specific and custom-tailored meanings that apply only to the chart in question. Many “chart interpretations,” especially computer-generated reports, are little more than a compendium of these generic interpretations. No attempt is even made to account for the interaction of many symbols or the overall implication of meaning for the chart as a whole.

Unlike science, which attempts to limit or control variables that might affect the outcome of an experiment, astrology regards all components as essential rather than extraneous. When Marc Edmund Jones, one of the seminal astrologers of the first half of the 20th century, was asked to define astrology, he replied that astrology was “the study of the relationship of everything to everything else.” That may have been more poetic than literal, but it resonates nicely to astrology’s reflecting life in ways that are both amazing and difficult.

Nothing in a chart (or precious little, anyway) operates in isolation. Every alignment of symbols in astrology — a planet in a sign or ruling a house, an aspect between two planets, etc. — contributes to and is modified by the whole. A hallmark of astrological interpretive technique is that symbols that are relatively isolated from the overall design of the chart take one of two directions. Either they “stick out like a sore thumb” or they remain silent and don’t operate at all. Even those minimally integrated factors are not completely isolated, however. They are still rightly considered in light of the overall hierarchy of meaning, even when contradictory.

Astrology is brilliant at delineating the fundamental core of meaning versus the periphery of other traits and characteristic approaches we use to build and support our sense of central meaning. That’s not a fact, of course, but my strongly held opinion. I wouldn’t have spent 46 years studying and using astrology if I felt otherwise.

That doesn’t imply, however, that I believe astrology to be infallibly accurate or to provide answers to every question. In my opinion, it isn’t, and it doesn’t.

First off, astrology cannot answer every question. Many questions have no resolution from within the system, only a range of possible outcomes. Frequently, such questions can be “answered” only in hindsight, by observing how the person lives and what happens along the way. Other times, the questions themselves are specious. A question such as, “Will I ever be happy?” simply cannot be addressed.

Astrology is a language of symbols. As such, it’s a sub-set of life and operates from within life, not from beyond it. Learning to speak the astrological language tells us which questions to ask about any given chart, or, in more pragmatic

terms, which questions to ask about the real life that is linked to any chart. In natal astrology, that life is an individual, typically human. Part of what becomes obvious after studying the system for awhile is that not all questions are relevant for every chart. Each chart presents its own set of patterns, and thus each chart comes with custom-tailored possibilities.

Knowing the date, time, and place of a person's birth (first breath of autonomy) allows us to erect an accurate map of the solar system that shows us in symbolic form the meaning of that time-space moment. Typically, personal astrology is geocentric: The map is drawn from the perspective of the individual. That may not be "scientific" in the way science is normally considered, but it's the correct approach to illuminate meaning for that particular individual.

The chart itself, however, won't tell us the nature of its subject. Charts are simply maps of a moment in time and space, viewed from a specific point of view. If someone tells me that a certain chart is the natal chart of an individual, I can't know whether the person is male or female. The chart itself won't tell me, because it doesn't contain that information. I need a name to know the gender of the person. In purely symbolic terms, gender may not matter. In real life, however, gender makes a difference in how we understand a given life. Context matters, and charts provide only limited context. We need information from beyond the chart to apply the astrological insights in a meaningful way.

So, despite the wealth of information that any chart provides, an undeniable truth of astrology is that no chart can tell us everything we need to know for comprehensive understanding.

The most critical factors that natal charts *don't* contain and cannot tell us is *anything* about the consciousness and maturity of the individuals to whom they "belong" or refer. Charts tell us how we're built, not what we do with how we're built. In other words, astrology cannot predict and does not reveal simple value judgments about how well or badly our life-challenges might be expressed in manifestation. Yes, charts often specify that some developments will be easier or more difficult for us in experience, but that's not a good/bad judgment.

By applying typical cultural standards, charts can delineate both positive and negative experiences that are possible or likely to occur, but they cannot tell us with any degree of certainty or accuracy which might happen at a given time. The symbols of astrology necessarily include both positive and negative expressions, especially during sensitive time frames of heightened sensitivity when certain events or experiences are more likely.

The mandala of symbols in a natal chart reveals to the astrologer a great deal about the life-journey of an individual. It shows where we start and where we'll naturally tend to go, as well as many of the experiences that might, could, or will occur along the way, whether those experiences happen because of our own

choices and behaviors (i.e., experiences that happen *out of us*), because we encounter them on our journeys (i.e., experiences that happen *to us*), or both. The chart also defines the ways we achieve and maintain coherence in our lives — the sense of a meaningful personal narrative — which is one of astrology's most important revelations. Charts yield information that varies from the surface to the depths — from the obvious, immediate, and ephemeral to more deeply internalized and long-term orientations that keep us on track.

Here's one example of what Donald Trump's chart tells us: Some media reports have indicated that higher-ups in the Trump campaign staff are frustrated by Donald Trump's seeming inability to stay "on message." These political advisors want Trump to stop "shooting from the hip" or "taking pot-shots" by saying whatever comes into his mind, no matter how far afield it may be from the strategy of an essential political message. His advisors desperately want Trump to stick to the planned script in a more disciplined way.

Astrology suggests strongly that those advisors are whistling Dixie. They have zero chance of reining in Donald Trump. Trump's natal chart makes it clear as a bell that he cannot and will not be restrained by such advice. For one thing, Trump accepts no authority above his own. He is a law unto himself. Beyond that consideration, consistency and disciplined self-expression, especially verbal, are not in Donald Trump's nature, according to his natal chart. Trump is wired in a manner that causes his mind — and his mouth — to jump around from one thing to another through what might be called "free association."

What Donald Trump says and how he moves from one thought, perception, opinion, or judgment to another is not random, but it's not necessarily logical or linear, either, and it's sure as hell not disciplined. Trump doesn't stick to the facts, for facts carry little weight in his mind.

For Donald Trump, facts intertwine with beliefs, hunches, things he read or heard someone say, and even purely speculative possibilities. Truth and untruth dance together inside Trump's head. In itself, that's not particularly unusual, since our brains are wired to present us with as much information as possible. What distinguishes Trump from most people, however, is that his chart implies that he can't distinguish which is which and doesn't care.

To Donald Trump, non-facts have equivalent weight and meaning to facts. They are all equally interesting and compelling in his mind. Whatever Trump says at any given moment is as likely to reflect dreams as realities. Everything Trump says makes sense to him as support to what he holds as true. Audiences that like his act have no problem with this free-wheeling pastiche of facts, assertions, lies, memes, and beliefs, but others find Trump's stream-of-consciousness style to be chaotic, disturbing, and often inappropriate.

The further modern civilization goes in separating us from the natural world, the more difficult it becomes for many people to distinguish "actual" reality from "virtual" reality, especially in their personal experience. Trump is the poster child for that state of mind, which could be considered creative or dangerous, depending on one's orientation. But that's another essay...

Beyond the type of information he offers, Trump's assertion of particular ideas are less "chosen" than compulsive. Stuff flies through Donald Trump's mind in kaleidoscopic fashion, and some of it flies right out of his mouth. A moment later, another thought flies out. The two thoughts are connected for Trump, but not necessarily according to any external or coherent script.

In addition, Trump's chart implies that unpredictability and eccentricity are inherent and central to his on-stage performance. Some people like smooth interactions where they plan both what they say and how they say it. By contrast, Donald Trump likes shocks, but only when he delivers them. Trump enjoys being controversial and defying the expectations of others. He moves from serious to joking in the blink of an eye, and often without any change in delivery. Even Trump doesn't know if he actually means what he says, although once he's expressed any thought, Trump will defend whatever he said as "true" and "correct."

I could go on, but I want to keep this short and sweet. (I refer anyone interested in more information about Donald Trump to my original essay on his character written in January of 2016, which is still available on my web site.)

To hammer home the central point once again, astrological charts are fundamentally neutral in their information. They describe the make-up of individuals; they don't judge that make-up. They also reveal likely events and experiences, but they don't judge those, either.

Astrological techniques cannot reveal either consciousness or maturity. The actor behind the curtain remains invisible and beyond the realm of astrology. From the chart alone, we have no way of knowing whether the individual concerned has been learning, growing, or otherwise paying attention along life's journey. To see that kind of content judgment, we have to use information we find trustworthy from outside the astrological system. Then we can add the indications from the chart to further illuminate those opinions or judgments.

No chart ever states that someone is crazy. Yes, charts can and do indicate whether sanity (in the mental health sense of reality competing with fantasy or being in conflict with our fictions in potentially crippling ways) will be an issue or concern in a given life. And yes, Donald Trump's natal chart does indeed imply that the question of personal sanity is relevant to his life. The chart also pinpoints periods in Trump's journey where that issue comes to the fore and

becomes substantial in experience. 2016 is one of many such phases in Donald Trump's life where that question arises in particular and specific ways.

Astrologers routinely make judgments when they interpret charts. That's understandable, given the powerful motivation within human nature to evaluate experience in terms of pro and con, positive and negative, good and bad. What's important to remember, however, is that those judgments come from the astrologer, not from the chart.

Astrology alone never was and never will be sufficient by itself. To obtain any sort of full picture of an individual life, we need to apply information from beyond the chart. When that additional information is accurate, insightful, or particularly compelling, the resulting mix can be brilliantly revealing. When it's inaccurate, however, the mix is questionable, and sometimes just plain wrong. But that's usually our fault, not the fault of astrology.

Is Donald Trump crazy? I don't know. For me, Trump's knee-jerk, defensive reactions to any perceived slight or critique by resorting to attacks and crude insults are more worrisome. Donald Trump seems completely unable to handle any criticism and to believe that he is sorely put upon by others. Trump can dish it out, but he can't take it. I regard him as aggressively narcissistic more than crazy. That's just my personal reaction, though, and not a clinical assessment.

In general, Trump's chart indicates clearly that the question of his mental health is relevant as an ongoing and recurring issue in his life. Arguments in support of both sides of the question can and are being put forth, but the voters will make the final decision on that in November.