

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO THE PRACTICE OF ASTROLOGY

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I had the opportunity in the late 80's and early 90's to take undergraduate courses in Psychology at Rollins College in Brevard. Here are some psychology ideas that I've borrowed from the field to help me practice Astrology. I gave this lecture in May '94 to the St. Pete Astrological Association.

Before we begin pairing our symbols and psychological ideas, let's look at a few useful concepts.

The last time I looked there were four schools of thought in Psychology. Freud and Jung are very famous members of the Psychodynamic School. That which runs us is deep inside of us. Discovering it and understanding it is therapeutic. Freud's defense mechanisms are still respected, there are some really creative Neo-Freudian, and Jung respected Astrology. This school is Moon, Pluto, Neptune, the water signs, and the water houses. Jung had Moon near Pluto in his birth chart. His own chart shows the principle of the collective unconscious (Pluto) interacting with the unconscious (Moon).

The Cognitive School focuses on what we think. Improving our thinking, improves our lives. This group is Mercurial and Gemini-like.

The Behaviorist School focuses on what we do and how behavior and environment interact. B.F. Skinner was one of their gurus and he has a bucketful of planets in Aries, the action sign.

The Humanist Existential Group focuses on our finding meaning in our lives. Victor Frankl, writer of "The Search for Meaning" is one of theirs. I think of Jupiter, Neptune, Aquarius, Sagittarius, and Pisces here.

Astrology is its own psychological system. We have our own theory of personality; you are like the sky that you were born under. "As above, so below" is our motto. Our many planets and signs show many valid ways of being. And we have various therapies associated with our symbols and concepts. And in Astrology, we help the client to understand himself and his life and we can sort out the forces at work in his life at any time. Our symbols remain the same but as we learn, we place new things under our symbols.

Here are a few more general notes.

The Gestalt perspective of life space is literal for us. In Astrology, one's inner space is associated with outer space. We are the sky that we were born under and we are what is in the sky at any time temporarily.

In psychology various terms are used to describe trouble: double messages, splits, conflicts, mixed feelings, and neuroses which are internal battles. In our system disharmony is associated with squares and oppositions of planets. Planets in signs that they are very different from can also show conflict, for example, Mars the planet of war, in the relationship sign Libra.

Finally, there is no reason to think that any two systems can fit together point for point. Comparisons can be nice, but there are limits. I'm thinking of Jung's personality types and Astrological symbols.

Here are some psychological principles grouped under the signs.

Aries

Aries is a wonderful fire sign full of joy, enthusiasm, energy, and youth. Aries people need to know who they are, develop their agenda, and do it. They would benefit from being more Libra like and paying some attention to others. Delayed gratification may be difficult for Aries because they are so in the moment. A desire to do things quickly may keep them from doing anything that takes too much time. They should be wary of rashness, impulse, and rushing. They are great leaders and smart. Bill Gates has the Moon in Aries at the top of the chart, the business part of the chart.

Taurus

Since Taurus is an earth sign and the money sign, they need a sound fiscal policy. Taurus loves pleasure, comfort, beauty, the earth, money, security, and they are content. They can calm others and want things to stay calm. They like predictability. They meet chaos and create a routine to organize it. They can stay with something a

long time. Sometimes they have trouble taking a timely action. Taurus is an inertial sign, slow to get started and difficult to stop. They may carry the need for security and predictability to an extreme. When they do, they end up on Neo-Freudian Karen Horney's list of neurotic needs.

Here's her list. The neurotic or extreme need for: approval and affection (Libra), for a partner who will run your life (Libra), to live within narrow limits (Taurus), for power to exploit others (Leo and Scorpio), for social recognition (Aries, Cancer, Leo, Capricorn), for personal recognition (Aries), for ambition and personal achievement (Capricorn), for self-sufficiency and independence (Aquarius), for perfection (Virgo & Capricorn) and invariability (Taurus).

For Taurus I will include only the need to live within narrow limits and the need for invariability.

Gemini

We all need to thank Geminis for making life more interesting. They do this by pursuing or creating interesting things because they hate boredom. They can multi task but may need to focus a little deeper and longer. Since Gemini is about thought and communication, an air sign, they need to think in a positive manner and speak well in order to succeed and be happy. The cognitive school in psychology focuses on how we look at things. How we structure our world in our heads is important for all and especially Gemini. Gemini is about facts and science.

It is interesting that twins left alone will invent their own language. It's called twin talk.

Cancer

Cancer is a water sign focused on home, family, and feelings. Home is supposed to be a safe place. Family is supposed to be loving. In so many cases home and family are not what they should be and feelings reflect that. Feelings are real and hard to change. Someone who is emotionally wounded may never recover. The Cancer territory is extensive for therapy.

Leo

Leo is the Sun's own fire sign. Since the Sun is associated with success, this is also important for Leo. Some astrologer said that Leos are the center of attention because they have something to share. With Leo we look at this principle. When called upon to do it, if we can perform with confidence, we're functioning well. If we can't, we have

some work to do. In order to fulfill our Leo facet, we should be able to perform well when we are the center of attention. This can be giving a eulogy, teaching a class, giving a presentation, telling a joke. This involves having the confidence to take risks and it does get better over time.

Another aspect of Leo is power usage. We have to do what we say we are going to do. This power needs to be teamed up with respect. We can't cross the line with people by telling them what to do and we can't let them cross that line with us. You can see that we are talking about confidence, self-esteem, and appropriate control.

Virgo

Virgo is an analytical, work oriented, and service oriented earth sign. Being able to perform a task, to work well, and to feel productive is essential to this symbol. The analytical quality of this sign is right next to criticism. Criticism is harmful in relationships, it is a terrible parenting method, and self-criticism is damaging to self-esteem. The constellation Virgo is a winged creature, an angel. Virgos need to remember this and build themselves up. They need to avoid getting caught up in pursuing perfection.

Libra

Air sign Libra is about putting things or people together in a harmonious balanced way. It's about relationships, and Libra needs one. Equal partnerships and mutual respect are essential for a good relationship. Maslow tells us that B love, being love, is a relationship in which two together people want to be there. This is good. D love, deficiency love, happens when at least one partner is deficient and is there to get the need filled by the other. This is not functional. Libras are noted for their desire to please. A course in assertiveness may be needed for Libra. See Mars. Libra needs to be more like Aries; knowing who they are, having an agenda, and doing it. In fact each sign benefits from developing the qualities of its opposite sign. Here they are; Aries, Libra (me & you); Taurus, Scorpio (mine & yours); Gemini, Sagittarius (perception & judgment); Cancer, Capricorn (private life & public life); Leo, Aquarius (my power & group power); Virgo, Pisces (practical life & inner life).

Scorpio

Scorpio is the second water sign we've seen. It's ruled by aggressive Mars and extreme Pluto. It is passionate, intense, graphic in expression, and about sex, inevitable death, other's resources, and jealousy. All the passions, good and bad are

Scorpio. Those of us with something important in Scorpio need outlets for our passion and we need to control our passions. Popular television shows “Dexter” and “True Blood” are very Scorpio.

Sagittarius

Sagittarius, the centaur, is noted for its ability to hunt and search. It is an inspired fire sign and the sign of the higher mind. As a result it is concerned with ongoing learning, higher education, philosophy, and religion. Gemini collects facts, Sagittarius, the opposite sign, finds meaning in the facts, draws conclusions, makes judgments, and forms opinions. Opposite signs complement. It is important for Sagittarius to be well educated and have some freedom.

Capricorn

Capricorn is the sea goat. He's part goat and part fish. This symbolizes the ability to go from sea level to the mountaintop. So we associate the sign with setting and achieving goals. I had a counseling book in school called “The Skilled Helper”. It was about figuring out where you are, where you want to go, and how to get there. That's Capricorn. Capricorn is an earth sign ruled by practical and disciplined Saturn. In setting our goals we have to be realistic. In achieving them we have to be disciplined, patient, and able to adapt to changing circumstances. Capricorn is also lusty like Pan, buddy of Dionysus.

Aquarius

Aquarius is a social and intellectual air sign. The constellation pictures the perfected man measuring the stars in one hand and giving water to the southern fish with the other. As a result Aquarius is associated with altruistic and humanistic activity. Aquarius is associated with activity and symbolism on a global scale, it represents all of humanity and all knowledge. It is important for Aquarians to know everything and know everyone. They need a global scope in their social and intellectual perspective. Social Science, Behavioral Science, and the Humanist/Existential School of Psychology, which looks for the essence of human nature, come under Aquarius.

Pisces

Pisces is the last sign of old souls and a water sign. Its emphasis on the hidden and its ruler ship of the ocean implies deep hidden emotions and mysteries. The unseen is around and within us whether it is the world of emotions or of the supernatural. How

does the individual deal with this? The tied fish symbol connotes attachment. I tell my students that the personified concept, Pisces, has a rope tied around its waist. Whatever planet is in Pisces is at the end of the rope, attachment. The attached may be the divine or it may be an abusive mate. How does one deal with what they are tied to. The passive quality of Pisces suggests we receive from what we are attached to and that learned helplessness goes here. Pisces needs to find meaning in life and in events and needs to connect to the spiritual.

If we wanted to encapsulate the dynamics of the signs we could say: Aries, energy; Taurus, security; Gemini, thought and communication; Cancer, feeling; Leo, power and creativity; Virgo, productivity and skill; Libra, relationships; Scorpio, passions; Sagittarius, adventures of the mind and body; Capricorn, setting and achieving goals; Aquarius, people and ideas; and Pisces, subtle, strong attachments.

As I relate psychological theories with signs and approach connecting them with the luminaries and planets, I'm reminded of Gordon Allport. He was part of the trait and factor school, holding that people are born with certain traits. We can make some nice comparisons between his 6 perspectives or values and astrological symbols. One can be Theoretical, air signs, especially Aquarius; Economic, earth signs and Saturn; Aesthetic, Venus, Taurus, and Libra; Social, Air signs and Venus; Political, the Sun and Saturn; or Religious, Jupiter.

Let's look at Sun, Moon, and planets and psychological principles associated with them.

Sun and Moon

The Sun is associated with the ego, executive of the psyche. Self-esteem and all the self-words are solar. We, in astrology, associate success and happiness with the Sun. We'll see more of the Sun later. The Moon is associated with Mom, women, the subconscious mind, and the predominant mood. Although each planet and luminary in the chart shows a facet of our personality, the sign, house, and aspects of the Moon encapsulate our psychology. The Sun and Moon are associated with the father and mother tape in transactional analysis. These are memories that we keep playing in our heads of what mother and father said. Studying the Sun and Moon in the chart can give insight into the nature of the tape. Anything that promotes awareness of the tape moves the tape out of the subconscious and into the conscious where it can be managed.

Mercury

Mercury, messenger of the gods, is the planet associated with thought, communication, and the conscious mind. We would place the Cognitive School of Psychology under this planet. This school places emphasis on how we construct our world in our heads.

Bandura's Observational Learning goes here. According to Bandura what we see in terms of others' behavior goes into our repertoire of possible behavior. And if we see people being rewarded for the behaviors that we see them doing, we'll tend to do that behavior. We might choose to do a positive behavior in front of students; this is called modeling a particular behavior.

Venus

Venus, goddess of beauty, is the planet we associate with love, beauty, enjoyment, and pleasure. Psychologists divide love into Eros (physical love), Philia (brotherly love), and Agape (selfless love). Eros is like Venus and Mars together. Since this combo represents the female and the male, we associate it with sex. Philia is like Venus in Aquarius or Gemini, the signs of friendship and siblings respectively. Agape is like Venus in Pisces, this is the spiritual egoless sign. Social skills come under Venus and any type of recreational therapy. Maslow has an interesting note about love. He distinguishes between B love and D love. D love is deficiency love and happens when one or both parties are in a relationship to fill a deficiency that they should fill on their own. B love is being love. Both parties are functioning well and are in the relationship because they want to be there.

Mars

Mars, god of war, is associated with building up, tearing down, energy, energy expenditure, strife, trouble, conflict, and stress. Stress is defined as a situation in which we have to act. Aggressiveness, anything done with intent to harm, is also Martial. Stress management and conflict management are Mars related therapies. Assertiveness is a positive Mars behavior and defined as standing up for our rights, defending ourselves against attack, and expressing our true feelings. Frustration tolerance is a Mars and Aries concept. A mature person has more tolerance or can take more frustration than an immature person. This is a great place to mention the stress formula. Stress comes to everyone. How well we deal with it depends on how many resources we have versus how many vulnerabilities we have. Resources can include friends, support groups, money, education, good health, and good life skills.

Vulnerabilities can be poverty, lack of information or education, a circle of non-supporting associates, poor health, and poor habits.

Jupiter

Jupiter, god of the gods, is associated with the need for community in the world and the need for God in our psyches. Jupiter people tend to be on good terms with rules and law. Religion and churches are Jupiter. Religion promotes the notion that someone cares about us and helps us and churches profess their mission of being a caring community. Searching for wonderful ideas and then professing them is Jupiter, as is expansion through exploration.

Someone with a Jupiter problem is on the outs with the law and lacks support from the community.

Saturn

Saturn, father time, is the planet associated with loss and fear and as a result has a bad reputation. It's also associated with discipline, planning, and goals. Negative Saturn will remain in a state of deprivation. Positive Saturn will set a realistic carefully tended goal to fill the deficiency. Negative Saturn fails and is beaten. Positive Saturn fails and learns from it. My notes state that normal anxiety comes when our existence is threatened. Neurotic anxiety comes from setting up inflexible values to avoid normal anxiety. Saturn is associated with a sense of need. We behave differently when we have a sense of need in an area as opposed to having a sense of adequacy. Karen Horney's entire neurotic needs go here. And the extreme need is the problem, not getting the normal need met. Incidentally guilt is a Saturn concept and is defined as what we feel when we do not live up to our standards. Saturn, its sign Capricorn, and Virgo, the rejecting virgin, are all associated with wanting perfection and sometimes our standards are too high for any human to live up to.

Uranus

Uranus, god of the sky, is the first of the planets invisible to the naked eye. It, Neptune, and Pluto are a bit extreme. Uranus represents departures from the norm, whether it is eccentricity or brilliance and originality. Uranus people do well in a big free thinking impersonal gesellschaft society. They do badly in small personal intellectually limited gemeinschaft communities. This is why you find more astrologers in "the Village" as opposed to any Baptist church in a small southern town. Uranian people would benefit from finding a community that appreciates and supports them. Another Uranian quality

is influence. We all have to take care with those who have the ability to influence. These people take power away from us which we should not give up. It's not quite as bad as being glamored by a vampire but similar.

Neptune

Neptune, god of the sea. Neptune thy name is dysfunctional expectancy. This is an unrealistic goal that undoes the climb toward the goal. The overly idealistic nature of the goal interferes with success. This dysfunctional behavior goes here as an extreme and negative expression of Neptune's natural tendency to seek the ideal and fantastic. A little Neptune is great.

Pluto

Pluto, god of the dead, is associated with all force and forceful things. Pluto feels overwhelmed due to not taking action in time. It is the effect that follows the cause. It represents that which is inevitable, death and taxes. "The Force" in Star Wars is Pluto, good or bad, blue light saber or red. I would place here in complement the assertiveness and action of Mars that is required to meet the force of Pluto. On the positive side, I think of building a potent inner force, as in martial arts or Asian meditative disciplines.

Now that we have looked at all of the planets, we can talk about alchemy. According to Elbert Benjamin author of the Church of Light lessons, one aspect of alchemy is choosing to behave or think according to one planet instead of another. For example, we might find ourselves feeling depressed and discouraged under a Saturn period in our lives. He would suggest cultivating the behaviors of the Sun and Venus as an antidote or improvement. The Sun would feel confident, focus on successes, and get out and do something vital, like take a walk. Venus would paint their nails and do something fun.

Let's look at all of the planets and their antidotes.

- **When the Sun feels badly, we lack confidence. For this we do Sun; build confidence, seek out little successes, and get vital.**
- **When the Moon or Pluto feels badly, we are in a mood and stewing and overwhelmed. We need to do Mars by getting up off our butts and doing something about the situation.**
- **When Mercury or Uranus feel badly we are beset with negative thoughts and nervous. We need to be Jupiter and build faith and optimism.**

- **When Venus or Neptune feel badly, we are overly sensitive to slights, socially uncomfortable, and out of touch with reality. We need to be Sun and build confidence and be Saturn and see the situation realistically.**
- **When Mars feels badly we are stressed and angry or in conflict. We need to do a positive Mars by taking positive action, managing stress, managing conflict and do the Moon by nurturing ourselves and others.**
- **When Jupiter acts badly we are overconfident and excessive. We need to be Mercury and analyze the situation.**
- **When Saturn feels badly, we are tired and discouraged or suffering from a loss. We need to be Sun and Venus, build confidence and get some recreation.**

This is an example of one school's attempt at therapy. In addition to this, this school suggests that we also:

- Improve our situation in practical ways.
- Focus on good things that are going on in our charts.

Work to make difficult planetary relationships in our charts work like the same planets in good relationship. For example Mars oppose Jupiter would be a rule breaker. Mars trine Jupiter would act in accordance with law and build a better world.

The use of character vibes means wearing items with vibes of the planets that are harmonious in our charts. This is the type of thing that Marsilio Facino of Renaissance Florence would talk about. If one had many planets in Gemini in good shape, one would wear beryl to stimulate that harmony and bring harmony into one's life.

We could add that always keeping in mind the positive qualities of the planets and working toward expressing those qualities is part of this therapy.

Since the Sun is the most important thing in the chart, let's say more about it.

The Sun represents self-esteem. All self-words like self-worth and self-responsibility are Sun words.

I asked one of my teachers how to build self-esteem. This was her answer.

- 1. Change the way you look at yourself. Assess skills, abilities, interests. Lists likes and dislikes and focus on the good things.**
- 2. Say positive things aloud to someone else about yourself.**

3. **Re-examine relationships, some may have to be broken.**
4. **Get rid of negative self-talk.**
5. **Open yourself up to hearing positive things about yourself.**
6. **Make a specific change in behavior and reward progress. The change should be taken in little steps.**
7. **Give and get hugs.**

In summary, if we want people to treat us differently, we need to act differently. We need to make a decision to change. And remember, success anywhere improves success elsewhere.

Here are some additional Sun psychological concepts.

- Adopting self-responsibility is a huge way to increase success. The alternative is making excuses for things that are not right in our lives.
- Seeing ourselves in control of our lives and constructing our lives encourages success.
- Knowing that every stage of life is important helps us to respect ourselves and others throughout all stages of life.
- Being intentional in an area means that we function fully and consciously in that area. We are not haphazard or sloppy or just going through the motions. When intentional, we are: goal directed, self-responsible, in charge of our lives, we refuse to crumble, we can develop alternative behaviors, and we have a sense of purpose.
- Those with good self-esteem, good Suns, empower and validate people. They take care with questioning people or asking them to explain themselves. They give Rogerian unconditional positive regard. And they expect this type of respectful treatment from others. They note that every stage of life is important for all of us. As parents they are authoritative rather than authoritarian or permissive. And finally, their lives are the antithesis of learned helplessness.

Carl Jung described self-actualization as knowing and harmonizing oneself. As Astrologers, we know ourselves through our charts and you've seen how we try to harmonize ourselves by working with the symbols in the chart. If we expressed every planet sign combination in a positive way, we would be self-actualized. Carl Jung thought that Astrology was becoming a science and wrote about it in his paper, "Synchronicity and Acausal Connecting Principle". And it's nice to know that Astrologer, Alice Howell taught Jungians Astrology for years at Jungian institutes.

Abraham Maslow has given a list of the 15 qualities of self-actualized people. This is from Hergenhann's "Introduction to Theories of Personality".

1. **They perceive reality clearly and accurately.**
2. **They demonstrate greater acceptance of themselves, others, and nature.**
3. **They exhibit spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness.**
4. **They are concerned with problems rather than themselves.**
5. **They have a quality of detachment and a need for privacy.**
6. **They are autonomous and tend to be independent of environment and culture.**
7. **They have a freshness of appreciation.**
8. **They have periodic mystic or peak experiences.**
9. **They identify with all mankind.**
10. **They have deep interpersonal relationships with a few people.**
11. **They accept democratic values.**
12. **They have a strong ethical sense.**
13. **They have a well-developed non-hostile sense of humor.**
14. **They are creative.**
15. **They resist enculturation. They are inner directed and have their own values.**

From Egan's "The Skilled Helper" let's list the requirements for creativity which is a Sun and Leo thing.

1. **Optimism and confidence.**
2. **Acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty.**
3. **A wide range of interest.**
4. **Flexibility.**
5. **Tolerance of complexity.**

6. **Verbal fluency.**
7. **Curiosity.**
8. **Drive and persistence.**
9. **Independence.**
10. **Nonconformity or reasonable risk taking.**

Here are obstacles to creativity.

1. **Fear**
2. **Fixed habits.**
3. **Dependence on authority.**
4. **Perfectionism.**

PROFESSIONALISM

The astrologer belongs to the professional world rather than the commercial. We provide a service for someone that we take responsibilities for. Those that we work for are clients not customers and they are not always right. Although we try to address their presenting concerns, we give them what they need not necessarily what they want. The professional is in charge of the session. We know what we have to offer and how best to offer it. And we should screen them to see if they want it. We want to empower our clients not make them dependent or unduly influenced. We do not make decisions for them. We give them information so that they might make a better decision. And we do the possible not the impossible. We can give insight into almost any situation. But we are not omniscient. It is okay to ask the client questions about themselves and their lives. It will help us make a clearer fit between client information and details of the chart. The client should be made to feel comfortable. With Astrology we are dealing with a wonder but we should not shock and awe the client.

Colleagueship is of great value for sharing learning and sharing problems. It helps develop the field and promote it to the public.

Therapists worry about some of the same issues that we do. In the dichotomy called autonomy vs. caring for the client, they and we worry about how much to tell the client. Do we expect the client to handle the information we give him or do we handle him with care out of

fear that we will do harm. Another dichotomy comes up in practice and research called utility vs. validity. Here something that works is compared to something that has been proven.

As Astrologers, we are counselors. Here are a number of points that define counseling. We can use some of this.

Counseling is:

- A professional relationship between a trained counselor and a client.
- A one on one or group activity.
- A process that helps clarify and understand problems from the clients frame of reference.
- A process that helps reach the clients self-directed goals.

Counseling is not:

- Giving advice or suggestions.
- Giving recommendations.
- Influencing attitudes or beliefs or behavior by persuading, pleading, or convincing.

FEW FINAL NOTES AND CONCLUSION

Reframing problems is an interesting notion in psychology. We use it in astrology also. The client comes in with a problem and we note it and honor it. After studying the person's chart, planets in signs and houses aspecting other planets in signs and houses, we might put the problem into a larger context. For example a person might note that they are not liked. Inspection of the chart might show Mars in a prominent place. The result could be attracting hostile people or a hostile reaction to them. Fixes could be: being discriminating about who one lets into one's life, managing conflict, and trying to put out a better vibe.

I learned a bit about research from psychology. Research about cases can be ideographic, or monothetic. Doing charts of many doctors or many lawyers to find the common factor would be monothetic. In depths look at one particular doctor and his chart would be ideographic. People seem to tend toward monothetic. I prefer ideographic. We can get a lot of mileage out of one case if we know the birth time and the details of the person's qualities and life, thus my interest in astro-biography.

Another very important principle is that of parsimony. In astrological work it means that we have to take the simplest explanation for an individual's quality or event or fact of life over something less central. So if we find a major aspect that explains a quality in a person we should take that over a less major aspect. If a planet describes a quality in a person well that would be the correspondent of the quality rather than an asteroid being used. If a transit described an event for a person well that would be used as the explanation rather than a secondary progression or direction.

The principle of parsimony keeps astrology unencumbered and eloquent.

I spent years studying behavioral science and grabbed up everything I could use in doing Astrology. I've shared some major points with you.