

The Wandering Hermit

Star-ting Astrology

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Even More to Learn!

The signs, planets, and houses cover the basic parts of astrology. There are some other features or factors that will help you do general readings of birth charts. In this section I'll go over a few topics that will give you a broader view of astrology. Again, remember that astrology is extremely complex and there are thousands of topics to explore. What I am presenting here is basically a way to open the door for you so it will be easy to decide if astrology is something you want to explore on your own. After I've covered some of these topics, we'll take a look at Albert Einstein's birth chart and practice a little bit of astrology when we try to understand him.

Retrograde Motion

Have you ever heard an astrologer complain about Mercury retrograde? All the actual planets will go retrograde at one time or another. The Moon and Sun are never retrograde. All the planets go around the Sun in the same direction and are always moving in that one direction. However, due to Earth's motion and the different speeds of all the planets, there are times when the planets appear, from our point of view on Earth, to be moving backward. When a planet appears to be moving backward, we say that planet is retrograde. Some say when a planet is in retrograde, everything it represents is impeded or blocked or working toward a detriment instead of toward something positive. Others say that retrograde motion just indicates an extreme use of the energies influenced by that planet. As for Mercury retrograde the reason it is brought up so often is that Mercury represents thought and communication. When Mercury goes retrograde, depending on what you believe, those functions are either taken to extremes or impeded. (Personally I don't feel a retrograde is necessarily bad news, but I do watch for retrogrades and I am extremely careful about any business communications I do while Mercury is retrograde.)

The Ephemeris

An ephemeris is a book or collection of tables with times and locations of planets. Usually the times are set for midnight at Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). If this is the case, then the chart contains the information of where the planets are at midnight GMT for that date and for the location of Greenwich. Before computers, if you wanted to plot a chart, you would have to use an ephemeris, then do the math to figure out how far the planet had moved since midnight GMT. You would also have to take into account the latitude and longitude of the birthplace and adjust for the distance from Greenwich.

You may be thinking, So if we can do all that charting with computers, why use an ephemeris at all anymore? Often a computer is not available. I keep a small calendar with an ephemeris adjusted for the East Coast of the United States in my backpack, with my tarot cards. This pack is an appendage and attached to me all the time. It is an easy, quick source for planetary locations. I don't use it to plot charts, but it is close enough to tell me what is going on that day. I've also used an ephemeris to look up something quickly instead of plotting chart after chart on the computer. One example was a challenge in an astrology class I was taking. One woman did not want to list her year of birth on her chart (all the students and the teacher had their charts displayed it was part of the class). She only had the date. She said nobody could figure out her year of birth. I looked at the position of Pluto in her chart, then went through the ephemeris to find the times Pluto was in that area (since Pluto moves so slowly, that narrowed it down within a year or two). Then I looked at another planet, Mars, I think, and matched it up. That showed me, within a few days, when she was born. I not only confirmed the date and month in the ephemeris with her the positions of the planets, but also with her stated day of birth. That told me her year of birth. She was not upset, but she was surprised that could be done.

The Elements and Modes

Remember what I said earlier about the alchemists? They were working on spiritual and religious work, not on changing lead to gold. Their notes and studies were about understanding people and spirit. When they talked of changing lead to gold, it was a metaphor for spiritual growth. Alchemists talked of four elements: Fire, Air, Earth, and Water. If you look at the twelve signs of the zodiac, the first is a Fire sign, then Air, and so on. There are three signs for each element. Fire represents creativity. (I also believe it includes spirituality). People born under the Fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) are generally energetic and creative. Earth is material goods and the management of those goods (and money, as well). Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are Earth signs. These signs are going to have strong connections to money, material goods, or responsibility of handling those goods. The Air signs are Gemini, Libra and Aquarius. Air represents intelligence and thoughts. The last element is Water, which includes Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. Water represents emotions. In the section on signs I will include more about the element for each sign.

There are also modes. There are three modes, Cardinal, Fixed, and Mutable. These also go around the zodiac. Cardinal signs are at the beginning of each season (Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn). Cardinal signs indicate beginning energy the ability to start projects and set them up. Cardinal signs can also indicate difficulty with staying with and completing projects. The Fixed signs, which are good at working on long term projects and keeping things going, are Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius. Fixed signs can have trouble with change. The Mutable signs are all at the end of the seasons and include Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces. Mutable signs find it easier to adapt and go with the flow. It may be more difficult for Mutable signs to begin or stay with projects.

The North and South Nodes

The Earth orbits the Sun in an oval. Picture this in your mind. Now, pass a plane through that oval. No other planet orbits the Sun and stays entirely on that plane. They all pass through it, two times in each orbit. The Moon passes through it, too. The next place the Moon will pass through this plane (called the ecliptic) is the North Node. The last place it passed through is the South Node. Most charts include the North and South Node. They are always in opposition (in other words, always directly opposite each other). If a chart shows only the North Node, you know the South Node is directly opposite the North Node. They are also usually moving in retrograde motion.

The North Node is destiny and change. It is what a person is learning or working toward or growing into in this lifetime. The South Node is where that person has been in most recent past lives.

The Next Step

I've included a few extras here. I give you a summary to help wrap everything up and list some other areas of astrology you can explore in the summary.

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