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# Six Billion Universes

by Bill Herbst

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Of all the many things astrology has taught me, the most shocking is just how big life is. Life is big, folks. Really big.

In my work, people talk to me about themselves, their lives, and their beliefs about life. This has occurred more than 10,000 times over the past quarter century. Because these conversations are the vehicle for my professional work, I listen differently than most people do. I listen through the special filters of astrology and intuition. I also listen without judgment and with compassion. Finally, I listen with an intelligence that has greater sensitivity and more wisdom than that of my ordinary life.

When I listen in this altered state—still myself, but as a clearer channel than my normal self—I hear a shocking truth. Despite the myriad ways we are similar, each of us is fundamentally singular in the reality we construct and experience.

People turn out to be more vastly more different than I would or could ever have imagined. The extreme differences between us go unnoticed in ordinary life, in part because we are seduced by our superficial similarities, and in part because we tend to assume that others must surely be like ourselves. But we are wrong about this. We are not even remotely like one another.

For this reason, I have largely stopped taking advice from others. And, with a few notable exceptions, I have also stopped giving advice to friends, except in my work (where it's expected of me). As time goes on, I'm amazed at how quick many people are to presume that they know enough about the reality of others' lives to tell them what to do and what

not to do, how to act and how not to act. It's as if these people actually believe that they have learned the general "rules" of life, or, at least, of certain aspects of living, and they feel qualified to instruct others as to what these rules are.

As far as I can tell, however, *there are no simple, hard-and-fast rules about life*, at least, none that can be invariably applied to real situations in individual lives. Certainly general truths exist, but they are paradoxical—one truth contradicts another, and what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another. Even within a given life, what is true at one time may not apply at another time or in a different circumstance. Beneath the surface of our seeming commonality of experience, every circumstance is unique.

In seeking and giving advice, we need to be damned careful. Much of the information offered and received under the guise of advice is simply bogus.

I do believe it's possible to give others information that is relevant and correct for them. If I didn't believe this, I'd surely quit doing sessions and give up my profession. What distinguishes for me information that is worth offering from propaganda that is just so much crap is *perspective*. While whatever small glimpses of truth I glean come out of my personal experience, I must consider the perspective of another person's reality in order to translate those glimpses of truth into a form that will apply for that individual. In pragmatic terms, I must understand what it feels like to be that other person, to have that person's history, karma, and spiritual purpose, to comprehend reality as it is experienced by that human being.

This skill—the ability to put oneself in the shoes of others and actually understand their issues and challenges in light of what they're up against and what they've got to work with—is apparently quite rare. The wish to help, which most people sincerely feel, may be a loving motive, but that and \$1.75 will get you a cappuccino. By itself, the wish to help is insufficient.

To be effective in advising others, to be truly helpful, we need to "see" another person clearly. That requires special lenses, like 3-D glasses. Sometimes these lenses come from profound intelligence or deep compassion. More often they take the form of mastery of a system that reveals the differences between human beings and goes to the core of each person's reality. For me, astrology is such a system. Astrology works better for me to illuminate the unique perspective of individual experience better than any other system I know. Life is big, however, and you don't need astrology to see clearly. In this "spiritual optometry," many different lenses can work beautifully.

We are routinely misunderstood by others, even those closest to us. We are misunderstood so often and so deeply that when we find someone who can see us as we really are, someone who actually understands us, we need to honor that relationship, for it is both rare and special.

It matters little whether this person is a friend, an intimate, or a hired professional—pay attention and listen carefully. You just might learn something about yourself.

