

Astrology Revealed

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"Astrology is not the truth. As presented in the 21st century, it is a form of personally applicable fiction, or a symbolic and metaphoric framework through which to view ourselves and the world. The use of astrology is therefore by definition the expression of opinion or interpretation."

— from the Planet Waves editorial policy

"We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us."

— Marshall McLuhan

"It's all in the houses."

— Patric Walker

The Search for Meaning

"What does it mean?" is probably the first question asked of most astrologers, and the first question people ask when looking at a chart. I would propose: forget about meaning, if you want it to come to you.

The problem with meaning is that it tends to be definitive rather than fluid. Often it's a kind of false "clarity" -- which don Juan warned was one of the enemies of mankind, because it closes your mind rather than opening it. The ruse of meaning is that it never comes to you from the outside. When it arrives, it's something that you assign to an event, experience, person or desire. The same is true of astrology charts. They don't mean anything inherently; you are the one who assigns their relevance, and who determines how that will influence you.

There are astrologers (and others) who will pretend to understand you and your life better than you do. They will make declarative statements about what your chart does or does not mean, does or does not say. Some will even claim to "know" what you supposedly cannot do anything about. Please don't fall for these kinds of ideas, no matter how much authority they come with.

When making an inquiry into your own chart or existence, it's important not to make the same mistake, but rather to entirely take over the process of assigning relevance to what you see and observe. A chart does not possess meaning independent of what you give it. Learning to read a chart is about training your mind to process your perceptions in a new way, and to understand your process of thought as it evolves.

Whether reading a chart or learning to do the work, the longer this takes, the better. The study of astrology, and of self, requires you to have a healthy relationship with the unknown: to stand, consciously, in the face of a mystery.

The best approach is being circumspect and taking a light touch with your chart, or any chart. Sketch in pencil at first, and then gradually fill in shade and color. The astrology chart is organized as a wheel. You can think of it as a tree; before you draw it, walk around a few times and look at it from every different angle.

Whether you're studying or reading a particular chart, be willing to be wrong; be willing to see things differently as your thoughts evolve; and be willing to sit with two or three possible interpretations of the same thing at the same time, and hold your mind open. There are times while doing advanced work, such as horary, when a planet or other factor can have three different significations at once.

There are times when Venus will represent a man and Mars will represent a woman. In this sense, the symbols in a chart are fluid and flexible, which means your mind must handle them in a flexible, rather than conclusive, way.

A Study in Pattern Recognition

The most useful, and perhaps only, skill necessary in astrology is pattern recognition. By this I mean the thing that gets you from a bunch of scattered bits of information to a cohesive reading. It's possible to have a definition of every planet and aspect in the chart and still not get the message. The message comes from the synthesis of things that both *are* and *are not* in books. Every chart is a unique case, in the true sense of that word, and has its individual pattern.

The most basic "pattern" of a chart is the *aspect pattern*: the overall way that planets and points in the chart are woven together. These, it's possible to learn how to see relatively easily. Then there are other patterns to charts -- for example thematic ones; similar messages that repeat in slightly different ways in varying angles of the chart.

The synthesis that emerges from actually reading is a case of *biophilia* -- the whole is more than the sum of the parts. This is also called *synergy*. To use this skill is a mental art form, and it's also a legit form of optimism. Synthesis-based thinking is

a useful alternative to linear or black-and-white thinking. The basic approach is to make a jump in dimension.

You might think of this as being a little like how Rain Man sees the world. Only you can get into the space using a step-by-step approach of contemplating elements in the chart, and then letting that take you to the next level of thought or perception.

There are times when a chart seems to say the same thing many different ways, and you recognize this is happening. You might start to see a theme emerge. Your job is to put that into coherent thoughts and words. It is better to understate the case, rather than to overstate, or overreach.

Astrology is multidimensional, teaching you to think on many levels at once. In this sense, it's different from conventional modes of thought, like studying a bus schedule. In essence, you're training your mind to go beyond conventional thought. The fact that the chart is arranged in a circle is helpful in this regard, because astrological reading is not linear, left-to-right reading, but a circumspect form of reading -- where you go around the wheel, looking at the same figure from numerous points of view.

Think of how ridiculous what you're doing is -- scrying some psychological or circumstantial meaning out of the positions of bodies orbiting the Sun, most of them gas bubbles, little rocks or ice cubes. So you can relax, and not worry so much about the definite meaning of planetary positions or aspects, and just riff on whatever you notice and what it says to you. If you relax, you will receive various messages.

Imagine you look at a chart and notice Pisces, which is watery and intuitive. You notice Mercury: mind, idea. Mercury in Pisces, intuitive, fluid mind or idea. Let the chart speak in its own logic. This same logic, or perhaps better said, *logos*, is the same logic you apply to new and unusual discoveries, or any chart element. The chart prompts you along, and then an idea can take on a life of its own. Sometimes images occur to you, seemingly out of nowhere.

As you work, sketch out the patterns you see using colored pencils to annotate your chart. Add in elements not found in the computer-generated charts. Also add features from other charts, such as the locations of recent (or even distant) eclipses. By doing this, you will notice points in your own chart that are activated when you're reading another chart.

And while you do this, you just hum a little song, drawing lines, circling things and scribbling notes. This is a form of passive thinking -- letting your mind go with the current, allowing random thoughts to enter, and seeing where you end up.

If you come up with nothing, set the chart aside and let your unconscious do the work. If these archetypes of the chart have life anywhere, it's the collective unconscious. The meeting point with the personal unconscious is that the collective tools (planets, etc.) engage with the personal (your ideas, birth, questions, as illustrated in the chart). So by letting your unconscious work on it (simmering away on its own, whether you're in cognitive mode or not), you may wake up with a fresh idea in the morning, or perhaps a dream that tips the chart's hand in some interesting way.

Astrology is a study in consciousness and not causation. Yet if the two are related, which they seem to be, astrology is an interesting way to guide the process.

Now, an interesting phenomenon of reading is the approach of taking the parts one by one. That's there, noted. That's over there, noted. Patiently and without putting much deep thought into it -- you kind of space out and look at the elements one by one. Then suddenly it can dawn on you what the chart is about.

Once you get to that point, the pattern can build. Make sure you do a quick check-over for any confirmation bias, whether the chart is presenting a useful message or one you don't like. One challenge of reading a chart is finding the solution where any problem is described; the two should be cohabitating closely.

There are more logical ways to work, too, and it's good to gain practice in them. William Lilly repeated the message that when reading (horary, in particular, but really in all forms of astrology) you look at both (or several) sides of the issue, and see which the chart seems to be arguing in favor of. This is what's meant by *judicial astrology*. You weigh and balance and evaluate and deliberate and then call it like you see it. Remember to leave a little room for being wrong and/or open to more information. You might see the chart very differently tomorrow.

There are a few ways to approach the method of taking the chart bit by bit. One method is to start with the Moon, and tell the story of its aspects within its current sign. Look at what happens next, counting whatever aspects you use. Then, follow this story to the last planet out in any sign -- the last aspect -- and make up a little story based on those aspects. Go back to the ingress and the first aspect to see a picture of the point of origin. Then, take the image from the chart and look for something in the world that matches it somewhat.

Another approach is to start with the ascendant, look at its ruler, and see the aspects. Then look at the descendent, look at its ruler, and see if there are any aspects between the two.

Sometimes you can just look at the chart and grasp what's going on. More often, though, you start calling out placements and aspects and, humming as you work, tune into the messages of the chart. Remember, you're doing something

impossible. But it isn't, of course; this is all being guided by your imagination and perhaps by the Daemon, the "genius or spirit" hanging out right over the chart, shining its light and speaking to you softly.

For those prone to study, beware. It's possible to take every fact in an astrology chart and give it a fixed definition: this is what Venus in Gemini means; this is what Mars in Aquarius means, and so forth. Those definitions can be put into a database and spat back out when you enter the birth data. You can get a "report" of all your definitions -- such as placements and aspects. But that is not a reading.

A reading is an original synthesis of multiple factors at once, which all modify one another. A computer cannot do a reading. Rather, a reading can only come from an observant, creative and open mind. As you learn how to read a chart, you will be retraining your perception.

Barbara Hand Clow wrote that if you try to read aspects by definition, you can disrupt what she calls *aspect sensitivity* -- the ability to feel the aspect in your body. This is not as new-agey as it may sound. Reading invokes feelings, whether it's a chart or a novel.

Looking for Correspondences

Instead of searching your chart for meaning, study the scene, and look for correspondences. Think of your chart as an illustration or a diagram -- of something. As you consider various features in your chart (a placement, the contents of a house, or an aspect pattern, to give a few possible examples), look for ways that the symbols as you see them remind you of qualities of your existence (a tendency, an affinity, a situation, a place, a condition, a person, a relationship).

The chart may relate to a specific question; the way to start reading that is to look for matchups between the chart and the circumstance it describes. Sometimes charts don't seem to work; better not to push it, if that is the case, and instead, set the project or question aside and look at it from a different point of view sometime in the future.

In terms of systematic reading, you can use a method, though I suggest you hang loose with it. One method is to take a placement, get a feel for what it conveys (heat, light, density, movement, motivation, energy, substance, diversion, crisis, mystery or whatever) and ask yourself where this seems to fit your existence. You might see a natal planet in your 11th house, and ask yourself how that describes your social life, as you already know it. This might seem a little odd, to look for the obvious rather than to go on a quest for what is hidden or cryptic.

Where the minor planets are concerned you'll need to find trustworthy sources. Planet Waves hosts many articles referencing new discoveries, which are searchable various ways.

I tend to trust delineations that describe a process rather than presenting a litany of keywords piled up. Examples of process are, "this is cyclical, but the cycle tends to be veiled," or "the energy has a tendency to move from one generation to the next," or, "This can be a crisis that leads to a breakthrough."

Before you can gain an understanding of those subtle elements, it helps to have a feeling for how the symbols in an astrology chart work. They don't merely have "meaning" -- they speak, tell stories and offer suggestions.

A correspondence might be something like: you know the 4th house is about your home, and you have Aquarius on the cusp of that house. You know that Aquarius is about groups, and you like to have friends in your home and do so frequently. This can be a specific inference from your chart, and it's funny how it works, when it does. Sometimes astrologers can say hilariously apropos things.

Once I looked up Venus in Taurus in a book, because that's my placement, and it said: You like to go to the same restaurant every day, and eat the same thing. Well, that's very often what I do. She likely saw a few clients who had that placement say they liked to do that, and figured out it was a tendency. Or maybe it was just an intuitive take on the placement. Taurus likes stability, and moreover likes what it likes and doesn't like what it doesn't like.

As you study the correspondences between your chart and your life, and your approach to life, you will start to notice the ways your chart aligns with your world -- and you'll also start to notice things that you don't understand. Studying astrology is really and truly about being comfortable standing in relationship to the unknown.

You will need to be patient with the whole process of learning astrology, learning your chart -- and getting to know yourself through your chart. You might set a timeframe of 10 years to attain a level of mastery. Then, you'll be happy with every discovery you make along the way.

The process of learning correspondences works with mundane astrology too -- that is, the astrology of events. The way to practice this is to cast a chart when something distinctive happens. The thing you cast for has to stand out and be a little unusual. You might not cast a chart for *any* bee sting, but you might look at your kid's first one. When you notice something in the news and the report gives an exact time (not approximate), take that as an invitation to cast the chart.

Then, print the chart. Please do not work on a screen any time you can avoid it. When you print a chart, you make it your own. You can take notes on it; you can add extra planets; you can draw pictures on it; you can hang it on the wall. This is one reason why we're providing you with a physical resource to study with.

Save your early charts. You will want them in five or 10 years. And by the way, it can take that long to understand what's going on in a chart. It can take that long for the layers to reveal themselves. This is why you want to go gently on meaning. There's always another layer; there's always another point of view, and as you learn and grow, your ability to see the layers will deepen.

A Model of Time, and a Navigation Tool

We are accustomed to tracking time on a clock or a calendar. In this sense, time moves at one speed, and is linear. Our model of time passing is illustrated as the second hand going around on a clock, or numbers ticking by. This is a limited and nearly useless model of time. It's fantastic for timing a marathon, but not for understanding your growth as a human being.

Sometimes time feels like walking along a tightrope between the past and the future. Yet each of us has observed many times how this model is a limited concept, verging on useless.

An astrology chart presents a model of time where there are as many cycles as you like, and the cycles all work in concert with one another -- like syncopated rhythms. When we say "aspect," we mean the point in time where two cycles meet or overlap.

These overlaps of multiple cycles, made of symbols to which we attach concepts, are a kind of synchronicity generator. The hundreds or thousands of simultaneous patterns of astrology would seem to qualify as a chaos pattern. When you (symbolically) stop the movement of time, in the form of looking at a chart, you get to see and study the synchronicity pattern.

Every chart is a one-of-a kind fractal (a single frame in a chaos pattern) which can provide endless information. Tapping into synchronicity, or meaningful coincidence, is one of the exits from conventional models of time.

Meanwhile, we learn other things about time from the study of astrology that help us do the same thing. Just like an analog clock has three hands that move at different speeds, astrology has many cycles that provide a much more detailed concept of what time is, and how to navigate it.

In a chart, we can see the minutes and hours going by as the ascendant advances (about one degree per four to five minutes; about one sign per two hours). We can

see the weeks and months advance as the lunar cycle develops. We can see the seasonal cycle of the year as the Sun goes through the signs of the zodiac, and marks the passage of seasons. These are natural forms of the cycles we're accustomed to.

Then there are peaks in the year, called eclipses, which are part of Moon-Sun meta-cycles. Eclipses are a field of study all their own, and make a fine specialty for both an aspiring or advanced astrologer.

Then there is the back-and-forth of Mercury retrograde, which cycles approximately three times a year. This is a crucial cycle to track if you want to follow the tides of productivity, communications, spending and commerce in general. To be a decent practicing astrologer, you will need to understand how Mercury retrograde works (see related chapter, *An Expert's Guide to Mercury Retrograde*).

In terms of the longer cycles of life, the Saturn cycle describes maturity, making a square every seven years. This cycle tracks the time it takes Uranus to move through a sign, so there are two natural elements that lead to a seven-year phenomenon.

Then there is Chiron, which takes about 50 years to go around the Sun, though it spends a different length of time in every sign. When close to the Sun, Chiron takes 18 months to go through Libra. When far from the Sun, Chiron takes nine years to move through Aries. Its cycle seems erratic at first; some astronomers believe Chiron has only been stable in its present orbit for about 1,300 years, so it does not date back to antiquity.

Each time we say the word "planet" or "asteroid" or "centaur," we are talking about an idea and a cycle of time, hence a moving and evolving concept that encounters other moving, evolving concepts. These then form patterns, which is what we're looking at when we read an astrology chart.

Astrology as Environmental Study

In recent years, I've been working more closely with the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, a 20th century philosopher. Here is how the connection came:

McLuhan is famous for the phrase, "The medium is the message." This is a little cryptic, but it's less so if you know what Marshall meant by "medium." To him, that meant "environment."

His study of media was a study of the environment, and he describes environment as all that is invisible but which nevertheless has an influence. In his approach to studying the world, the real information comes from the environment or the

background. In contrast, we are used to studying the figure on the screen or the stage -- and ignoring what's coming from the ground.

We're not trained to do so, so that's understandable. A useful metaphor will come from anyone who has ever kept a fish tank. If you want to know about the health of the fish, you sample the water and test for chemicals like ammonia, which are invisible to the eye but an important indicator of the health of the environment. The message about the fish comes from the medium of what's contained in the water. We do this because it would not make sense, in the context of a home aquarium, to kill the fish and then analyze them -- and it's not necessary.

The water is available to study and provides all of the relevant information we might need. Think of the fish as the figure, and the water as the ground or background. The useful information about the fish is coming from the ground, and not from the fish itself.

The mental environment works this way as well. The factors are invisible until we use special techniques to bring them to awareness. McLuhan was talking about the environment of communication tools primarily, which he proposed is the single most important factor shaping consciousness, and by extension, society and what happens.

Looked at one way, you could say he was studying the different impact of the same story on radio and on television. Looked at another way, he was interested in how these things shape consciousness; how they direct our awareness; what they do to the senses (radio is coming over one sense, and TV is coming over two senses).

One way to study the hidden environment of the world is to study astrology. What's happening with the planets is either invisible or goes unnoticed. Someone might observe in passing that the Moon is near full phase, without any way to place that into context. Astrology provides that context: the framework from which this elusive thing called meaning might be discerned.

Meaning is only meaningful *in context*. That would be an astrological expression of "the medium is the message." Context frames the message, so that it can be discerned. If someone was born in a birthing center near the Churchill Downs in Kentucky, it would be possible to have a birth chart that was the same as that of a horse winning the Kentucky Derby.

In theory, the charts, set for the same city, would be identical if the times matched, but one would be the context of a human life and the other would be a horse race. The context for which you are reading would influence the "meaning" of the chart.

We cannot emphasize this enough in our discussion of astrology. A chart is meaningless without context. The "message" comes from the "medium" of the

context for which you are reading -- so you must always know why you are reading any given chart.

Learning Interpretation by Example

Learning is conveyed by example more than any other method. Although it is possible to lay down methods of delineation and of basic approaches to the chart. I will give a few of those, which are like opening moves in chess. However, interpretation is more complex, and the experience of a chart -- and what you learn from studying it -- is at the core of your astrological growth process.

The single best book I've read that demonstrates interpretation is *The Moment of Astrology* by Geoffrey Cornelius, which is a book on horary (and one of my favorite books of all time). Once you have a grasp on horary, all other modes of astrology will make much more sense.

In my work as an author, I demonstrate interpretation with nearly everything I write. The best examples of interpretation that I have to offer come in two forms: one is my analysis of news events, of which there exist a great many going back 20 years. You can follow current events ongoing in new publications released to Planet Waves subscribers, and the vast archive of such articles that exist on the open internet. There are many, many past articles in the archives as well, which we will link from a resource area for easy access.

Pay attention to how I begin an interpretation: I'm looking for the way the chart represents or illustrates the event in question. In horary astrology -- the master art of our field -- this is called a *test of radicality*. Whether the chart is "radical" means whether it represents the matter in question. While classical horary has several technical criteria in its test for radicality, the chart must also pass a kind of smell test: does this chart fit the scene, and if so, how?

Once you start looking for this fit, it becomes second nature. There are, of course, charts that are more confounding or that don't seem to fit at all, and those must be given some time, and circumstantial investigation. Sometimes you don't know what you're looking at, because you don't understand the situation. In this sense, astrology is a kind of investigative art. Although astrology is better suited for asking questions than it is for coming up with answers, the two are related.

In an article, I will often say why I start the reading a certain way, though it will help if you bring some creativity and discernment to what you read, and make some observations for yourself -- first about my approach (which you are free to analyze, study or critique), and then, about the chart that I offer.

The second, more personal and psychological in nature, can be found in studying my annual readings. These are extended interpretations of transits I've written

continually for 21 years. These readings contain many careful, thoughtful delineations that utilize all of the principles of astrology I'm describing in this monograph.

It's possible to read a description of a long transit, such as Chiron in Pisces or Pluto in Sagittarius, for many signs, for every year the transit was in place. This will allow you to see a development of my thought process about that transit, which is a demonstration of the many ways it's possible to think about what is essentially the same basic symbol. These readings often come with charts provided for each sign, the same charts I used to write the interpretation. There is no other resource like this, that I know of, anywhere in existence.

There is a third method, which is the way I initially learned astrology; that is to follow my horoscopes and see if you can figure out what I'm saying. In my daily, weekly and monthly columns, I mention the specific astrology a little less than I do in the annuals, though I am always speaking of identifiable themes that relate to planets and houses. You can cast a chart for any given week or month and reverse-engineer my columns to figure out what I am doing. There will often be several possibilities, though other times you may notice I'm describing something that becomes fairly obvious when you look at the chart.

These are different from standard book interpretations of a placement because they are written in real time, and considered as a dynamic force with other planets and aspects -- and working with this multiple-factor process is the key to developing an interpretation. Planets modify one another's expression, and I am usually considering the whole aspect pattern. Study this for a while and you may find that you get the hang of it.

Speaking of Houses: Focus Your Study There

The feature of astrology that will help you orient the most clearly is the houses. The houses represent physical and mental environments. They provide the context where the events in a chart take place.

It takes a while to get a feel for them, though the system makes sense if you apply some creativity, and gather clues from study and experience. The houses are what bring planets and signs (which are features in space) down to the Earth-plane.

There are 12 houses in the astrology chart. There are many ways to divide them, which does not change the theme of the house, only its shape (a little). The method of division is called the house system.

The house system is much less significant than the concept of the house itself; the place where two houses meet or energetically overlap is called a house cusp and this region of the chart has its own particular theme or quality. This book contains

a detailed discussion of how to work with, and think of, houses in an open-minded way (the article is called *It's All in the Houses*).

Currently there is a movement in astrology toward using whole sign houses. Many things are being said (I am being polite here). In order to orient you on the origins of this idea within the contemporary astrology community, your Advanced Astrology Set (if you chose that option) includes a PDF download of the original work on the subject, *Whole Sign Houses* by Robert Hand. If I could take just five astrology books to another planet, this would be one of them. If I had to take just two, it would still be one of them (the other being *The Moment of Astrology* by Geoffrey Cornelius).

You will learn a lot about how to use houses from Cornelius' approach. You may need to be a slightly more advanced student to follow the book, though it's also a good way to challenge yourself to learn the basics. Cornelius is really the only author who addresses the issue of how we know what we think we know -- that is, epistemology -- in an astrology book.

What is a Placement?

A placement is a point in a sign and a house; for example, Mars in Aries in the 1st house. It needs to be read on all three layers, taking into account the delineation of each. Generally, the sign modifies the quality of the planet, and the house shows the context where the quality is expressed.

What is an Aspect?

An aspect is a relationship between an object and one or more points, such as Venus trine Mars. An aspect is almost always part of an aspect pattern, such as Venus trine Mars and sextile Jupiter. One key to reading astrology is to see the aspect patterns, and consider them as one interesting thing. Most cookbook-style texts you read will define one aspect at a time. There is no book that tells you about having Jupiter square Saturn, with Pluto trine Jupiter, and Chiron square Saturn, conjunct the Part of Fortune. That is the work of actual, living astrologers. Such a pattern has no one "meaning;" rather it has many possible interpretations and expressions.

What are Transits?

A transit is when a planet moving in real time and space makes an aspect to a planet or other point standing in the natal chart. Examples of transits are when Jupiter makes a conjunction to natal Saturn (called Jupiter conjunct Saturn); when Venus makes a conjunction to natal Mars; when a planet crosses the natal ascendant, and so on. The distinctive thing about a transit is that it involves the current position of a planet making an aspect to a planet in the natal chart.

What is a Key Life Transit?

These are transits where there tends to be a transition in maturity level or the structure of one's consciousness and physical life, which can happen across an entire sub-generation. Occurring by age, they are part individual and part collective. There is no set definition of the term key life transit, but my set includes the following:

Saturn return (when Saturn returns to its natal position, around age 29)

Pluto square Pluto (also called Pluto square, when Pluto makes a 90-degree angle to its natal position; these days, around age 35)

Neptune square Neptune (also called Neptune square, when Neptune makes a 90-degree angle to its natal position; these days, around age 40)

Chiron square Chiron (also called Chiron square, when Chiron makes a square to its natal position; the first happens between ages 7 and 22, and later between ages __ and __)

Uranus opposition (when Uranus makes a 180-degree angle to its natal position, around age 42)

Chiron opposition (when Chiron makes a 180-degree angle to its natal position, age varies; use an ephemeris)

Chiron return (when Chiron returns to its natal position at around age 50-51, one of the most important transits in life, and a major coming of age)

Second Saturn return (when Saturn returns to its natal position for the second time, around age 58)

Any transit to the ascendant made by a slow-moving object, such as Chiron, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune or Pluto

Key life transits are the big ones that everyone goes through. They are points of initiation. Our society is distinctive in that it tends to lack rites of passage, except maybe high school graduation, college graduation for some, and marriage for some. That's not enough. We are not guided out of childhood and through the phases of adulthood, so we end up with a lot of children walking around in adult bodies, and this is troublesome for everyone.

Part of what astrology gives us is these rites of passage. First, you will study them in your own life, then in the lives of people close to you, and eventually (if you wish) for others; you will gradually learn to guide people through them as well. These are passages where we each must find our own way, though it helps to have someone experienced who can read the map.

Your chart and your transits are always the starting place. Astrology is not the study of things; it's the study of yourself, and can only be safely practiced by self-aware people.

If you are a younger person working for older people, it's essential that you not be presumptuous about what these transits involve. You must take your time and find out. This is one reason why I suggest that serious students of mine learn how to calculate these transits (by hand, meaning by ephemeris and not by computer script), and spend time with many people, listening to what these transitions in their life were about.

You're doing this for many reasons, though mainly so you can be a competent, sensitive astrologer, effective in serving one of your more significant roles: that of initiator.

What are Progressions?

Progressions are movements of the planets measured in a scale model of time. The most commonly used scale is a day per year, or movement of approximately 1/365 of time. This is called "secondary progression" for some reason that nobody seems to know. There are other models; your computer software probably has 10 different ones, and you can experiment.

I have tried them all; for me, secondary progressions are the ones that ring the bell, in terms of yielding valuable information for my clients. Of these, I use Quotidian style because it moves the ascendant one degree per day, timed to sidereal time. Said another way: it's a real, not a theoretical, chart.

A progressed chart (of any kind) is based on your natal chart -- and is therefore your chart. Transits (planets moving in real time) are common property, even though they may make exact aspects to your natal chart. But your progressions are directly rooted in your time of birth and your original astrological pattern.

I suggest you read progressions as a stand-alone chart rather than as a bi-wheel around the natal chart; or at least do both (I am not a fan of bi-wheels; I prefer to draw in the outer-wheel planets with a pencil. I do a lot on my charts in pencil; I will include an example or two at the end of this monograph.)

One key difference between a natal chart and a progressed chart is that *the progressed chart moves*. Progressions therefore remind you that any chart is a snapshot of time, and that the planets are still moving, and need to be viewed as a developing story rather than a static thing.

Reading progressions takes practice -- a lot of practice. If you're new to the technique, cast a series of charts for events like your Saturn return and Uranian

opposition; and for important dates like getting married, college graduation, buying your first house, and so on. Then check the corresponding progressions and you'll see how they describe these various situations. Look for correspondences rather than for meaning. Look for pictures of things you recognize in the chart.

Progressions should not work, but they do. This suggests that there are properties of time other than the ones we normally notice: that time has subtle cycles, and can act in a way that is holographic, meaning that any chart represents a picture of the whole, which can evolve.

Progressions are measured on a microscopic level; the placements change only rarely, and matter more, and primarily focus on the sign occupied by the Moon and the Sun, and the aspect between the Moon and the Sun (the progressed Moon phase). *Aspects are measured much more closely than with transits, usually to one degree on either side.* It's not as simple as what is in what house, at least not most of the time. Progressed aspects can point to the timing of events, and this needs to be studied in a precise way -- i.e., to the degree applying, exact and separating.

See the chapter *Holographic Astrology* in the Advanced Astrology Set for more information about how progressions work.

Ethics and Prediction

Prediction is, theoretically, possible in astrology because you can cast charts for the future, plot the directions of planets as they move in the future, and make up stories based on them. Some astrologers are particularly intuitive at seeing imagery in the chart, and can therefore seem to make predictions on this basis.

But the dismal record of astrology in making specific predictions must be accounted for. Even if it's only evidence that most astrologers cannot do it, that's enough to warn us off of making predictions. That leaves astrology as a means of (among other things) envisioning the future. This uses essentially the same tools as does so-called prediction. Prediction to me seems like a more limited form of visioning, offering just one possibility as "the thing that will happen."

It's fairer to say something like, "These are the conditions under which this will be developing." It's fair for a weather forecaster to say that if it rains, things will get wet, though this has different implications for a birdbath and for a painting left outside.

Astrology is usually expected (by clients and by the media, among others) to venture into the realm of prediction. No matter how psychological or humanistic or shamanic or archetypal it may claim to be, prediction has been part of astrology (and the perception of astrology) for so long that it would seem impossible to get

away from. For many, the term "astrology" means "to predict the future." You know, "What's in my stars?"

In my view we don't need to be predicting, which means *pre-dictating*; we need to be creating our lives, or co-creating with our clients.

Astrology charts display many simultaneous probability fields, and I would say the goal of a sound, fair-minded and useful astrologer is to see as many as possible. Know what you want, and use astrology to design a path to the desired objective.

A chart may show obstacles, and if it does that, it will show a path through or around them -- if anyone bothers to look, or perceive matters that way.

In any meeting with a client, I revert to one of the most basic and practical teachings of Jesus -- entirely non-dogmatic -- "where two or more are gathered in my name I will be there." This is to say, when two people get together to discuss the chart, they can invoke a property of manifestation, and if they proceed in a spirit of love, the outcome of their discussion will be loving and creative.

The astrologer you want (and want to be) is one who can see the many possibilities dancing in the chart, and moreover, who can hear what you want, help you make some decisions, and ultimately help you create that thing or that circumstance. As your own astrologer, this is something you can learn to do for yourself.

Astrology is a Form of Literacy

Among other things, astrology is an unusual form of literacy. Think of it this way: In a typical astrology chart, there are as many symbols (including numbers and the birth data), as there are letters in one or two paragraphs of an average article. Typically those paragraphs provide very little information.

Yet one astrology chart can provide sufficient data to talk about it for 12 hours (I once did an entire spring reading for all 12 signs based on one chart).

Why is this? The circular arrangement of the symbols focuses their potency. The placement of any one planet has multiple levels of interpretation. Then every planet (in its sign and house) relates to every other planet (in its sign and house). Then patterns emerge and reveal whole new ideas. It's an efficient way of conveying data, similar to a hologram.

You may notice that any segment of the chart tells the story of the whole chart. You can test this by cutting up the chart and drawing little snippets randomly, and seeing if you can extrapolate them into the bigger picture.

We are accustomed to reading left to right, seeking logic and linear meaning from the things we read. Astrology will teach you that meaning, such as it exists, is always set in context, and that context has a way of shifting. As Yoda said, truth depends on your point of view. Of course, that itself is a statement made from a point of view; and there's such a thing as the point of view known as being honest with yourself.

NOTE ABOUT WORDS: As a form of literacy, words matter. It's essential that you collect a few astrology dictionaries and use them frequently. The two best ones I know of are by Leo (an old one) and Gettings (a newer and much more comprehensive one from the Arkana series of books). Both are out of print, but easy enough to track down. Every time you come to a word or concept you don't understand, look it up in several references.

I could say a lot (based on my study of Marshall McLuhan) about the relationship between book literacy and the circular literacy of the chart. The distilled version is this: astrological literacy is based on book literacy, but is a bold departure from it.

Yet to read a chart requires the organized thinking of books as its foundation in grammar and syntax; and because books tend to point us inward, as astrology must, reading is an essential element of astrological literacy. By reading, I mean reading from books written in distinct eras of time, from very old translations of ancient texts, to the classic works of our lifetimes. I have listed some of those in the book list, below.

Practice Reading Tarot Cards or Runes

One suggestion I have is to work with tarot cards or runes. Keep them handy. If you work with tarot, get to know a few decks. For study and divination, I suggest you not use novelty decks, but rather classic decks. I will give some suggestions at the end of this section.

Astrology is a form of divination -- perhaps the most complex form ever devised. The essence of divination is corresponding with things that seem random but which turn out to be significant after all. Remember that the significance (or meaning) is coming from you: it's what you ascribe to the chart you're looking at. Yet at times it can feel like it's coming from a much deeper place, also within you, that you will train and learn to access and be open to.

There is a "feel" to divination -- a kind of call and response between you and some mysterious force of nature that is guiding the process. The feel to divination is your sense of when something resonates, or when you seek some information and then know when you have it.

Since astrology is the most complex form of divination, you must refine your "Spidey sense" that will allow you to sense when the wisdom of the universe is whispering to you. However, then you need to cross-check against the chart for factors that might argue against your perception. And you need to check in with physical reality and inquire as to what is actually extant. What you see in a chart is not proof of anything.

The way you practice doing this in smaller, simpler ways is by exploring other methods of divination first, so you get the feel for how the oracle speaks, and how it corresponds to lived reality.

Let's use a more mundane metaphor; If you think of astrology as the game of baseball, there's a lot of throwing and catching involved. There's a lot of scooping up balls that skip along the ground. Long before anyone plays baseball, they might play with a rubber ball by throwing it against a stoop or wall (or at least they did when we were kids). It may seem simple to throw a ball, have it bounce and catch it. Actually, though, it takes considerable coordination and practice.

It's this ability to throw the ball, anticipate where it will hit, observe it bounce, and then be in a position to catch it, that is the equivalent of divination using a relatively simple method like tarot cards. This skill will follow you throughout your astrological study and practice. It will help you get a feel for the process. If you use your skill with sincerity, you will develop it over the years.

There's an excellent rune set called *The Book of Runes* by Ralph Blum. The write-ups on the runes are simple and follow the basic tradition, and are philosophically elegant. Remember, runes are breakable, so don't drop the bag.

Tarot is a simplified version of astrology. The 78 cards each have astrological correspondences; and in their various combinations are like a shorthand representation of all the possible permutations of the planets, signs and houses. There's lots of astrology encrypted even into the most basic deck. Many newer decks (beginning with Crowley) have astrological correspondences drawn right into the cards, which will provide some additional guidance on how to align the two systems. Note that there are differing opinions on the correspondences; there is no definitive version, though many commentators agree on certain basic facts.

My preferred tarot decks are the Tarot de Marseille (Jodorowsky-Camoin edition, which is impeccable); the Rider-Waite deck; the Haindl deck; the Voyager deck; and for study but not for divination, the Thoth deck by Crowley and Harris. The various decks have different feeling tones and vibrations.

While the Tarot de Marseille (Jodorowsky-Camoin edition) is one of those old wood cut-style decks with sparse illustration, it's the least cluttered (spiritually

speaking) of any deck I've worked with. However, it helps to study and experiment with many decks to get a sense of all of the permutations of each card.

My basic teaching approach is to take versions of the same card from several decks, put them on the table and notice how each delivers a similar message in its own esoteric language. If you do this with a group of friends, and take a light touch, you will start to see how you can deduce the "code" of each card and of each author.

While studying books is inevitable these days, remember that the tarot is a visual language, which is not supposed to be written about -- the whole point of the tarot is to contain and indeed conceal the message in the visual images, which could be played off as an innocent game. The more accustomed you become to getting the message visually, the less you will need to look up the "meaning" of cards in books, and the better you will be at actually reading cards on the spot.

If you want to get a lot of practice reading cards, get involved in reading at psychic fairs, or get one of those gigs where you become an online reader who people call, paying you by the minute. That will hone your skills and get you in shape fast.

What You Read in Books (or Online) are Commentaries, Not The Truth

Many writers make declaratory statements about what something means (such as an aspect, or a planet in a sign or house). I was recently treated to a video of two astrologers sitting on a couch boo-hoing over someone's Saturn placement (the same one as Descartes, Emily Dickinson and Emerson, so it definitely has potential). I just sat there mumbling something I say often, *you must be fucking kidding me!* But alas, no. They were not kidding.

This is not a helpful approach, mainly because people tend to believe the statements about the problems other people say they have. Every placement, aspect and concept has its benefits and its liabilities. The art of living involves maximizing the benefits, protecting yourself from the liabilities -- and then turning them into assets.

It's essential to take all commentaries with the awareness that they're just someone's opinion -- learned as it may be, or as wise as the writer is presumed to be. Get in the game of comparing commentaries, and seeing how they differ and what they have in common. It's true that some people tend to have more useful opinions than others.

You might find that an author is really good on Saturn placements, then gacks on one particular sign, or throws in what sounds like an insult or a barb. Or maybe they just don't get it. There are a lot of planets and 12 signs and a lot of combinations. This is why the study of astrology *is a study in comparative*

literature. You will want to collect books, particularly old ones, and draw contrasts between the commentaries.

The internet is a particularly dismal place to get astrological information. I say this as an author who has come up on the graces and miracle of digital technology, though I am old school. I came of age in the print era, when three to five people read, and to some degree evaluated, everything before it was released to the public.

While there are plenty of bad books (and plenty of good ones), at least the author had to have some experience to get one published; a few colleagues and a couple of editors probably read it over; and then it has to sell a few copies in order to establish itself.

Nothing like this is true of the internet. There are many, many errors in articles on esoteric matters published to the net. That's because usually, there is no editor, no review, no vetting, and no fact-checking. One types something and clicks "publish" and that is that. And there is no promise that the person writing has actually read an astrology book. You have to figure that out for yourself, and skip over being dazzled. Pay attention to what you read. Take it apart. See if it stands up to scrutiny and cross-referencing.

If you are going to get astrological information from the internet, follow the writer for a while and make sure you resonate with what they say. Try to reach them on the phone and get a feeling for who they are as a person.

The Need to Read and Collect Books

Astrology is an art for the literate, and most of the reliable information is contained in books. But the old books are disappearing, and being replaced by online sources where there are typically no editors, a frightening lack of depth and a mind-numbing lack of context.

Suddenly everyone can be an author by spending 99 cents for a domain and sticking up a WordPress blog. I have personally thrived on the digital revolution -- and I spend a nice slab of the Planet Waves budget on people who help me proofread, fact-check, and what we call karma check. We are a bookish lot.

To study astrology, you must read and collect books; you must get to know them and understand the author's point of view, and also something about the viewpoint of the work related to the time that it was created -- even if that point of view now seems weird, or wrong.

Astrology is a study in the human condition, which seems to change a lot less than you might think, but our perspective on it changes. Therefore, it's important to

know where an astrologer is coming from, spiritually, psychologically, and in relationship to the astrological tradition.

Go to used bookstores wherever you travel, and buy anything that looks interesting. Pay special attention to craggy bookstores that look like a fire hazard. Check both "occult" and "astrology" sections. Don't worry whether you really need it. You do -- for research purposes. Grab anything that seems vaguely interesting.

Once when I was visiting Key West, I had my hands on a very early monograph (short book) on Neptune. I did not buy it -- and I'm unlikely to ever find it again, mainly because I don't remember the title or author.

You want your library to have a good sampling of books from different eras of astrological development -- for example, some works related to classical astrology (Advanced Astrology Set customers get two by Robert Hand, *Whole Sign Houses* and *Night and Day*). You want some from the early 20th century revival era; the 1970s revival era, including works related to humanistic astrology by authors such as Dane Rudhyar (*An Astrological Mandala* is the best of his work, IMO); the late 20th century psychological astrology era; and a few others. Pay attention to how the viewpoints evolve.

Get your hands on classic early 20th century works by such authors as Evangeline Adams (who invented the current astrological profession), Grant Lewi, Llewellyn George and others. You might not read them cover-to-cover (unless you do) but they are very helpful for getting a sense of recent history.

We happen to live in an era when translations of very old, original works are being made available, through things like Project Hindsight and Arhat Media. We also live in an era when there are many new developments in astronomy, which are opening up broader horizons for astrology. However, astrologers -- many of whom claim to be future-oriented -- spend a lot of time looking in the rearview mirror.

We live in an era of rapid evolution of planetary science (please see *Beyond the Veil*, an appendix to this monograph). To find resources that guide you into the newer discoveries, you will need to be discerning. There are many resources that I've written and compiled with the Planet Waves team in the digital resources area for this monograph.

But back to the old books: Be generous with yourself. Grab anything that looks vaguely weird, interesting, useful or even a bit boring. Pay special attention to pamphlets. Scanning the literature, you may find stuff that has repugnant, dogmatic viewpoints. You will find stuff that is witty and self-aware. You will find authors from the distant past who were surprisingly forward-thinking. Pick up old books on the "occult" and consider the book in its place and time.

An essential reading list is included at the end of this monograph. I've included the books that have helped me the most, and that are spiritually grounded. Personally I am not interested in the astrologers who are into power. I am interested in the ones who are generous with their spirit, who love humanity, and who know they are here to help. I am interested in astrologers who impress me as intellectually honest, and who have broad life experience.

Sadly, that is rare to find. And books can contain lots of weird stuff, which is why I am suggesting that none of it is the truth; it's all commentary, from the viewpoint of the author and his or her place and time in history. That books are reviewed by editors is no guarantee that they will be enlightened. Still, if you want to be an astrologer, you need to know what's in them. And if you do that consistently, you will find some very good ones. I have listed my personal favorite astrology books at the end of this monograph. My favorite sex books are listed at **YogiSlut.com**.

An Example, From the Books: Venus square Mars

I said earlier that astrology is a study in comparative literature, though it also has a touch of investigative reporting to it. To learn astrology, to study your own chart, and to handle cases, you need to be a good researcher, and an excellent listener. Then you need to present your findings.

Astrology books and other sources present an over-abundance of data. The question is, how do you sift through it, evaluate it, and put it to work? How do you spot the strengths and weaknesses of what is presented?

There is a genre of books that take the "cookbook" approach to astrology, attempting to list every placement and every aspect. These commentaries need to be approached with caution, thought through carefully, and tested against lived reality. I also find it helpful to compare what different books say about the same topic, such as an aspect.

The goal of learning to read a chart is to get beyond the cookbook definition and cultivate sensitivity to what the chart is saying, in its context. To read a chart means to read without external references. Still, most astrology students go through a phase of studying cookbooks and trying to make sense out of them. I stopped doing that as soon as I got involved in studying Chiron, and then the charts just started speaking to me.

Just for a good time, let's try some comparative literature with one aspect -- Venus square Mars. I just walked down the street and visited the Planet Waves office, where I keep most of my astrology collection, and looked up a number of interpretations for this aspect. I chose it because it's considered one of those "challenging" aspects with a bad rap, and I wanted to contrast how the different authors, from various time periods, handled it. What common themes are there?

Who departs from them? Does anyone have something relevant to say? It's been a while since I looked at any of these aspect delineations.

Straight away, I noticed an old problem. None of the books reference the fact that Venus square Mars will manifest differently depending on whether it occurs in the cardinal, fixed or mutable signs. For example, you could have this aspect from Aries to Cancer (cardinal), Taurus to Aquarius (fixed), or Virgo to Sagittarius (mutable). These will have a little in common, though what crosses the aspect is on will give you a whole other result, and a very different feeling tone. Only one author makes passing reference to this distinction. The rest leave it out completely.

Let's start with someone I consider to be a reliable source: Isabel Hickey, from her book *Astrology: A Cosmic Science*. Of Venus square Mars, she writes, "Emotions and passions need controlling. Can be cruel and ruthless if individual is lower martial type. Conflict between passion and love. Often leads to an early marriage due to sexual attraction. In female chart, produces emotional suffering from father or husband." And she concludes on a chipper note: "Cruelty, inflicted on others in a past life, will come home for redemption."

Now, would you really say this to a client? You better not! But what you want to do is listen to them describe their relationships and their problems, and notice where any of them seem to resonate. Then, it's up to you to work with the client to come up with a creative approach to their personal material.

You have to be really careful with statements like this: "Cruelty, inflicted on others in a past life, will come home for redemption." It's become trendy for some astrologers to try to use the chart to tell people who they were in a past life. I don't think this is responsible, nor do I think it's possible to see in a chart. While a chart may give some hints as to the distant past, it's not conclusive of specifics.

I consider the whole past life thing to be the "reincarnation effect." Whether real or not, it's an effect that someone is experiencing. There are many sources of data pertaining to this effect, and as with all matters of verification, several sources are necessary. Those might include direct memory, a reading, hypnosis, trance channeling, a dream experience and others. The reincarnation effect is a whole topic unto itself that deserves to be on the short list for topics to include here, because it comes up so much in astrology.

Back to Venus square Mars.

Llewellyn George is a famous old writer from the days of yore. His book *A-Z Horoscope Maker and Delineator* came out in 1910 and was revised many times. I think I've got the 29th edition. He does not list specific aspects, only "Venus in Unfavorable Aspect to Mars." This is from the old days when there were thought to

be benefic and malefic aspects -- trines and sextiles allegedly being benefic, squares and oppositions allegedly being malefic. (I read in an old book researching this chapter that semi-squares are allegedly "evil.")

He writes of "bad" Venus-Mars natal contacts: "Very fond of pleasure; impulsive and amorous; difficulty through excesses and the opposite sex." He adds, "Loss through over-liberal tendencies or carelessness and extravagance; also through fires, partnerships and too freely entering business or speculative enterprises."

Completing the optimistic perspective of this aspect, he includes a little more: "At times, the social popularity or standing will be adversely affected; danger through dishonesty or loss; opposition through friends or jealousy; separation and enmity. Trouble through marriage and partnerships."

Hoooookay. How might this information be useful? Loss by being over-liberal, or through fires? Like, your thong igniting? Advise client to keep a fire extinguisher handy?

Let's parse this out for a second. How, besides observation, is he coming to these conclusions? I could see Venus square Mars as brimming with tension. Depending on all the particulars (referencing the above interpretation) this could in turn describe psychology that might lead a person to want to cut loose. It could also be a bit prudish, or describe tension between the two states.

The jealousy bit is easy enough to surmise; Venus rules Taurus and Mars rules Scorpio and both lean toward the possessive side, and the square can be seen as a kind of inner clash. How many people do you personally know for whom jealousy is not a significant aspect of their psychology, whether latent or overt?

Yet the deeper matter to consider is the posture of these presentations: this aspect *means this is going on*. What you see here is partly the result of astrology *trying to say what something means, but without looking for meaning*.

Let's try one more take on this aspect, from *The Astrologer's Handbook* by my old friend Louis Acker and his collaborator (whom I never met), Frances Sakoian. They write: "This square causes emotional problems, especially in romance and relationships with the opposite sex. Sometimes there is a tendency to use the opposite sex or to be used by them for purely sexual gratification."

Wow, I wish this problem were limited to only individuals with this aspect! I guess there must be hundreds and hundreds of different aspects that "cause" this problem. Let's go on. The authors continue:

"The natives may lack good taste or refinement in their social conduct. Their desires are very strong and unless other features indicate the contrary, there is a need for self-control. Unbridled passion can cause them great harm. Men with this

aspect are likely to offend women because of their coarse manners. Women with this aspect often exasperate men with their emotional temperaments."

I guess all of these books were written before people had same-sex relationships. When exactly did that begin?

Part of what we're seeing is these authors writing into an expectation of what astrology is supposed to be -- and quite a bit of judgment about sexuality. In the days of yore (between around 400 BC and 10 minutes ago), astrologers were expected to lay the reading on the client.

Today, we must listen. If you have a one-hour reading scheduled with a client and you spend the first 54 minutes listening so you understand what they are experiencing, and the last six minutes delivering your message, that is what you do. It's far preferable to build the listening time into the process as an architectural feature.

That's what you have to do as someone's astrologer: you hang out with the person until they state the problem in a way that it can be solved. Then they may have some useful ideas. If you're curious about this particular aspect, or if the client is, there's a fairly easy way to get a sense of what's going on -- note when Chiron passed through the square, and listen to some descriptions of the client's life at that particular time (In a future edition, probably the next, I will include a chapter on working with Chiron transits.)

The houses where these planets appear are going to make a big difference, because the houses set the context. The planets describe a relationship, and the planets are placed in environments, which are also in relationship to one another.

Mars in the 12th can be a little paranoid, and prone to keep secrets; what is in the 12th can also have an extra tendency to lurk beneath the level of liminality; you might keep an ear open for that. Venus in the 12th can be evasive and prone to being driven by fantasy. Anything in the 12th might have a little cloud of denial around it. You need to listen for the details. Mars in the 8th will be sexually curious and provocative, potentially quick to connect with another, and given to a certain kind of risk. Venus in the 5th can be playful and expressive; Venus in the 3rd might want to talk a lot, and word play can be as sexy as physical play. The houses provide the context for the reading -- but you still have to suss out the placements with the help of the client.

The signs will count too. For example, if Mars is in a feminine sign and Venus is in a masculine sign, that will cast the aspect in an interesting way. If you tune into those details -- and study the whole aspect pattern, including any of the newer discoveries that are likely to get into the mix -- you will have a lot more information to work with.

What if we go from the other direction -- starting with what a square is? Michael Meyer, in *A Handbook for the Humanistic Astrologer*, writes, that it's about "the exteriorization and actualization of relationship. The giving of concrete form. Crisis and the need to take clear-cut action. Confrontations and their results. Creative tension. Solid power."

Now that is helpful. The square would seem to want to express something in a tangible way. So the question might be: what is someone with this aspect trying to manifest? And how is that working for them? Even if some of the above commentaries describe their behavior -- and they might -- what are the underlying values? How does the person feel about having those values?

If you're sitting with someone who has Venus square Mars, you don't need to tell them what it means. You can ask; and the chances are you won't even need to. Just listen and they will tell you. People have a lot to say about their relationships, and if they pick up the possibility that you won't judge them, they will have something to say about their sexuality as well.

Set within a contemporary context (early 21st century, United States), Venus square Mars, indeed any Venus-Mars aspect, can open up a discussion on sexual identity, gender identity, and the relationship between the two. Then, it would be helpful to consider the relationship between *identity* and *reality*, which may or may not bear any resemblance to one another. This is not a topic that was part of public discourse at the time these books were written.

Going deeper, how does the person with this aspect express the female side of their nature? How do they express the male side, and what is the relationship? Note that the "female side" and "male side" themes are entirely products of their time in history. Does female side equal wear a skirt and male side equal build an addition onto the house? What are the underlying assumptions being made?

I'll take a trip to the local mass-market bookstore and see what a current book or three has to say about this aspect; it will make a fun research project. I will be pleasantly surprised if any are more enlightened than what we've just read.

It's Essential to Study and Understand Sex

Our Venus square Mars example offers a hint and a caution: a competent astrologer must make an effort to understand sex, and to talk about sex in such a way that avoids judgments. This requires a high degree of comfort with yourself, and with your experiences, and this is rare to find in the human race.

By sex, I mean sex, sexuality and how these correspond to people's relationships to themselves, to others and to society. This is a tall order, and you will need to do

much reading and even more listening to even come close. You can try (by which I mean make a sincere and consistent effort) -- and the most important element of effort is to keep your mind open.

Your job as an astrologer will be to guide people to get to know their personal truth, rather than to live out some version of life that you think is right. Everyone has their personal truth where sex is concerned, though few come to terms with it. You need to be the place where that coming to terms is, at least, a possibility. And many people who show up looking for spiritual, psychological or relational guidance are actually seeking guidance where their sexuality is concerned.

There are very few places where this is found. It is considered controversial and even dangerous, because we are in a time when people are so easily triggered and are being conditioned to be reactive. People tend to blame whatever triggered them rather than seeking contact and resolution with the underlying causes of pain or struggle. So this is territory where you need to work gently.

It is fair to say that every house of the zodiac has an important permutation where sex or sexuality are concerned, which I have outlined in the article **The Wheel: Sex and Astrology** (available on the digital resources page).

<< <https://planetwaves.net/news/daily-astrology/the-wheel-sex-and-astrology/>

Because I am working as a professional, my clients sign a consent agreement, which states that astrology can cover any topic in the universe, including sex and relationships. I get specific permission from my clients to cover this subject matter. It will be a happy day when this is not necessary; when an honest discussion of sex and sexuality is considered a healthy and normal thing for adults to discuss, and for parents to discuss with their children. Yet the situation is to the point where many people cannot discuss sexuality with their own therapist, for fear of being judged (which may well be a reality).

The most serious problems practitioners of all kinds come up against are thinking they know more than they do, and not understanding when their statements are prejudicial or ignorant. That is why it's essential to learn how to listen without judging, and without getting pulled into the drama. That is a subject of its own.

Those seeking sexuality resources can find them on a website I've set up, called **YogiSlut.com**. I provide some of my own articles and a monograph called "It's Not About Sex, It's About Self," as well as a reading list of books that I have found dependable over time.

There is No 'Correct' Version of Astrology

There have been many movements in astrology the past 100 years, some of them claiming to be the vehicle of ultimate truth. Quite a few are running around today

places such as the internet, where any Russian hacker can go into business as the world's greatest astrologer.

Beware of these people; most are on a power trip, or toll collectors. Most will not come out and say that their version of astrology is the paragon of wisdom, though they will act like it. Some will even claim it outright.

Similarly, beware of declarative statements of any kind by any astrologer, and do your best to restrain from making them. You cannot tell if someone is going to succeed or fail in their career from their chart. If the 10th house is some guaranteed marker for success, start looking up rock stars and verifying that. You cannot tell how long someone will live from their chart. You cannot tell that someone will only have horrid relationships (or brilliant ones) from their chart. These are all speculative ideas, and people defy their charts all the time, or use them in interesting ways you would never have thought of.

Part of the current problem involves the recovery of old methods of doing astrology (Greek, Hellenistic, Medieval and so on). These methods can offer some valuable tools, and insight into the history of our work. Yet there are some newer students of these methods who claim that they are the only true astrology. For example, you will read arguments made that whole sign houses are the *only* valid method of reading a chart, sometimes by people wielding a knife or gun.

Well, that's not what Robert Hand, author of *Whole Sign Houses* (included on the digital resources page) says. He takes a more open-minded approach and explains where quadrant houses (the usual kind, such as Koch or Placidus) combine beautifully with whole sign houses. By combine beautifully I mean give you lots of ideas for interpretation and correspondence.

Astrology is a tool like any other (ok, quoting Robert, it's the most complex form of divination, so it's not like *any* other! But it is a tool that we use, and that shapes us while we use it). Yet it has one thing in common with your pocketknife. How a tool is used, whether destructively or creatively, is entirely up to the practitioner.

Along these lines, it's helpful and indeed essential to have some familiarity with the history of our craft, including some working knowledge of classical astrology (see the Thema Mundi and the Table of Essential Dignities), early modern astrology, and horary (William Lilly), the 19th century revival (Leo), the various 20th century movements (Evangeline Adams-era popular, spiritual, humanistic, theosophical, what's-your-sign groovy 1970s, classical revival, psychological and that which uses modern discoveries such as Chiron).

Collect and study the books. I may design a "survey of astrology" class to get the party started. Note, this is not Ph.D.-level study; it is 200- or 300-level study; it's basic literacy, like a Tesla mechanic knowing what a Model T is).

Acquire and Learn to Use a Book-Format Ephemeris

Astrology is a traditional art, and it's essential to stay in contact with the tradition. Part of that tradition is the ephemeris, the essential tool of astrologers.

There are some excellent ephemeris tools, such as **Serennu.com** or **True-Node.com/eph3/** which can do things that most astrologers a generation ago could only dream of (or could not even dream of).

Yet it's still helpful to be able to use the ephemeris to find transits and progressions. I'll include some possibilities on the book list. You will see things in the book format you cannot see in an online tool. It's similar to how maps differ from navigating by GPS. When you're looking at a map, you can see an image of the whole region. When you're using GPS, you're looking through a little porthole.

Approaches to Reading Your Chart

A chart is holographic; you can dive in anywhere. It's best to take a loose and circumspect approach at first. For example, you can start considering how your planets are placed in signs and houses. For that to work, you will need multiple references to the signs and the houses, and the planets.

Your book includes an article on the houses, and access to the audio class on that topic. The houses are BY FAR the most important tool you need, if you want to understand a chart. The reason for this is that the houses represent the basic environments of life. They tell you where to look for the subject matter described by planets and signs. They tell you where to look when you have a question or an event to consider. *Meaning is context*, and the houses provide context. Therefore, work with context, and meaning will come to you more easily.

You can get pretty far by considering your Sun, Moon and rising sign in some detail, studying multiple sources. The thing with astrology is that once you're in, you're in. Eventually you will swim through the whole chart and it does not really matter where you begin, unless you have some specific question, and then you can select that house.

One easy general approach is to look at your rising sign, and consider the placement of the planet associated with that sign. Then study all the aspects to that particular planet. Note, the ruler of the rising sign is not the "chart ruler" -- it is the ascendant ruler.

Another approach is to study any one house that seems interesting. Look at everything in that house. Notice what sign(s) is (are) involved, and check out the placement of that planet, and its aspects. Read, take notes, and then look for correspondences in your own life.

Three (or Four) Versions of Your Chart

One approach that I have found helpful as a student, taught to me by David Arner, is to study three versions of your chart (which are included with the Advanced Astrology Set; two come with the Basic Astrology Set).

The first version is something similar to what was used in 1647, when the first textbook in English was written. This is your very basic foundational chart, made only of the seven visible planets, the nodes and the Part of Fortune.

The second is what an astrologer would have used in 1970-2000 (and many into the present), around the time of your birth (in the mid-20th century, many astrologers were still not sure about Pluto); and a modern chart the way that I cast it. That includes the modern planets: Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. I have also included Chiron and Eris, since they have the full effect of planets and represent major evolutions in both astronomy and astrology.

The third type of chart adds several asteroids, Transpluto, the lunar apogee, and a few other bits.

If you study these three versions, you will see similarities of themes, and how the newer discoveries elaborate on the older ones.

The fourth version will be the one that you draw yourself (samples included). That's your actual working chart. You add the planets that you want, and you can have many versions of this. I suggest you work in pencil, and make several color copies of each chart so that you have as many as you need to experiment with.

Sample Minor Planet Lookups from Serennu.com

One of the most helpful things to notice is your aspect patterns. By this I mean the patterns formed by bringing fairly large numbers of objects into the chart, and then focusing on a narrow orb for aspects, usually about one degree.

For the Advanced Astrology Set, I have hand-selected several 90-degree sorts of your natal chart for you to study. A 90-degree sort brings up planets in the same degree range for that particular cross, or quadruplicity (cardinal, fixed or mutable).

For example, if your Sun is at 20 Aquarius, your sort will include everything around that degree range of Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius, so you can easily

spot all the conjunctions, squares and oppositions to your Sun, made by the minor planets. If you want to do more of these sorts, go to Serennu.com.

Please become a member of that site; you can get a password for as little as \$1 a month or as much as \$10 a month. This gives you access to many amazing features -- such as aspect calculators of far-away planets, an eclipse calculator, and an occultation calculator.

I will include 90-degree minor planet sorts for your Sun, Moon and rising sign, so you have a sample of how they work.

What Chiron Did For Astrology

When Chiron was discovered in 1977, astrology was in need of an overhaul, and in a sense it got one. Or at least in some sectors of the community, astrologers began to rethink what they were doing, in the context of a planet that was specifically devoted to healing.

Prior to that time, my impression is that astrology that grew from the early 20th century astrology revival lacked direction and purpose. It was not sure whether it was connected to mediumship, fortune-telling, spooky esoteric study, entertainment, deep scholarly research or pop-psychology (which topic itself in the 1960s and 1970s far excelled over astrology as a tool for helping oneself and others; at least astrologers had a source of information available by getting what was placed on the bestseller list).

When Chiron was discovered, several interesting things happened. One is that a good few highly intelligent astrologers began the process of figuring out what it was about, right then, using honest methods of research. These primarily included listening to clients describe their experiences of Chiron. As we have seen from some other examples, contemporary astrology literature can be remarkably speculative and narrow-minded.

Though a number of planets and asteroids had been discovered by science, beginning with Uranus in 1781, there had never until that time been a concerted effort by astrologers to get a handle on what a new discovery was about. For example, the most recent major discovery up until that time was Pluto, in 1930. But it was not until the mid 1980s -- 45 years later -- that a book was written in the English language about Pluto, and it was speculative, not based on consistent research (Isabel Hickey did a pretty good job in the 1970s in a monograph that became the last chapter in *Astrology: A Cosmic Science*.) That is a long time.

So Chiron's discovery got a core group of astrologers interested in learning something new, and a series of books began to come out that associated Chiron with the healing processes it represents. While this did not cause a revolution in

astrology -- plenty of astrologers will claim that "the jury is still out" or whatever -- this was a positive influence, and at least some astrologers were deeply involved, and all astrologers heard of it.

For the first time, astrology was cast as a healing art, at least in potential.

The distinction in who made a serious study of Chiron seemed to follow who had a notion of astrology as having a specific purpose; that purpose being a means of helping assist in growth and personal development. Of course there have been a few astrologers who took this approach prior to Chiron, though my take is that the discovery and highly unusual approach taken by many astrologers helped shift matters significantly in this direction.

We have been backsliding a little, as commercial astrology -- that is, astrology that is used to sell other things, for entertainment or as a kind of joke -- is alive and well on the internet. So is bottom-trawling "find your destiny" astrology. But the books on Chiron are still in print, and gaining an understanding of the personal teachings of the master healer in their chart have been helpful to many, many people.

Your Chiron Journal

If you have purchased the Advanced Astrology Set, you will have your Chiron journaling dates. If you go through this process, you will get a deeper understanding of your chart with relatively little astrological effort.

I have used this process with many hundreds of clients over the years, sometimes in conversation form, and more recently, in written form. It's my single most useful astrological tool, and you're invited to try it out -- and to try it on others.

Here is the thing to be aware of: when you start discussing a person's Chiron transits, you will get into deep water pretty quickly. You will find out about all that has ever ailed them.

I have selected several of your more notable Chiron transits, and other key life transits. These include your Saturn return(s), Uranian opposition, and important transits to your ascendant. I have listed the name of the transit and the date range when it was at its peak.

One way to unfold your chart is to observe how you respond when transits occurred. This does not necessarily predict the future, though it gives you an idea of how you responded in the past when your chart was under strong influences.

Take your time journaling out the scenario of that particular time. I suggest you write about *what was happening* rather than trying to figure out *what happened*.

The difference is that you're not looking for something specific, but rather a general sense of your environment.

I have found that the most neutral way into the material is to start with your address at the time of the transit. Then describe your life at the time. As you refine your entries, you will see that many of the dates come with a common theme, even if it's expressed in rather different ways. The key to understanding your Chiron transits is to suss out that common theme.

The Different Types of Planets

You're about to read something I am sure does not exist in any other astrology book: a brief discussion of the different types of planets that exist, and that you can use as an astrologer. I have covered this topic in detail in *Beyond the Veil*, **which is a reprint of an** article from *The Mountain Astrologer*.

Since the discovery of Chiron in 1977, many new classes of planets have emerged. Improvements in telescopes, and programs designed to scan the sky for objects that might strike the Earth, are among the factors that account for how we now know there are about 750,000 planets orbiting our Sun. That is correct. Not just eight, or nine, or whatever -- 750,000. I detail the history of these developments in *Beyond the Veil*. I also describe the processes by which newly discovered planets are delineated.

For easy reference, here are some basic definitions to work with although a few others exist:

Classical Planet -- These are the planets of antiquity, which include the luminaries: The Sun and Moon; and then Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. These are the planets that *rule the signs in classical astrology, according to the Thema Mundi and the Table of Essential Dignities*. Only classical planets rule, or are exalted in, signs. Many, indeed most, astrologers claim that other planets rule signs; that is a little like inventing the key of H minor and claiming it's found in classical music.

I think that the newer discoveries have affinities for the signs, though there are good reasons to restrict the term "rulership" to the classical planets. The most important is to honor tradition, and to have a consistent method of working. You want those old tools to mean something to you, and to work dependably for you -- by which I mean the Thema Mundi and the Table of Essential Dignities. For that to happen, you need to apply consistency to your work pattern, so you can test your results. Astrology only works when you approach it with some discipline.

This is especially important when you're doing horary astrology, which is the master art in our whole field. Once you have mastered a technique, you can bend

the rules where necessary. I describe a method of prioritizing planets in *Beyond the Veil*, which I call the order of operations: classical planets considered first, modern planets considered second.

Modern Planet -- Trained astrologers will tend to include only Uranus, Neptune and Pluto in this group; most have little to no experience with any others. "Modern planet" is a term of art, from the days before there were any new discoveries besides asteroids and Chiron. I use the term more broadly, to include anything discovered by science besides an asteroid.

Centaur -- This is a group of about 75 known small objects that tend to have long orbits, and which cross the orbits of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and/or Neptune. The first acknowledged one was Chiron, discovered in 1977*, which for a while had a positive influence on astrology, guiding it in the direction of a healing art. Chiron's role is to guide or push people into raising their self-awareness, and to honor the holistic principle. The second was Pholus, discovered in 1992 and which confirmed the existence of the category. The third was Nessus, discovered in 1993. Others that I use include Chariklo, Asbolus and Okyrhoe. All feel a little (not a lot) like Chiron but each has a distinctly different emphasis. Centaurs are considered by astronomy to be "minor planets."

**Asteroid (944) Hidalgo is now considered to be the first centaur discovered, way back in 1920, and reclassified from asteroid only recently. It has a very short comet-like orbit of about 14 years, and comes very close to Jupiter's orbit. I have included Hidalgo as an example of an asteroid, though it's really a centaur.*

Asteroid -- Most exist in a four-year (or so) orbit between Mars and Jupiter, a region called the main asteroid belt. Ceres is their queen, comprising one-third the total mass of the belt. Ponder that for a moment. There are tens of thousands of named objects in the main belt, and millions if you count the smallest objects. They do not gain their relevance from their gravitational influence (very little does), but rather from their symbolic influence. Asteroids are considered by astronomy to be "minor planets."

Trojan Asteroid -- This is a term for asteroids that hang out in the orbit of one of the gas giant planets, such as Jupiter or Neptune. Jupiter, for example, has two swarms of asteroids that are located at approximately 60 degrees to either side. As of 2018, according to research by Kuiper Belt co-discoverer David Jewitt, more than 7,000 Jupiter Trojans had been identified, and more than a million larger than 1km are believed to exist. The first one discovered was (588) Achilles.

Classical Kuiper Belt Object -- Classical KBO for short, also called a "cubewano" after 1992 QB1 (QB-1-o), have orbits in the 290-year range and do not cross Neptune's orbit. Their orbits tend to be rounder and less eccentric than Plutinos and centaurs. Examples include Varuna, Quaoar, and 1992 QB1/Albion. They are a

sub-class of trans-Neptunian object (TNO). KBOs are considered by astronomy to be "minor planets."

Plutino -- These are objects that occupy the Kuiper Belt but are closer to the sun than classical KBOs, in the region of Pluto, with approximately 250-year orbits, similar to that of Pluto (hence the term). They have orbits longer than Neptune, and many cross Neptune's orbit (for example, Pluto does). Examples include Orcus, Ixion, Huya and Lempo. They are a sub-class of trans-Neptunian object (TNO). Plutinos are considered by astronomy to be "minor planets."

Scattered Disk Object -- These are distant objects with extreme orbits, which can extend more than 100 times the Earth-Sun distance (an astronomical unit or AU). This region is believed to be the source of most periodic comets. Some have orbits of 10,000 years or more, and can be inclined to the plane of the solar system by 40 degrees. SDOs are considered by astronomy to be "minor planets."

Uranian Point -- Also called a "trans-Neptunian point" or TNP, these are not to be confused with TNOs, which are physical things. TNPs are hypothetical points, meaning they don't have a body; said another way, they exist only in the minds of certain astrologers, not in space. They have very long, perfectly circular orbits -- as long as 900 years. There are eight of them: Cupido, Hades, Zeus, Kronos, Apollon, Admetos, Vulcanus and Poseidon. They were developed by two different German astrologers, Friedrich Siegrün (1877-1961) and Alfred Witte (1878-1941), two pioneers of the contemporary astrological revival. The system is sometimes referred to as the Hamburg School. They are interesting points, and I track at least a couple of them (sometimes more) in every chart. The system has other interesting features, like emphasis on the 45-degree and 135-degree aspects.

Classical Planet Delineation Keys -- A classical planet is something that's visible in the sky. When studying a classical planet, you will need to know its essential dignities -- that is, its signs of rulership, exaltation, detriment and fall. Those are seen in the Table of Essential Dignities, which is a document you should print out and look at every day. Get to know its elegant logic. When you know the dignity that a planet possesses according to the classical rules, you can take it into account. See the monograph *Night and Day* by Robert Hand for more information about how to assess the strengths of a planet in a sign -- it's the most comprehensive guide to the essential dignities.

Moon -- in a natal chart, the Moon represents several things at once: the person's basic needs; their mother; and their core personality, usually experienced most distinctly as a child. In other forms of astrology, the Moon has more complex meanings, like being a significator for the question, or representing the public.

Sun -- considered the central power source in the chart, the Sun is where most people seek identity, or take it for granted. The Sun provides a basic point of

orientation in the chart, including referencing the Sun sign (also called birth sign), the specific time of year and season of birth, and certain fundamental character elements. It's fair to say that where one has the Sun placed in the natal chart, by both house and sign, is where they will tend to seek their full expression, their passion and their glory.

Mercury -- represents the mind and the state of mind, a person's ideas, their overall intelligence and their way of communicating. You can study Mercury and get a good idea of someone's thought process: how it blends with creativity and intuition, seeming blocks to thought, and the way the person processes information. Sometimes it can represent a specific message, and bears some information about one's relationship to money and cash flow.

Venus -- represents values, the pleasures in life, and the inner woman. Venus also describes a particular kind of desire that's related to attractiveness rather than to assertiveness. One's sense of aesthetics (that is, of beauty) is described by Venus. Venus has a physical (rather than mental or abstract) quality that is distinctive. It also represents the sound of one's voice. Venus is more closely related to intelligence than has been previously noted. In modern parlance we might call it emotional intelligence, though really, intelligence overall.

Earth -- our home planet. Although not often used in astrology, the Earth is described by Alice A. Bailey as the esoteric ruler of the sign Sagittarius (which is the center of our local cosmos). You can think of the Earth as appearing one of two places in a geocentric (conventional) astrology chart: at the center, or exactly opposite the Sun. Both are true. Use your imagination for how to apply this in a birth chart. And perhaps dip into *Esoteric Astrology* by Alice A. Bailey. It will take you a few years, or a few lifetimes, to parse out, though it's well worth the effort.

Mars -- a kind of energy core, representing motivation, desire, drive, sex drive, and the ability to fight for one's position. It was named for the Roman god of war. Mars is the root of the word *martial*, as in martial arts. Its other name is Ares. Mars and its aspects indicate how one manages or directs one's energy and desire, as well as how they handle anger and jealousy. Like Venus describes the inner woman, Mars describes the inner man, though there are other factors that will elaborate on this.

Jupiter -- the principle of expansion. The largest planet, Jupiter is 1,200 times the size of Earth; denser than Saturn, with 79 known satellites, Jupiter is a resource that's usually under-utilized. It's a solar system of its own, so massive that it wobbles the Sun as it orbits. One principal role Jupiter plays in the solar system is to protect the other planets from impact by comets and asteroids, and as such, it represents protection. Traditional significations include knowledge, wisdom, foreign cultures and important personages. It can be a marker of success and abundance, though the material notion of these things is more stable if balanced with the wisdom aspect.

Saturn -- the principle of structure and stability, and of chronological time and by inference, mortality. It is the authority principle, which must be internalized, lest it come at you from the outside -- though it represents both forms of responsibility; one's sense of duty; one's concept of commitment. Impressively massive (800 times the size of the Earth) with dazzling rings and many natural satellites, it is in fact less dense than Jupiter, contrary to astrological folklore. It is a structuring factor, demanding focus and organization, and moreover, the honoring of process and schedule. While it's often considered an influence of stuckness and stagnation, a better case can be made that Saturn is about moving things along and enforcing progress.

Lunar Nodes -- these track the approximate locations of solar and lunar eclipses; where the Sun is near any node, eclipses are in the vicinity. The nodes provide a sense of direction or orientation, and tend to concentrate experiences around them (such as by transit). In contemporary astrology, most astrologers agree that the North Node or Rahu is a pull toward the future while the South Node or Ketu is a pull toward the past. There are many subtle points of interpretation, though note that the South Node provides protection from potentially dangerous influences. Check eclipses in the vicinity if the Sun is near a node in the natal chart. Look those charts up and include them with your natal chart set.

[The word for planet from Vedic astrology is *graha*, which means *force* or *power*, including the nodes. The nodes are indeed an odd kind of energy source, mysterious as such, and generally difficult for new students to grasp. Observe them for a while and you will start to pick up on their messages -- especially if you remember their connection to eclipses, and how influential those can be.]

The Rising Sign or Ascendant -- This is not a thing but a direction, and that direction is east. The sign that is on the eastern horizon at the time of your birth (or at the time of casting any chart) is the rising sign, and this is given tremendous importance by every form of astrology I've ever heard of. It's a nonphysical point; it's where the Earth's horizon contacts space, based on the location of the chart.

Recently, I took an informal survey of my astrologer friends and asked them what the ascendant meant to them. I did so because I've always grappled with this delineation a little. The consensus of my colleagues is that it's about what you present to the world. This might be your first impression, your appearance, your style, your name, and as some say these days, "how you identify." One colleague described it as the point of contact between yourself and the world.

These all work, though they don't quite do it for me. There is more; there is something else going on, and I've been on a quest to find out what it is. This may relate to the fact that I have the North Node rising, so these two points are

conjoined in my experience of them. While the node is nonphysical, it's "a different kind of thing," and is tangible in its own way.

My sense is that the ascendant has the quality of what someone is trying to become or wants to be. It's about more than just presentation; there is a reach involved, though people often present outwardly what they want to be inwardly.

In any event, I have two suggestions for reading the ascendant, in addition to the sign involved. One is to look at the ruling planet of that sign, and evaluate its condition. This is a basic method of starting the evaluation of a chart, by the way. Notice the house, the sign and the aspect pattern of that planet. This will help you understand the chart native's sense of self and how they present themselves in the world. A person whose ruling planet is in the 12th will have a different way of being and orientation than someone with a ruling planet in the 10th.

Second, put the degrees around the ascendant under a microscope, using a minor planet ephemeris such as Serennu.com (use the "degrees of zodiac" option for this). This will give you some idea of the lens through which the person is filtering their personality and their aspirations. Second, look more closely at the aspect pattern of the ruling planet, using minor planets. To do this, use the 90-degree sort option and study conjunctions, squares and oppositions to the ruling planet.

Modern Planet Delineation Keys -- There exist silly questions of what is and is not a planet; I don't intend to settle that, though I prefer the Greek definition, which means "wanderer." While not all astrologers consider these to be valid influences, I have tracked them for many years (since the beginning days of my work) and have found them to be useful, even profound influences in astrological charts. But you have to be fair-minded, and observe carefully, and not jump to conclusions. You must be meticulous and judicious in your work.

If you have the Advanced Astrology Set, please see my article, in your binder, on the minor planets in astrology, which gives the full history of Ceres through Eris. Additionally, I have full articles or article series' on many of these planets, which you can find by searching the name of the planet and "eric francis" or "planet waves."

Technically, the term "modern planet" pertains to Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. When you hear a well-educated astrologer use it, check to see if that is what they mean. I am taking a wider view of the modern planets, including all discoveries made by science, apart from asteroids. Those are in a class by themselves, and are useful if you use them gently and take an open-minded approach.

Ceres -- the first and largest asteroid, now considered a dwarf planet. In my experience, in its most basic form, Ceres is Earth Mother. When you think Gaia, think Ceres. She is closely related to the Virgin Mary from Christian mythology.

She also represents food and its emotional properties, which are many, as people have complex relationships to the food they eat. Ceres covers matters of bonding between mothers and daughters, and the theme of the 'missing' daughter. It also represents *liminality*, or that which lurks on the threshold of awareness, similar to the emotional material it describes.

Chiron -- the first centaur (discovered in 1977), it is technically a massive comet nucleus). Please dip into the wealth of articles I've written about Chiron for a more detailed discussion of the many facets of this planet.

You may have heard of the holistic principle, which is that the whole is contained in the part and the parts are contained in the whole. Chiron teaches us to honor this, and to consider problems, issues and circumstances in a whole-system way; that means treating the person, rather than swapping out a part.

Chiron guides matters of healing, and calls attention to them; it helps us understand the kinds of injuries that either repeat and get worse, or tend to gather strength around them, as a healing process develops; healing skills; mentors; healers; and teachers -- **particularly mentors and mentoring**, a major theme often overlooked in Chiron discussions.

Chiron has an unusual property of favoring documentation: the gathering of tangible evidence and observable proof. Chiron can function as the "system buster," which reveals the problems in an otherwise orderly arrangement. Chiron has the property of *standing out and apart*.

Chiron's primary role, however, is guiding people into raising their self-awareness and their awareness in general. If Chiron comes knocking, pay attention. Listen. Seek interaction with teachers and mentors, and note what they say.

Pholus -- second centaur (discovered in 1992), which defined the existence of this class of planets. Pholus represents the rapid release of energy (a runaway chemical reaction), or the "small cause with the big effect" (for example, homeopathy, or a catalyst). Look to Pholus for matters that go back three generations, as well as alcohol issues, one's response to celebrities and famous people, and actions with unexpected consequences.

Nessus -- third centaur (discovered in 1993), has a dark cast, and ultimately represents taking responsibility for what has happened to oneself. Often associated with abuse legacy, Nessus is "where the buck stops," which is with you. It's where the cycle ends; where the karma comes home to roost, which is where it must be addressed, no matter how long it's been going around or who passed it onto whom. When you see Nessus present, look for themes of emotional or psychological abuse, whether real or imagined. It can point to hazy matters surrounding sexual consent, or lack thereof. Don't make too many

pronouncements when Nessus shows up prominently in a chart; rather, gently unravel the backstory, paying special attention to two things: matters of accountability, and anything that seems ambiguous. Take the time to listen to, and consider, all sides of the issue. We live in times when victimhood and accusation have a kind of exalted status. Nessus warns that this is a trap.

Uranus -- first planet discovered by science, with the aid of a telescope (on March 13, 1781), though Neptune almost had that distinction centuries earlier. Orbit of 84 years and spends about seven years in each sign. This is the planet of the age of industrialism, electricity and science. Revolutionary in nature, it's been likened to Prometheus (it does not really resemble its namesake). It's a planet that says "expect the unexpected" more than any other.

It's associated with breakthroughs, inventions from the light bulb to the airplane, and has an affinity for groups. The opposition of Uranus to its natal position is one of the most significant transits in a person's life, and marks the beginning of what's called "midlife," which for many people seems to arrive at a critical juncture. The most creative approach under Uranus transits is to reinvent yourself.

Neptune -- discovered Sept. 23, 1846, Neptune did a disappearing act, bobbing in and out of view since its probable first sighting by Galileo in 1613 and by John Herschel, the son of Uranus discoverer William Herschel, in 1830. Yet it was not noticed or recorded as a planet. This fact is representative of the action of Neptune, which can be invisible. Neptune can seem to lurk in another dimension, just out of reach. This is true of everything it represents: dreams, delusions, drugs and drug experiences, alcohol and deception.

Yet Neptune provides a tap into the creative realm as well, as a source of what some call inspiration, which is a kind of altered state of awareness. One's relationship to Neptune therefore describes one's connection to the sublime realms, as well as one's relationship to alcohol or substance abuse. Note that this tense relationship exists within artists themselves, who often end up using or abusing substances in order to stay connected to their creative source. I have also noticed that the condition of Neptune in a chart is a way to assess whether a person is struggling with some form of mental disturbance or illness, though this must be confirmed by other factors, including careful interview -- and never be considered a diagnosis.

Pluto -- discovered Feb. 18, 1930 during the search for "Planet X" (which has yet to be found and is unlikely to exist), Pluto is the first-discovered and largest-known object in what became the Kuiper Belt, which until 1992, nobody was sure existed. After Pluto was "demoted" to dwarf planet in 2006, it was given the minor planet designation (134340) Pluto-Charon, so it is in fact a minor planet. It is part of a binary system (Charon is not a moon). There are several other objects in the

Pluto-Charon system, which all orbit around a common barycenter or center of gravity located outside all of the physical points.

Think of Pluto as the unstoppable force, which can exist on many levels, though at its essence it is an evolutionary drive. Pluto is known for its intensity, and its sense of "grow or die." Or what Patric Walker called "enforced growth." You might say that's the essential message. It's good when people choose a different option, though typically humans do not grow until they have no other viable choice. This is an essential issue to check for where Pluto is involved. More is at www.1992QB1.com.

1992 QB1/Albion -- in 1992 when space-related science was fixated on Saturn and the Cassini probe that NASA was preparing to launch, two astronomers in Hawaii set out to see if there really were objects in distant orbits in the region of Pluto. They found one, which meant that they had discovered the Kuiper Belt. For many years, it was known as (15760) 1992 QB1, and was very recently named Albion. There are now many objects known in this realm of space, with orbits in the 300-year range (Albion has a 289-year orbit). This planet is too complex to relate in a short delineation, though my take is that we have a way beyond the "grow or die" model of Pluto. See www.1992QB1.com for more information.

Eris -- intentionally named for the goddess of discord, one of the most important discoveries of our era, it's properly called (136199) Eris. It has a 558-year orbit and spends about 130 of those years in Aries, where it is now. If we blend Greek and Roman mythology, we can see a relationship to Mars (she is his half-sister).

Its provisional or working name, given by the discovery team, was Xena, from the "warrior priestess" TV series, which had a postmodern feeling: you could go from the birth of Jesus to modern-day New York City from one episode to the next. That was the first clue to its delineation. It also was responsible for the re-ordering of the solar system and the first attempt by astronomers to define the term "planet."

The public did not become aware of the existence of planets beyond Pluto until the summer of 2006, when Eris hit the news. Astronomy fans and some astrologers were aware of the discovery, though it became a matter of public discussion when astronomers decided to "demote" Pluto to a new category, dwarf planet, which would then include Ceres (previously the first asteroid) and Eris.

My initial take in the winter of '06-'07, when I wrote the first monograph on Eris, was that it was about identity chaos. I managed even at that early time -- a few months after the naming -- to connect Eris to the internet and the kind of mass-scale personality and body dysmorphia generated by the digital realm, mentioning the work of Marshall McLuhan in my first interpretation.

I did not fully document this connection, however, until about 2015-2018 after extensive research aided by the McLuhan family, so all of that work becomes a background reference (see *Understanding Media*, 1964). It turns out that Eris, and in particular, the Uranus-Eris cycle, tracks the history of electronic mass media, beginning with the conjunction in 1927-1928, and going back as far as the printing press in the last Eris-in-Aries phase. With Eris, we enter the complex relationship of humans, the mental environment, self-concept and relationship to the body in the environment of the media.

I have copiously documented this in a series of articles that are linked from the online resources area. Please see *Facets and Fragments of Self* on the digital resources page. As previously mentioned, in our era, Eris is spending about 130 years in Aries.

Varuna -- properly known as (20000) Varuna, it was discovered Nov. 28, 2000, and was given an honorific minor planet number corresponding to its year of discovery. It is a classical Kuiper object with an orbit of 281 years. Being a classical Kuiper object pushes it out of the realm of Pluto and into the realm of 1992 QB1/Albion, meaning that it's gentler in action. Varuna covers the theme of equalization of the field; and the enforcement of contracts. There's a whole cycle of myths weaving through the ages and the cultures where gods show up who make sure people keep their word. Varuna is one of them.

Quaoar -- one of the most interesting planets I've ever worked with, Quaoar (pronounced QUAY-are) is the creation god of the Tungva people, previously aboriginal residents of the Los Angeles area. Properly called (50000) Quaoar, it was discovered on June 6, 2002, and has an orbit of 288 years (so it's a classical KBO or cubewano).

Quaoar is about the tribal creation myth. Where did my people come from? That's one of the questions of Quaoar. The myth is acted out in music and dance; first Father Sky comes out and shakes his rattles, and is joined by Mother Earth, and on and on until the whole family of creation, or the tribe, is dancing and chanting. So think of Quaoar as "the dance that was being danced when you arrived (and you took for granted)."

It also covers some topics such as the family's notion of where it came from (we are Sicilian and Grandma and Grandpa emigrated in such and such year), as well as the family's relationship to its Sicilianness (or whatever it may be). Some tribes have the notion that "we came from the Pleiades" (or wherever). Some people feel a tribal affinity with all those who claim to have arrived from a certain star system; these are the kinds of themes to explore with Quaoar.

Sedna -- one of the most interesting known planets, (90377) Sedna is a member of the scattered disk (a scattered disk object or SDO). Discovered Nov. 14, 2003,

Sedna has an orbit of 11,408 years, the longest of any named object. So you have to think of a planet with that long of a cycle very differently, though it helps to track long cycles of history (such as ice ages, and Sedna happens to relate to ice). The myth is interesting to study and too complex to get into here, though she is one of the creation gods of the Inuit people (formerly, Eskimos).

Melanie Reinhart, in her article *The Goddess of the Frozen Waters*, writes of Sedna, "The encounter with what has been lost, drowned out, or frozen long ago is her theme, which can be taken most fruitfully on the inner levels. In other words, our own 'Ice Age' is being highlighted here: the wounds in the soul caused by the impatience, condemnation, dismissal or anger of the father; the living hell of unresolved outrage; the violence of hardship where we cut off from what is desperate and vulnerable in ourselves or others in order to survive. And how this harshness is internalized."

She continues, "Even in the face of unrelenting trauma and suffering, we can, indeed must, beat our drum and sing to life. This is not a plea for escapism, but rather an acknowledgement that the Work is about keeping our heart open in hell. Sedna's story is about acknowledging just how bad things really feel, and starting from there. Radical acceptance is demanded. Allowing love and harmony into our lives (symbolized by the Star of David) may mean opening to the frozen places inside where we are conflicted and feel unloving. To try and manufacture joy is to metaphorically cut off our own fingers."

The Asteroids -- The asteroids are a major field of study; there are many of them. I think of them differently from planets, centaurs, TNOs and SDOs. Asteroids tend to represent topical hints, and psychological puzzle pieces that help you sketch out the picture, deduce motives (risky business in any event), and fill in details.

Sometimes they are a bit more cryptic, and sometimes hilariously literal, such as when asteroid Photographica shows up a degree from the ascendant in the discussion of a photograph.

Some of the asteroids represent more complex processes or social patterns. When delineating an asteroid, or reading the delineations of others, it's essential that you not apply a literal "meaning" of the mythical figure that it's named for. All myths have many layers of significance, most particularly psychological (rather than moral). Their stories have shapes, and the shape is as important as the action.

This is territory wherein to tread lightly, and to eschew the notion of "final meaning" but rather allow significance to be a dance that you do with a chart or a situation. The asteroids are best read as an aspect pattern; for example, all that square, conjoin or oppose the Moon, Sun or a planet to within one degree. Then from that pattern, you draw an image in your mind and get a sense of what the chart is saying (See discussion above, of aspect patterns.)

That all said, in this monograph, I am including sample delineations of six asteroids: three of the first four (the first of them is Ceres, which became a dwarf planet), and three others, to give you an idea of what a delineation feels like and how you might use it. One way to think of asteroids is as a way of focusing a topic. You can use the asteroids to study that topic, then import it into the chart and see how it works within the larger pattern.

(2) Pallas -- represents matters of law and politics, and has a detached feeling, as if standing back a little. Has a guardian-like quality at times. If representing a person, check for a political official or attorney, and look to aspects for whether this person is set up to be helpful.

(3) Juno -- often representing marriage, I've seen Juno describe the first marriage partner, and the mother's idea of the ideal marriage partner for their child. Yet Juno has a tense quality, and can represent the bone of contention in a relationship. Another facet of Juno is as an advocate of social justice.

(4) Vesta -- the baseline idea here is devotion, and substitution of work and projects for relationships. I have seen that Vesta describes unusual relationship patterns, and people who prepare others for the next partner, who might seem to find an ideal relationship. Prominent Vesta calls for a deep inquiry.

(16) Psyche -- the sense of a psychic injury that will not heal, which is false; the long process of personal transformation and growth that leads to the sense of having a soul. A soul is not a thing; it's a level of awareness, a journey of trials and tribulations, and a particular approach to one's relationship to existence.

(944) Hidalgo (really, a short-period centaur) -- observing or rebelling against absurd cultural norms, like the notion that the dominant partner in a gay couple is not really gay, or Christians who support the death penalty. Hidalgo offers the courage to stand up to such ridiculous ideas, and maybe wage revolution.

(1198) Atlantis -- the overuse and abuse of technology, the impact of technology on society, and being invented by one's technological advances to the degree where they are out of control. Includes fear and paranoia around the end of the world, and points to potential conspiracies and connections.

Resources for Further Study

Planet Waves has in its archives articles on nearly every topic in Western astrology; many on psychology and spiritual matters; and hundreds of articles sizing up the astrology of historic developments and news events. Most are easily searchable in Google. In addition, for about eight years, I've given a weekly astrology class in the form of Planet Waves FM, and while not indexed, they are

somewhat searchable and ongoing. Additionally, I teach classes, which are friendly, affordable and accessible.

I believe that my best astrology writing is contained in Planet Waves annual editions. If you want to get examples of how to interpret transits, and many other ideas, there are 21 editions; two are still under subscription and 19 are open access.

Available Classes from Planet Waves

- Introduction to Reading a Natal Chart
- Become Your Own Astrologer
- Be Your Own Astrologer
- Retrogrades and Reincarnation
- Introduction to Tarot and Divination
- The Astrology of Now
- It's All In the Houses
- Karma, Reincarnation and Astrology
- Eroticism: The Cosmic Mirror
- Business, Finance and Astrology

Recommended Essential Astrology Books

The Moment of Astrology by Cornelius
Secrets from a Stargazer's Notebook by Smith
A Handbook for the Humanistic Astrologer by Meyer
The Book of Thoth by Crowley
Astrology: A Cosmic Science by Hickey
Arkana Dictionary of Astrology by Gettings
Dictionary of Astrology by Leo
Chiron and the Healing Journey by Reinhart
To the Edge and Beyond by Reinhart
Chiron: Essence and Application by Stein
Esoteric Astrology by Bailey
Whole Sign Houses by Hand (PDF is on digital resources page)
The Book of Rulerships by Lehman
The Astrology Encyclopedia by Lewis (you can safely ignore the asteroid delineations; please leave that to Lang-Wescott)
Mechanics of the Future: Asteroids by Lang-Wescott (and other books in this series)
The New American Ephemeris 2007-2020 by Michelsen
Tables of Planetary Phenomena by Michelsen
Raphael's Astronomical Ephemeris Of the Planets' Places (annual) by Raphael
The Book of World Horoscopes by Campion
Christian Astrology, Book 3 by Lilly (edited by Roell)
The Complete Astrological Writings by Crowley and Adams