

# Astrology – WTF?

(Part One)

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Along the span of a thoughtful, long life, many seemingly unanswerable questions accompany us on our journeys. I have bunches of these questions involving consciousness, culture, civilization, politics, money, media, class, health, death, and the nature of life — both human and otherwise — on this Goldilocks garden planet. Some questions are relatively impersonal, where I pose the query from the detached but curious perspective of almost an alien scientist. *[No, I'm not actually an alien visitor, but I often feel like one...]* Questions coming from that perspective are typically not about me or my experience, but rather all of us or everything. Other questions are extremely personal, born out of my paradoxical and sometimes difficult or even painful experience as an individual human.

I'd like to take a stab at writing about one of these questions that straddles both perspectives. I phrase my intention that way — to take a stab at it — because I'm not at all certain that I have the skill as a writer or the maturity as a person to finally address this question in a manner that will do it justice. The question itself is contained in the title of this commentary: "Astrology — WTF?" That has bothered me on an almost daily basis for more than 50 years. I'll probably need more than one installment to explore it, but my weekly commentary blog is a good vehicle for my rambling thoughts about many subjects. Having pretty much exhausted my insights and opinions about politics, society, civilization, and the dicey future of humanity, my longstanding questions about why and how astrology can possibly work have moved to center stage. So, let's have at it.

The questions didn't even arise until I was 20. Before then, my awareness of astrology was limited to the Sun Sign garbage that constitutes pop astrology as entertainment for the masses, and I rejected that from the get-go. Then, at the tender age of 20, everything suddenly changed. 1968 and 1969 had paved the way and set the stage very nicely, but 1970 was the great pivotal tsunami for me that defined life before versus life after.

I've already written some about the radicalizing of my life from 1967-1970, in terms of the youth subculture and the extraordinary upheavals of that time in the world. I don't wish to repeat much of that here. Suffice it to say that I was ripe for something truly amazing to happen, and it did. I fell in love for the first time, or rather, love fell on me, like a ton of bricks. Psychedelics had already opened my mind. When Love exploded my heart, everything changed overnight.

Early on in the that cauldron of romantic madness, the college girl I was enamored with had expressed a momentary and passing interest in whether she and I were “astrologically compatible.” Well, given my profound insecurities, anything I could do to tie her to me was worth pursuing, so I said I’d find out. Privately, I assumed that astrology was utterly bogus, complete garbage, just another fake system for stereotyping humans in groups that weren’t real or valid.

That was followed by my buying a whole bunch of books about astrology — textbooks, ephemerides, tables of houses, time changes, etc. — then studying for weeks to learn to draw up charts. Imagine then my surprise at looking at my beloved’s natal chart and mine for the first time. Sure, all I had to work with for “interpretation” were a couple of classic astrology texts, but even at that crude level of relatively unsophisticated delineation, it was immediately clear as a bell and downright unmistakable which chart was my girlfriend’s and which was mine.

My beloved qualified as a sweet young thing, a beautiful but possibly naïve ingénue, while by stark contrast I was a twisted mess of dark and shadowy weirdness. I knew that about us because I could see and feel it, and everyone else I knew agreed. My friends saw in each of us pretty much the same qualities I did. And that consensus was further supported by psychological inventories such as the MMPI and Myers-Briggs.

What was truly shocking, though, were the personality qualities indicated by our respective natal charts. I had fully expected our charts to imply nothing valid about either of us, just random nonsense, but nothing could have been further from the truth. There, on those two pages, in black-and-white, were symbolic descriptions of outward personality and inward character for each of us that matched what I knew from my own perceptions, and which were downright uncanny in their accuracy. On top of that, as the metaphorical icing on the cake, was the fact I stated above, that the two charts were completely different, just as we were in real life. Yes, there was a strange kind of kismet in our coming together — opposites attracting and all that — but we were hardly what one would call a match made in heaven. Basically, she was a babe, and I was a nerd.

Whoa! Wait a friggin’ minute. This astrology stuff was supposed to be nonsense. What the hell’s going on here???

That experience — erecting my own chart and my beloved’s — set me on a path that evolved into a long journey, one that has now stretched out over more than half a century. It accelerated the end of an academic education that dominated my early life and led soon after to what would become my full-time career as a working astrologer in private practice.

Through more than five decades — where I’ve logged 13,000 sessions with clients, authored three books, and written about 500 other articles and essays — the fundamental question that emerged from my initial reaction to my own chart and that of my first great love has remained as a permanent and vexing burr under my saddle.

*What the hell's going on here???* How is it even remotely possible that the positions and angular relationships of major bodies in the solar system can reveal — time after time, chart after chart — relevant information about individual human lives? Not only that, but information that is eloquent, deep, profound, and often unavailable from any other system or source? In other words, *why does astrology work???* I mean, it shouldn't, but it does!

I know a fair number of other professional astrologers, and I've worked with literally thousands of clients who are either avid students of astrology or at the very least inclined to accept astrology as valid. I assume that the majority of these individuals are quite comfortable with their belief in astrology. Like me, some may have nagging questions about why astrology works, but I haven't encountered that very often in people who use or access the astrological system. Be that as it may, though, I'm not a member on the team of "true believers," mainly because I'm not a fan of magical thinking, and it seems to me that magical thinking is almost a prerequisite for a belief in astrology.

But then, I sure as hell can't be on the other team either — the team of astrological deniers and debunkers, those who claim that astrology is bogus and utterly false, and that anyone who believes in or practices such superstitious nonsense must be deluded, a whack job, a charlatan, a snake-oil salesman, or an outright con artist. That team includes many people who like to consider themselves "rational," "scientific," or "pragmatic." It also includes a fair number of fundamentalist Christians, for whom astrology is the work of the devil. (Never mind that the three wise men were obviously astrologers...)

A disturbing quality of some (perhaps many) members of the we-hate-astrology team is a kind of high-handed, smugly self-righteous moral superiority. All too often, they are absolutely and dogmatically certain of the correctness of their position regarding astrology's invalidity, and they regard anyone who might disagree as fools, mental inferiors, and somehow beneath contempt or unworthy of consideration. I find these attitudes (which are clearly and most damningly aimed at me and my professional colleagues in astrology) personally insulting and socially demeaning.

Such slanderous disdain seems to be especially prevalent among those who are liberal or progressive politically or who regard themselves as intellectually or philosophically adept. Perhaps it's not ironic that I harbor every bit as much dislike for them as they do for me.

Look, I'm well-versed in most of the arguments for and against astrology. I understand the philosophies and presumptions that are sometimes used to support or defend astrology: as above, so below; the universe as a holographic mirror, the vibrational energies of inter-planetary geometry, etc. I don't necessarily believe all those rationales, but I understand their presumptions. On the other side, the arguments against astrology are generally pretty crude and usually amount to little more than incredulity. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to build a case against astrology. Astrology was thrown under the bus

along with all the other vitalist elemental myths of a living world as soon as the industrial and technological revolutions, with their materialist orientations, had swept through and reshaped western civilization.

Perhaps curiously, I've never debated any astrology deniers and have no wish to do so. I regard all debates about what we believe as a waste of time. First off, hardly anyone is ever convinced by logic to give up or reverse an embraced belief. Someone may be crowned "winner" of a debate, but no one's opinion is changed. Second, I'm not sure that I find any argument for or against astrology very compelling. For me, all the arguments pro and con finally amount to much more than hills of beans. I mean, *So What?* Where is it written that the universe must necessarily conform to the puny rationales we offer so confidently for whatever stories or narratives we believe?

I fear that we have tossed out the baby with the bathwater. In attempting to banish superstition and thus improve the human condition, we may have inadvertently neutered life itself. Rather than living in a world where everything is considered alive, we now act as if (and seem to believe) that most everything is dead. My deepest, most vibrant intelligence tells me that this is not progress. I've come to believe that Death Culture, along with the Monsters who promote it, has won. That pyrrhic and perverse victory strikes me as one of the core reasons that humanity and civilization are facing collapse and even possible extinction.

When the so-called "scientific community" gets up on its hind legs and publicly excoriates astrology as a pseudo-science, I object passionately. Condemnation by science sometimes occurs pointedly, as it did in 1975 when a broadside castigating astrology was signed by 186 "top scientists" and publicly promoted in the media. More commonly, though, astrology is used as a whipping boy in a more casually backhanded fashion, like a slap. When certain science types want to belittle some assumption they regard as foolish or unsophisticated, they often toss in an aside that it's "like believing in astrology."

What I say to all those arrogant scientists (who are clearly not open-minded about matters they haven't studied) is that astrology is not a science at all, pseudo or otherwise. It operates in a different way, by analogy and metaphor.

I should probably state that over my 50+ years of being identified with astrology, no one has ever accosted me or given me shit about it. Literally, never. I don't push astrology at people, but I don't hide my profession, either. I find it extremely unlikely that everyone I met out in the world who learned that I was an astrologer was a believer or otherwise predisposed to regard astrology positively, but that's how it appears on the surface. Perhaps the innate social pressure people feel to avoid disharmony or open conflict was a factor in that. I don't know.

Still, I bristle when I routinely encounter in the media pronouncements from people who are dogmatically certain that astrology is bogus. Basically, though, I'm less disturbed by skeptics or outright deniers — whatever their ilk — than I am by certain true believers who are evangelical about astrology and proselytize

for its social acceptance. Such a person once said to me, *"If astrology were accepted and taught in public schools, the world would be so much better."* My response? *"No, it wouldn't."*

Even at 73, after 50 years of being a professional astrologer to earn my livelihood (meager, yes, but sufficient — more than a million dollars so far), I am still bothered by the fundamental question, *why does astrology work?* By "work," I mean why does it provide accurate and meaningful information about the lives of individual human beings?

Yes, I'm well aware that I'm foolish and often deluded about many important subjects. I'm also aware that there's a great deal about which I am ignorant, and that some of what I think I know is almost certainly wrong. I often take refuge in the assumption that the universe is mysterious far beyond our limited human ability to perceive its structures and contents. But come on, astrology? What the hell?

I'm comfortable with the macro physics of gravity — tides and the Moon's orbit, for instance. The effects of the physical universe extend all the way down to our DNA. But understanding the Moon's effect on the oceans is quite different from the Moon's symbolic revelations in a natal chart about a given person's strong needs for social acceptance and belonging or conversely, another person's need to remain staunchly independent and unaffected by group pressure to conform. A chart may indicate that home and family are critical in one person's life, but tangential in another's. How can astrology possibly do this?

And yet, as improbable as it seems to me, astrology does indeed work to reveal facets of our character, our lives, and even our destinies.

*End Part One*

*I'll start off next week's second installment by delving deeper into what I believe, along with so many others who have thoughtfully explored the system, namely, that it works in some amazing ways to reveal information that no other source reveals. I'll also discuss some of the ways that astrology's debunkers and deniers accuse astrologers of running our "con game." Those techniques of manipulation are relevant to many arenas of society and well worth noting, especially since so much of society's time, effort, and money is spent to achieve mass mind control and the manufacture of desired public opinions that serve the elites. I'll try also to show how those manipulative techniques either don't apply at all or apply only minimally to my particular work with astrology.*