

Astrology in a nutshell

* What is astrology?

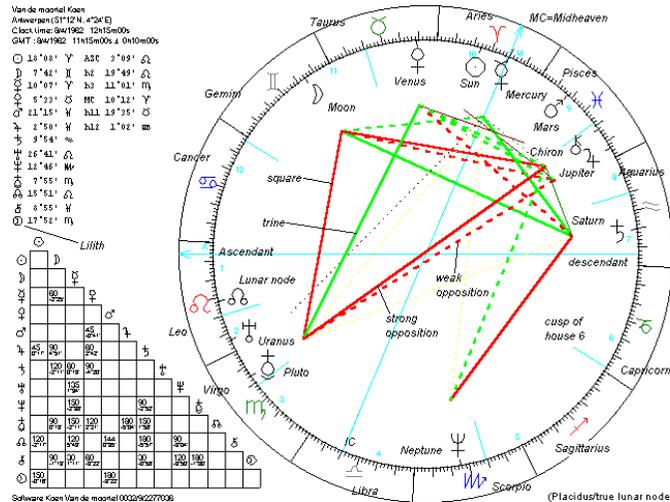
Astrology is often confused with tarot reading, crystal ball watching, clairvoyance, etc. In principle it has nothing to do with these things. What it does study is the possible *connections between cosmic and earthly events*. Usually, astrologers try to explain a person's character and life course, or the nature of a relationship, starting from the planetary positions. Some of them also study cycles in economy or politics, the stock market changes, the course of war and peace, etc., even the weather or earthquakes. It's a lot more than the simplistic columns in popular magazines.

Astrology is a very old occupation; the Sumerians already printed planet positions on their clay tablets when there was an important event, in order to be able to check later whether there was a connection or not. In the course of time, western astrology is mixed up with elements from the Greek and Roman mythology, which gives it - in the eyes of many - a mysterious, romantic attractive force, but it also explains partially why modern scientists usually are not inclined to take it seriously.

* What is a horoscope?

A "horoscope" is a moment picture of the sky, as seen from a specific place on earth, usually reduced to a flat cross section (plane of the ecliptic), in which the Sun, Moon and planets are drawn. Usually this moment is the birth of a person, but it can be the creation of a country or a company as well, or the arising of a question, etc.

On one hand, the sky is divided with the vernal point as a reference. Thus one



gets the 12 *signs* (Aries, Taurus, etc.). On the other hand, the sky is divided in a way which depends from the geographic position, into 12 "*houses*": firstly according to the horizon (the *ascendant/descendant* axis), then according to the meridian, and then again each quarter in 3 sectors. Then, lines are drawn between the celestial bodies if they form special angles (the so-called "*aspects*").

* What does that horoscope mean?

According to traditional astrology, the celestial bodies correspond with different facets of one's personality: the Sun with the conscious "I", the male side; the Moon with unconscious reaction patterns, the female emotional side; mercury with the way of thinking; Venus with the taste, the way of expressing affection; mars with the dynamism, the strategy; etc.

The *signs*, grouped in 4 "*elements*" (fire, earth, air, water) and 3 "*modes*" (cardinal, fixed and mutable), give their "color" to the expression of the planets; e.g. the Moon in Aries will give very sudden reactions, while someone with the Moon in Capricorn will keep his reactions much more under control, until after a long time the bomb explodes.

The *houses* say in which area of life a planet will work mostly; e.g. someone with Mars in house 7 will invest a lot of energy in his marriage, while someone with Mars in 10 will put it more in his career.

Aspects tell us whether planets co-operate or work against each other; e.g. someone with the Sun and Mars in a positive "trine" aspect (120°) is supposed to have an energetic personality, while someone with the Sun "square" (90°, negative) Mars could be described as a brute, reckless person.

By comparing the later planet positions ("*transits*") to the natal ones, one can say something about the kind of experience that a person will experience. E.g. if the planet of expansion, Jupiter, passes at one's natal Sun position, he/she will tend to feel more dynamic, optimistic than usually. On the other hand, when the serious planet Saturn passes over one's natal Moon, he/she probably won't feel very happy; maybe something sad happens, or he will just want to draw in his horns for a while.

It is also possible to compare the natal planet positions of two people to see in which planes they are in harmony or in disharmony. This is called the study of "*synastry*".

* "True" or not?

The big question one should pose himself, of course, is whether astrology is "true" or not. Some astrologers claim they can predict a substantial amount of details in a person's life, even the moment and the cause of death, but if we just consider the simple fact that twins have almost identical horoscopes, and yet they can have quite different lives, we are obliged to put into perspective the forces of the planets! Already two thousand years ago it was said that "the stars incline, but don't

compel", which became a sentence often misused by astrologers when their predictions refused to fulfill. This doesn't exclude that the planets might still have a certain influence on our lives, but the influences from our genetic structure, our social environment, our free will, etc. have to be at least as strong.

Astrological theories are often difficult to test. For example, if one gives the same horoscope delineation text to several people, it appears that many of them recognize themselves in it, especially if it contains enough compliments. By the way, it's not much better with reports based on psychological analyses. It seems that people often don't know themselves very well.

Astrologers also don't perform very well when they are tested and e.g. have to match the right horoscope with the right person.

Many kinds of statistical investigations have been done, like e.g. the relationship between one's horoscope and one's profession or character traits, but unfortunately the results were often disappointing. And if there were any positive results, they didn't always agree with traditional astrology. As an example, the latter expects Mars in the 10th house to be typical for sportive careers, while statistics tell us that champions tend to have Mars in 9 or 12. A traditional "sagittarian" profession like explorer actually appears to be quite rare among these people, if we just count them, etc.

Disputes among astrologers are more the rule than the exception. E.g. one will predict something for the age of thirty, while the other says it will happen when you're 31. And for oriental astrologers your horoscope is completely different because they don't take the shift of the vernal point into account.

Wow, you might think, shall we classify this whole astrology as superstition then? Well, yes, partially, that's my opinion too. But we have to be careful and not throw away the possible grain of gold in a bucket of mud. Everyone occupied with astrology will have noticed that it "appears" that striking predictions can be made, and at least some investigations revealed objective effects that can hardly be explained in a non-astrological way, even with animals (e.g. horses are found to be more fertile near full Moon), plants (growth rate varies according to the lunar cycle, even if the plants are not in the light of the Moon), and chemical processes (can accelerate if planets form certain angles).

"Technically" there is a possibility that planets influence our pineal gland thru the solar wind and the magnetic field of the earth. This way, some astrological claims might be explained one day (after much more testing): the functioning of a certain birth horoscope, transits, harmony or disharmony between people,... Other techniques, like progressions and directions (often used to predict) fall completely out of this realm and would require a supernatural explanation.

Fortunately, these days, here and there on this planet, and even at some universities, people are searching for the astrological truth, with the help of modern statistical techniques and technology. Even you can make a small, but essential contribution, without spending more than five minutes of your time. Namely: for my own research I am looking for natal data (date, time, place, gender) of couples (friends, colleagues, married partners, etc.) that have either a very bad or a very good communication (i.e. people that seem to be on "a different wavelength" or people

that can take a hint to know what the other means). If you have such data, please let me know.

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Internet: www.astrovdm.com (articles, links, astro-calendar for Belgium,...)

Software/calculations: "Radix", "RadixMini", "Tara" (by Koen Van de moortel, same address).

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