

Astro Twins

by Bill Herbst

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The title of this commentary does not refer to biological twins — whether identical or fraternal — who share the same mother, gestate in the same womb, and are born often mere minutes apart. This commentary is about people who are not related who are born on the same day within about 12 hours of each other, usually in different locations, perhaps half the earth apart. This phenomenon is not something typically discussed by astrologers, but I've thought about it for a long time.

On the face of it, the subject of this commentary would seem to appeal mainly to those of my readers who are serious or advanced students of astrology. And, indeed, I'll need to discuss some technical astrology here. I think, however, that where I'll go with this theme will be of interest even to those who have no particular technical expertise in astrology nor interest in that. So, please hang in. If the technical stuff gets too thick, skip it and go right to the conclusion.

In 1950, the total number of human beings born that year was 97 million. That's an average of 266,000 people each day. By 2015, those numbers had increased to 141 million for the year, and an average of 386,000 per day. If you were born in or around 1950 (as I was, in late 1949), of the roughly quarter-million people born on your particular birth date, about 75 of them are your astro twins, born with natal charts that are strikingly similar to yours. If you were born in 1980, the number of astro twin you have increases to about 100. And if you were born in 2000, the number is about 120.

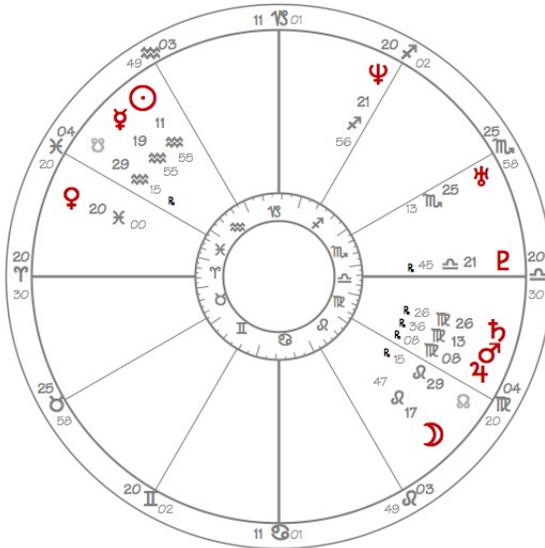
Whenever you were born, the similar charts you share with your astro twins are not exactly the same. There *are* differences. They vary from miniscule to meaningful, but — in the overall approach to natal interpretation — they're minor. That's what makes those people your astro twins. Your natal chart and theirs aren't perfectly identical, but nearly so.

On the next pages are four astrological charts, shown in two sets of graphic styles. They're real charts, but not necessarily the charts of actual people (at least I don't know who those people are or if they exist). We can call them natal charts for hypothetical people. The charts are labeled Person A, B, C, and D. All four charts are erected for February 1st, 1980, in mid-morning, using four

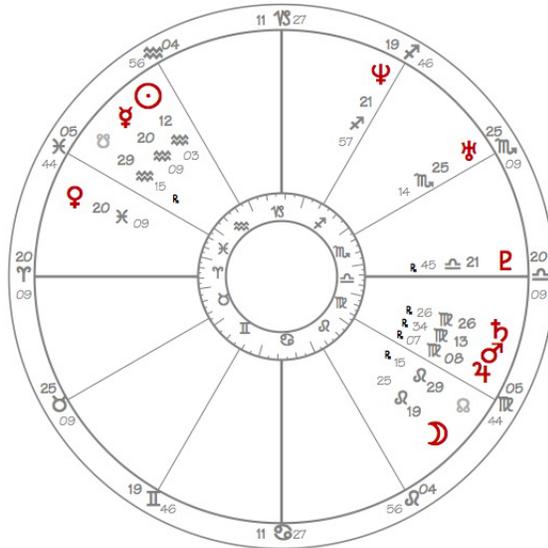
different locations — New York City, San Francisco, London, and Rome. They represent a cohort of astro twins.

The first set, on this page, are the four charts shown in the manner that astrological charts are traditionally displayed graphically:

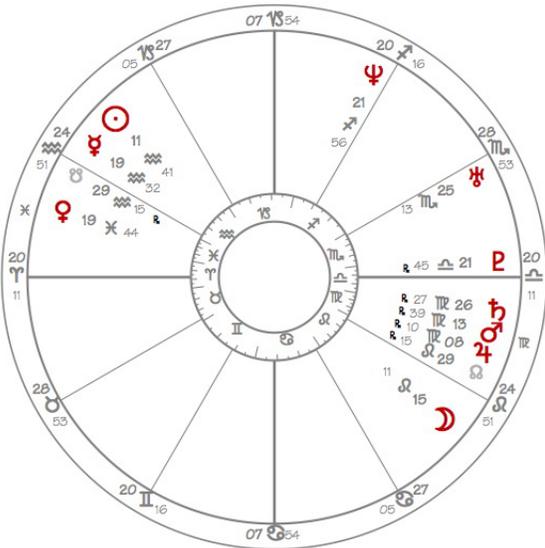
Person A
Natal Chart
February 1, 1980
New York, New York
Tropical Placidus True Node



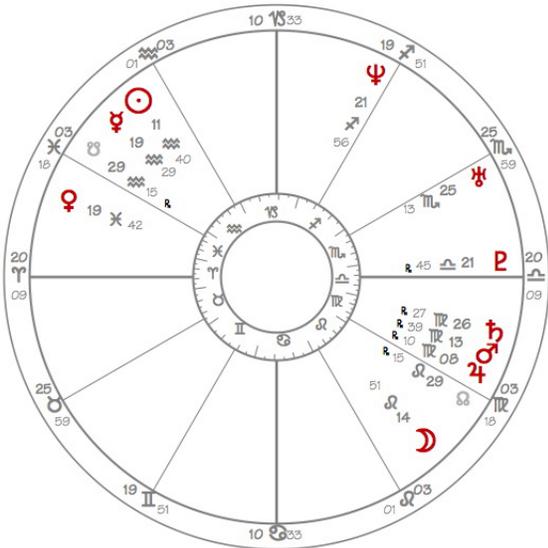
Person B
Natal Chart
February 1, 1980
San Francisco, California
Tropical Placidus True Node



Person C
Natal Chart
February 1, 1980
London, England
Tropical Placidus True Node

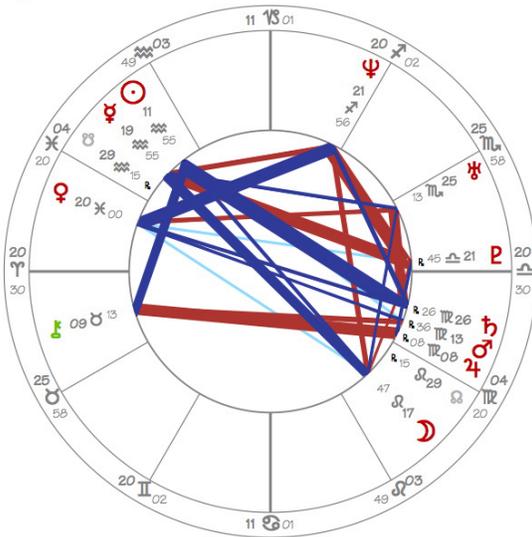


Person D
Natal Chart
February 1, 1980
Rome > Roma, Italy
Tropical Placidus True Node

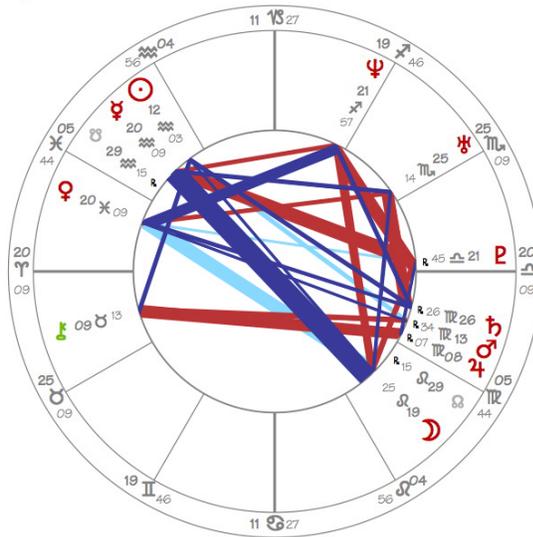


Here are the same four charts displayed in the graphic style I typically use in my astrological work. The interplanetary aspects are shown as lines between the planets — red lines for “soft” aspects (trines and sextiles), dark blue lines for “hard aspects” (squares, oppositions, semisquares, and sesquiquadrates), aqua lines for inconjuncts, with each aspect line thicker or thinner to denote my judgment as to its strength and importance in the overall aspect pattern):

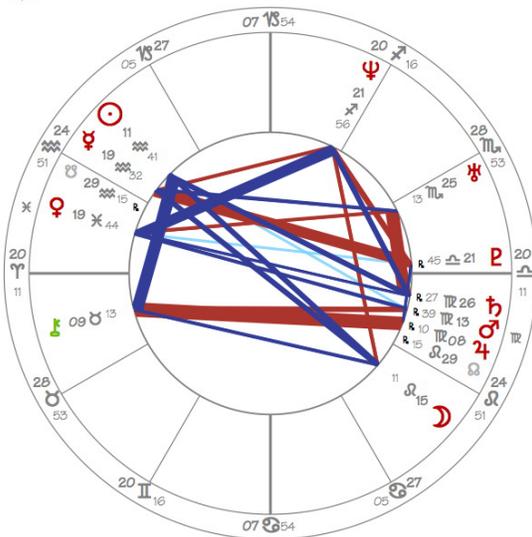
Person A
 Natal Chart
 Friday, February 1, 1980
 10:00:00 AM EST
 New York, New York
 Tropical Placidus True Node



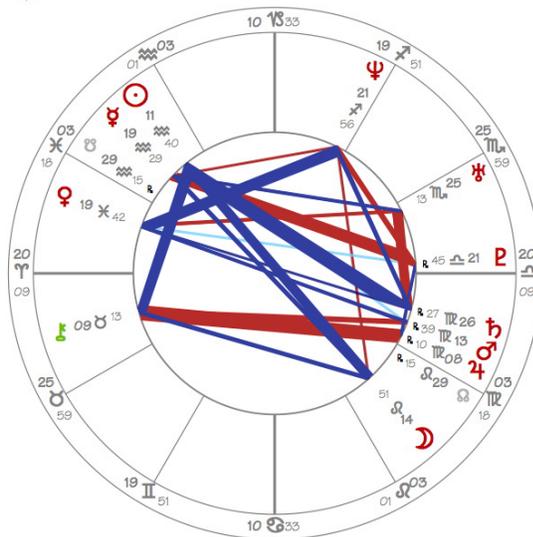
Person B
 Natal Chart
 Friday, February 1, 1980
 10:15:00 AM PST
 San Francisco, California
 Tropical Placidus True Node



Person C
 Natal Chart
 Friday, February 1, 1980
 9:52:00 AM GMT
 London, England
 Tropical Placidus True Node



Person D
 Natal Chart
 Friday, February 1, 1980
 10:13:00 AM CET
 Rome > Roma, Italy
 Tropical Placidus True Node



Despite the time difference between the charts (the chart for Rome occurred nine hours earlier than the chart for San Francisco), notice the similarities of the four charts. The respective planets are basically in the same places in each chart, and the overall aspect patterns are visually comparable.

Most of the pairings (planets in signs and houses) that are so fundamental to standard textbook natal interpretation are the same. In all four charts, the respective planets and angles are in identical signs (and mostly in the same degree of the zodiac), and all the planets occupy the same houses. The overall planetary patterns are also very similar, although certain aspects vary slightly.

The four charts are not identical, however. Many small differences exist between them. Some of these differences are meaningful in the traditional textbook approach to natal interpretation:

While the occupied houses are identical, a small number of ruled houses are different. In three of the four charts, Saturn rules the 10th house, the Moon rules the 4th, and Uranus rules the 11th. In the London chart, however, Saturn rules both the 10th and 11th houses, the Moon rules both the 4th and 5th, and Uranus rules the 12th (with Pisces intercepted there).

The Moon's precise zodiacal position in Leo varies by 5° over the four charts (because of the nine-hour time difference). The Midheavens in Capricorn vary by 3°. This means that interpretive techniques based on individual degrees of the zodiac, such as the Sabian Symbols, will differ for the Moon and MC (plus Mercury and Venus, as well). Typical natal interpretations don't use degree analysis, however.

Also, specific aspects to the Moon vary from one chart to another. The most obvious example is the waxing inconjunct/quincunx from Venus to the Moon. In the San Francisco chart, that inconjunct is strong, only 1° from partile, while in the London and Rome charts, that aspect is beyond the allowed 3° orb and thus doesn't exist.

The most significant difference between the charts isn't in natal interpretation at all, but rather in the timing of long-term progressions and transits. The variation in the zodiacal degrees of the Moon and Midheaven may shift the effective periods of certain major progressions or outer-planet transits by as much as a year or two.

Despite these differences, however, the four charts are remarkably similar. We could find the same kind of astro twin charts for any birth date.

OK. Enough of the technical stuff. Readers who are not dedicated students of astrology can rejoin here.

The first question I want to pose is this: *Given that these charts are almost identical, will the people whose lives they symbolize also be nearly identical?* The answer to that question is **no**.

Even people who share nearly identical charts are unique individuals. Just because their charts are almost the same does not mean that the people are clones of each other, nor that their lives are carbon copies. They're not. Even biologically identical twins who are genetically identical have their own lives. Yes, biological twins (and astro twins) may be "connected" in many ways, from similar physical characteristics through their psyches and even to their spirituality, but they are still not the same person. That simply doesn't exist at the human level of existence. While brief moments of empathic union with another person may occur from time to time, whole lives do not work that way. Each of us is on our own individual journey through life.

The second question is this: *Since the four charts in my example are nearly identical, could the same astrological interpretations of "character" and overall experience apply to each of the four hypothetical people who "own" the charts?* Ah, that's more complicated. The answer to that question isn't an easy, black-and-white yes or no, but a more relative response of ***maybe, to some extent***.

If I had to give a more simple, straightforward answer to that second question, I'd say that each of the four people whose lives are supposedly described by those nearly identical charts requires (and deserves) a separate and distinctly different interpretation of the chart. Giving the same interpretation to each person would sacrifice both accuracy and relevance. That's pretty much what online, computer-generated natal "reports" offer — page after page of "textbook" interpretations that are theoretically "correct," but don't (and cannot) take into account the endless variations of how the chart might be expressed through a real human life.

The only way we could provide a one-size-fits-all interpretation across an entire cohort of astro twins would be to limit our delineation to the more abstract levels of the symbolic archetypes in the chart. For instance, we might be able to accurately assess the relative importance of career and "life in the marketplace," according to the chart, as well as the similar timing of phase changes in the ambition cycle (Saturn relative to the meridian), but we couldn't take that very far into real-life livelihoods, since they would vary widely across the cohort of twins. Similarly, we could identify the core life-purpose and how the chart describes creating and maintaining coherence, but we couldn't relate or custom-tailor that to real-life circumstances.

Our overall understanding of the chart, the life it describes, and how we might discuss that, would be very different from one astro twin to another. Every meaning would necessarily be subtly altered (and some meanings would be dramatically different) for a person in the cohort who was a married woman

pregnant with her first child versus an unmarried male. Other factors of circumstance, culture, and conditioning, including our own cumulative reactions to our lives, would similarly alter the landscape of the chart.

How would an astrologer know how to alter his view of the chart to custom-tailor the interpretation to each person's real life? Well, if all she had to deal with was the chart itself, she wouldn't. Without at least some knowledge of the actual life or direct input from the person (such as might happen through talking together in conversation), the only way an astrologer could know how to custom-tailor the interpretation would be through a kind of magic, such as pure intuition. Such people exist, of course, but we call them psychics, trance mediums, intuitive readers, or something similar. People with those extraordinary abilities are not usually technically-accomplished astrologers.

This is not to suggest that astrologers cannot be intuitive. We can, and — if we want to be good astrologers — we damn well better be. Astrology is not a paint-by-numbers system. It's an art form involving both sides of our brains — blending the rational and intuitive, the analytic and holistic. Chart interpretations (i.e., "readings") aren't cast in stone. They're fluid sculptures that shape-shift according to who's talking to whom, what information is being shared, and when it's happening — both within and beyond the chart.

The vast majority of us never meets any of our astro twins. We tend to go through life not even aware that they're out there. If one could spend a month or two with an astro twin, many connections might be revealed (or so astrology holds) — parallels in experience, character traits of personality, or similar timing of significant events. But differences, often striking, would still exist.

Given that our species has an innate curiosity, it is, I suppose, natural that humans yearn to discover simple ways to understand our commonality and our differences — what unites us and what separates us. Life, however, does not reveal its secrets easily and resists reduction to formulae. Yes, the Meaning of Life can on occasion be as plain as day — obvious, straightforward, and clear as a bell. More often, however, Life remains mysterious, eluding easy conclusions about it and ourselves.

Even then, however, astrology offers worthwhile insights. Understanding our charts will not by itself lift us out of our melodramas nor put an end to our travails, but it can help us relax, becoming more comfortable in our own skins, and accepting our life-journeys with greater peace of mind. Sometimes, astrology can even help us get out of our own way, to befriend reality more gracefully and actually improve our lives.