

# **Holistic Interpretation: Spiritual Transpersonal Astrology in Action**

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**This excerpt from my book, *Transpersonal Astrology*, presents Holism, another way to describe the spiritual, in my opinion. To read a synopsis of the book: [Click Here](#)**

## ***Chapter 1***

### **Introduction to Holism**

The art of astrological interpretation of a chart represents not only the most difficult aspect of astrology but actually the entire heart and soul of astrology's function and purpose. Without the capability of synthesizing the individual pieces of information provided us in the various and often excellent astrological "cookbooks" on the market, we grow confused by contradictions, discouraged by negative descriptions, overwhelmed by the deluge of indiscriminate bits of information, and probably even misled towards a fragmented view of ourselves.

Such fragmentation results both from the necessary brevity and "synopsis-nature~ of the passages as well as from the impersonal quality of a book that has to speak to all readers.

You, however, are unique. Your specific response to having a Gemini Moon in your birthchart for example might be to 1) love to read, 2) hate to read, 3) struggle to read because of dyslexia, 4) care nothing for reading because your medium is speech, so you invite intellectuals and/or conversationalists to your house. All these responses and more derive from this specific issue or energy-combination of a Gemini Moon, yet won't likely all be found in any "anthology" of planetary positions.

What are we to do, we who desire to utilize the model and tool called astrology for the purposes of self-awareness, whether we are the casually curious, or apprentices, or veteran students of the art?

The first step of course is to find a good astrologer with values you accept and skills widely admired, and work on your chart together in some sort of humanistic or holistic experience that helps you understand the basics of your personality, directions, strengths, and possible purposes of the events and emotional encounters you've undergone. But how do you continue to work with this tool for your life? Who wants to be forever dependent upon a psychologist or even a doctor—let alone an astrologer?

And how does that astrologer come up with the synthesis? Is it correct? Does it conform with your values and view of the universe? And does it really meet your situation and needs?

In this book I seek to instruct by example the many possible (yet not all) methods and approaches to the art of synthesis in sufficient depth to make this work useful for the novice and for the accomplished interpreter.

The novice or beginning student of astrology will probably want to have some familiarity with the individual meanings of the planets, signs, and houses already since we will just be using keywords primarily here. Writers like Alan Oken, Frances Sakoian, Robert Hand, and Isabel Hickey have offered extremely fine treatments of these basic meanings, though often quite varied. Yet it will also be possible to simply use the keywords offered below without going beyond this text.

Both beginner and veteran will find here a collection of several approaches, some of which will already be part of the experienced interpreter's repertoire. While you who have studied the art of

synthesis for years are encouraged to select the chapters that interest you, I recommend readers to move chapter by chapter.

The remainder of this introduction will give you the flavor of what I am offering by employing approaches that come under the umbrella terminology of "holistic" and "humanistic," since definitions of these words are quite varied and frequently even contradictory.

After studying the various interpretive processes, several of which work together, you may prefer to use only certain ones, rather than all. But at least you will have had the opportunity to see what is being used, with examples to improve your own synthesizing skills, especially in "holistic" terms.

Humanistic Astrology, owing much to

leaders like Mark Edmond Jones and Dane Rudhyar, has come into wide practice. Person-centered, rather than theory-centered, the humanistic concern has challenged emphasis upon events, prediction, and mechanistic cause and effect. The humanistic influence has taught us to see persons in terms of choice and internal will that may change the details of a presented energy-force or experience, or certainly alter our attitudes, thereby altering future events. **Responsibility lies not with our stars, but in ourselves, as Shakespeare once told us.**

While humanistic astrology (like humanistic psychology) has been apt in helping us to take ownership and gain understanding of our actions and deeper motivations, it perhaps has served the necessary emancipation and growth more for the ego than for the soul. Such is the role of **holistic astrology, which is simply the integration of the physical, emotional, and psychological together with the spiritual or soul level.**

Such an integration is necessary since the spiritual level (represented by the unconscious portions of the chart and the three outer or higher planets) moves ineluctably, urging awakening (Uranus), dissolution of egoistic preoccupations (Neptune), and transformation to loving concerns (Pluto), to be taken up in Part Two.

It is highly likely that **the transpersonal (beyond the personality) or spiritual contains and directs the activities of physical, emotional, and mental dimensions—yielding the often quoted, "As above, so below."**

Holistic astrology and psychology as I interpret them take the position that each of the levels has power to affect the other three, so that a blockage on the emotional level tends to impair the flow of the spiritual energy as well.

This recognition becomes immensely important for medical astrology because a skin irritation or an allergy (Saturn in Gemini, for example) quite probably corresponds to stifled mental activities or desires, emotional legacies of the parent, and spiritual needs to share [earnings with other persons - thus illustrative of the four holistic dimensions of consciousness.

Humanistic astrology and psychology, then, loom significant for the enhancement of the ego's various actualizations and

developing fulfillments. Yet the cosmic environment and the earthly environment legislate against the individual's power and may overwhelm the weary ego. The East for thousands of years has called this "inundation" of forces karma, the resultant effects of our past actions, choices, and attitudes. This contest between the ego's self-gratification and the challenges of karma is summed up nicely by Stephen Arroyo:

The chart shows what we are now *because* of what we have thought and done in the past. These age-old, deeply entrenched patterns are not easily changed.... It is not a simple matter to change powerful habit patterns merely through the application of a bit of old fashioned "will power." Neither do these patterns essentially change by glossing over them with the faddish jargon of some of the "New Age" psychotherapies or philosophies that inflate the ego by encouraging people to assert: "I'm taking

charge of my life; I make everything happen; I now know that I'm making myself suffer; etc." [Arroyo, 7f.; **citations will be included within text by name and page, and may be referred to at the end of the book in the References**].

Though it isn't necessary to accept this position, most astrological evidence leads us to karmic reincarnation, and we will speak frequently here in these terms, especially when considering certain aspects of the spiritual levels of our charts and lives. The important point is that the holistic astrologer (in some way according to the beliefs of the person whose chart is being interpreted) must address the spiritual dimension at least as much as the other three. It may even be seen it as the governing factor.

Therefore every planetary position and aspect may be and *need to be* understood on all these four levels to receive a holistic picture of ourselves—and additionally to do justice to what astrology offers the human being.

The astrological chart should be seen as a "map" of consciousness—and unconsciousness, the two continually flowing back and forth from one to the other as we shall see later in Chapters 11 and 12. This map reveals how we act both externally and internally upon the environment through actions, thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. And then the environment reacts upon us. Hence Rudhyar's famous statement, "Events don't happen to people. People happen to events" [Alan Oken, 12, also says some really useful and similar things].

Buddhism's second Noble Truth—that desire is the cause of all suffering—parallels the psychological view that we examine in Chapter 14 on needs in the chart. Thought, desire, and need tend to get interfused when considered from the undifferentiated zones of spiritual levels, so that while the body may know the effective distinction between its desires and needs, the mind seldom is in such intimate touch with its physical vehicle.

Therefore it is no surprise that the East speaks of the separation from the Source as having been initiated by thought and desire, while the psychologies of the West speak in terms of need. Western psychology sees all behavior as a reaction to a need.

My point is that we project that need or desire (usually unconsciously) and garner the results from the environment in ways that we may or may not appreciate. The point is that we still have been the creator of the experience, whether in this lifetime or another.

We always retain responsibility. And once this ownership is accepted, we can more realistically pursue viable avenues for improving or altering our attitudes and very likely our experiences.

Let's then look at what all this background means for our current study of interpretation in astrology. From what has been said so far, it is obvious that I feel strongly that each planet and each person need to be viewed from all four dimensions of consciousness, with a primary consideration for the spiritual dimension for the planet and the person.

Yet that doesn't mean that a person with the Sun in 10th house Capricorn and Mars in Aries has to be building a church (though that would considerably satisfy the spiritual needs of those two planets for him or her). Suggestions that meditation would help the excessive energies for this person might be valid, but would probably not be received with much enthusiasm. Trying to limit all that driving energy to a Lotus position might only be possible in the years following what's called the Uranus opposition around forty.

It may turn out that helping at the YWCA or Girl's Club is the most spiritual activity this particular woman might undertake at this point in her life. In other words "spirituality" acquires unique qualities and directions specifically according to the nature of the person as might be seen in the holistic map. Spiritual activities may be the actions of staying with an alcoholic husband, raising an intimate and loving family, jogging past the point of second breath, writing a poem to a friend for his birthday; and so on. Holistic spirituality is always available, not just in the temple and in meditation.

As a holistic interpreter of the astrological map you must be sensitive to the subtleties of spiritual expression within yourself or the person whose chart is being synthesized. We will pay particular attention to the ways that the chart aids us to see these expressions as we explore different approaches to interpretation.

A further point to take up now before we get to the text has to do with how the four dimensions of consciousness relate to the outside world. What about relationship—the social and interpersonal—in other words, the not-self or the other-self?

The other person and the environment in general do not make another dimension of consciousness; they are extensions of the same holistic awarenesses. The mate or child or boss or friend—all are part of the "environment." They react to the unconscious needs and demands of the person, again on the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual holistic levels. The notself, which I prefer to call the other-self, is a camouflaged characterization of the holistic being.

You learn what's really inside yourself regarding illness by having to take care of that other-self when poor health strikes. You discover the nature of your own tendencies to possessiveness when you feel that your partner refuses to give you any space or freedom. Whoever affects you emotionally is revealing some facet of your own unconscious. The interpersonal *is* the personal.

With this subtle cosmic perspective under our belts (and corroborated by some psychological observers like Ken Wilber in *The Spectrum of Consciousness*) we need to understand that each dimension of consciousness may also be viewed on its opposite level of the other-self—our unconscious walking around before our eyes, so to speak. [To Top Rt col.](#)

So when we examine a planet, for example, Mars in the 5th house of children, the impetuosity and dynamism of the child mirrors a potential need to activate our own urge to play, or have fun, or create something according to the sign and aspects. The child represents one method (as does the Mars position) to grasp a portion of our inner nature.

Each part of the holistic tetrad may thus be understood on its social level, as well as its personal level. There's really no difference, except that one is conscious and the other is unconscious—though in terms of a person's individual awareness both social and personal may be partially unconscious quite likely until well on into one's lifetime.

Just as a husband is an opportunity for the wife to learn about herself and her depths, the 7th house (partnership) planet needs to be seen personally. It is a description of the mate on a conscious and/or unconscious level. It's also a description of the self usually on the unconscious level -until awareness at some point raises such a recognition to consciousness. Holistic growth then takes place.

This growth is the potential fulfillment that the 7th house sign, planet, house ruler, and aspects suggest. This dual interpretation means that eight dimensions are available for understanding—the unconscious and conscious treatment of each member of the dimensional tetrad disguised in awareness of the self and other-self.

But there's still more.

I think that insufficient attention has been paid not only to what has been said so far but also to what I call *modes of interpretation*, 1) description, and 2) designation. These two modes are characteristics of interpretation itself, not of consciousness. The distinction is probably most valuable and recognizable to the counseling astrologer. I think the terms are necessary to clear up confusion in approaches to synthesizing.

The term, *description*, is an interpretive mode that's somewhat obvious. Regarding the consciousness tetrad, we may use the first mode to describe the physical person, health, food preferences, childhood, family, job, friends, etc. Astrology has been most adept in this mode.

Description of the emotional and psychological person has developed considerably in the last 100 years with Western astrologers less interested in human events than in human growth and motivation. Emotional descriptions reveal tendencies to cold responses, homosexuality, intense anger, fear of being alone, attraction to specific types of persons, etc.

And the description of psychological dimensions of consciousness yields such possibilities as the type of mentality and intelligence, capacity for learning, mental interests, projections of the unconscious upon others, potential psychological breakdowns or brilliances, etc.

Our spiritual description may simply be tendencies towards tolerance, conservatism, unusual religious interests, and so on. Such description isn't thoroughly developed yet as an astrological language. So far most of the information has to do with vague suggestions of karmic inheritances, usually quite dour, with the additional statement that we have done something terrible to deserve what we are getting. In some cases we have a guardian angel that protects us.

I'm not demeaning such interpretations, but they're quite unverifiable; often the client can only take the astrologer's assertion. In other words the descriptive mode of the spiritual dimension most frequently leans in to the other mode that I have termed as *designation*.

Designation brings in the values, beliefs, and viewpoints of the astrologer or the "cookbook" involved. The descriptive mode answers questions like these: What is happening for me emotionally? Is this a wise time to apply for that job? To what mental tendencies can I attribute these skin rashes?

Designation reaches in to deeper levels of explanation to discuss *if*, *why*, and *how*, but this dearly desired information is connected in some necessary way to the values and attitudes of the interpreter. I use designation instead of explanation to point up the fact that all such "explanation~ comes from a frame of reference and is a designated statement, rather than the "truth." The statement may be correct and valid—but this may only be judged so by the client or the person whose chart is being discussed.

An example would be an interpretation of Sun opposed Saturn. Holistic descriptive statements might run like this: You deal with forms of work as a means of expression, yet you probably feel frequent pressure from those in authority—your boss or your father. You might even avoid any work or obligations that would place you under an employer or leader; this tendency might extend to avoiding a husband if you are female. You might suffer from bouts of depression, perhaps feeling physically weak or too unstructured to accomplish what your ambitions lead you to strive for. Your interactions with other persons, especially men or women who have control over you in some manner, tend to be struggles instead of flowing relationships.

When you want to know *why* this is the case, or how you can alter these conditions, we move into the designation mode:

You might build an emphasis upon the house areas in which Neptune and Pisces are placed. Such a Saturn-Sun opposition may have stemmed from too much ego, pride, selfishness in a former lifetime or in the childhood from the example of your father perhaps. Flexibility needs to be built into your makeup; and perhaps willingness to play, or letting go of some adamant objectives, would help to contribute to a more flexible nature. Another important consideration is to see what accomplishments you have already made. Accept and appreciate these as examples of your strength and ability to accomplish, so that you might persuade yourself that you don't need to scale another mountain so imperatively. Seek the company of persons who are less goal-oriented than yourself; spend some time at the ocean doing nothing. Enjoy.

These examples show the differences between the two modes, and they also suggest my own preferences in interpretation—one form of synthesis we will use in the approaches that follow. I want my own biases to be crystalline so that you as readers may have a clearer opportunity to agree or disagree. Every person who is learning about his own chart should have that clear opportunity.

My suggestions about Neptune, Pisces, the ocean, and persons who are not so goal-oriented derives from Neptune's associations to dissolve rigid Saturnian/ Capricornian concerns and structures implied in the opposition to Saturn. However, it still is my experience and attitudes that suggest that overweening egotism and power-struggles

diminish the quality of life. Perhaps such activities are seen to give life its zest for him. He might want to climb endless Everests because they are there—and I might inquire about the quality of his emotional and personal life.

Therefore unless he specifically recounts these situations as dilemmas or areas of pain, I feel that I must, if I am to be fair to him, make clear my holistic directions so that he understands that I'm assuming a spiritual position that sees the Sun-Saturn opposition in the terms that I present them. Actually the interpretations and manifestations represented by this aspect are quite unlimited -infinite shades of value and meaning.

Psychologies and therapies up until the 1960's thought of themselves as valueless with clients and strove to convey no attitudinal positions from therapist to their "patients" (as clients were then called). Humanistic and existential psychologies showed that this attempt was not only impossible, it was not even desirable, any more than viewing the client as an unwell patient was desirable. Subsequently a large percentage of therapists (and eventually astrologers) have revealed their own points of view so that the client may clearly distinguish their own. A dialogue is requisite.

But the more important recognition here is that the astrological designation be indicated clearly, since such "correctness" of the description can lead the counselee to hear such commentary as mandates from on high. The interpretation may indeed be the right or best one for the counselee, but the frame of reference must always be available.

Our last concern for interpretation regarding consciousness-dimensions and modes pivots on the topic of prediction—in one sense, a third mode of interpreting.

For me, however, prediction is the timing of events or experiences, either in the future *or the past*. Such statements locate in time the possible or predicted outcomes or occurrences. These represent correspondences of the cosmic with the mundane personal, rather than an enactment of cause and effect. Again, the meeting of the not-self or the other-self with the self—a kind of synchronicity.

I see prediction as *time*, while the holistic dimensions (as this word implies) stand for the *space* of the person. This space-time continuum taken together yields the fulfillment, actualization, or outcome of the potential energies of the planetary placements and the actual person. Forms of timing (transits, key cycles, solar returns, progressions, etc.) in astrology help to indicate how and whether the person is fulfilling that potential in a way that he or she is satisfied with.

Therefore I don't classify *prediction* as a separate mode, but as a necessary adjunct to description and designation. The corresponding events and experiences (as we'll see in Chapter 18) help us to understand how those energies are being activated, and thus to comprehend better what the initial natal energies (as seen in the map) are capable of producing.

A subtle example of what I've been speaking of may be seen in my own chart when transit Neptune made its long enduring passes over my Sagittarian, 9th house Mercury. Having been working hard to build and sustain a spiritual community focused on meditation and the land, I discovered it crumbling around myself. Simultaneously my long-standing interest in astrology rekindled, and I was drawn to the writings of the spiritual astrologer, Dane Rudhyar, whose humanistic attitudes had enough impact on me that I continued on to ready myself for a career in the field.

Another astrologer might argue that I was led astray by my boggled, confused Neptunian transit, so that I turned my back upon the flagging community—a ready means of escape. Some other interpretation might suggest that I took responsibility for my own spiritual growth by disengaging myself from the crutch of the insular community, deepened my own inward self-knowledge and commitment, then reached out to work in Piscean fashion for the greater spiritual good of others in a

specific, professional manner (Neptune being on my natal 7th house cusp of partnership and professional activities).

One interpretation might urge me to abandon astrology; another might see astrology as my own unique spiritual path. Such possible variations must be available for a counselee (the term I'll use throughout to refer to a person receiving astrological information from a person, book, or self-insight). The final choice and responsibility rest always with her or him.

Figure 1 gives a graphic statement of what has been discussed and might serve to consolidate what my words have been trying to picture. In it the tetrad of consciousness is set off against its polarity the unconscious of the social, interpersonal—or the not-self, other-self. These are then viewed through the two modes of interpretation, description and designation, leading to their outcome -prediction, actualization, fulfillment.

While Neptune transiting my natal Mercury (passing in the sky over the same degree at which my Mercury sat at my birth) could only be predicted accurately by indicating the probabilities, the tendencies towards actualization and fulfillment may be seen. And it is precisely this significant capacity of astrology that makes it so superb a tool for personality development and spiritual growth.

Towards these developmental and growthful ends we need to make a final comment on designation regarding what these ends in the chart might be.

Martin Schulman's brilliant and perhaps visionary work on the Moon's Nodes, *Karmic Astrology* [24f.], tells us that we move from the symbols, inheritances, and skills of the South Node to the scary and impelling urges of the North Node. While he quite properly points out that this movement from Node to Node is symbolic in nature I think it should also be recognized that the North Node implies an ideal and direction for the ego and the overall personality. But in its symbolic nature the North Node is essentially that which draws us towards greater fulfillment, but not that which we must become.

The South Node shows a miniature chart of what we are like at birth or when we incarnate with our energies from past lives. But rather than shift from the nature inherent from past achievements and excesses to that which is entirely new or unsuccessfully absorbed, we gain much more if we draw from *both* Nodes and learn to remain in the middle.

No sign is more desirable than another. Balance, equilibrium are what we need to seek. What usually happens in incarnations and during our lives' experiences is that we swing pendulum-fashion from one side of the chart to its opposite. Just as we do with an aspect of a square between two planets, we sample the two energies in a vacillation procedure until we learn to integrate them into a new whole. Thus we do with a series of incarnations of personalities as viewed in the chart by the Nodes.

The astrological chart I use shows a circle in the center to represent the planet Earth, so that we remind ourselves that we gain most fulfillment by learning to be centered. The signs and planets seem to revolve around us. Our job is to draw the best from these energies to be able to become aware of our unconscious potential, not to swing from extreme to extreme.

With all this background and bases for approach let's now turn to the practical skills of interpreting in terms of what we know -and believe.

**End of Chapter 1**