

# Keeping our astrology honest

Roy Gillett

Back in November 2002 I wrote a Working with the Planets column titled 'Egocentricity – the Enemy of Astrological Understanding'. In the opening paragraph I wrote:

"The more we develop our esoteric and especially astrological insights and powers, the more dangerous a force the unfettered ego becomes. Pride, self-obsession and possessiveness about 'our knowledge, discoveries and favoured techniques' is the harbinger at the gateway to delusion and conflict. For astrology is the study of all relationships. While such studies must be based on consistently definable criteria, to allow ego-driven motives to narrow down relationships and claim supremacy for one approach, person or opinion over others, is to miss the point entirely. It misappropriates the authority of astrology and uses it to harm others and misinterpret their behaviour. When, even for the best of reasons, individuals see themselves as vital custodians of the 'Truth', argument, resentment and loss of power inevitably follow."

Nineteen years later, I feel compelled to return to this subject...

As public interest in astrology blossoms beyond Sun sign columns, with new internet stars drawing hundreds of thousands of followers and confirmation bias narrows us to approving audiences, it is important to ask what astrology can and cannot do. What are the ethics of how astrologers should present to the wider world?

Astrologers see deeper into the past, present and future by understanding intricate interactional astrological cycles. The internet gives the presence to demonstrate this ability to a wide audience who may be suggestible, most people not knowing how it is done. The wine of public recognition can intoxicate the ego of the astrologer and so blur the crucial line between interpretation and personal opinion. In this way, crude prejudice is dressed up to appear to have celestial authority and becomes a lethal threat to judgement of the astrologer's followers. Of course, it does not have to be. There are many opportunities for excellent astrological information and advice on the world wide web. With Jupiter and Saturn in Aquarius (often considered astrology's sign) and public interest in astrology growing, what should be the principles of our practice?

## Astrology – not a belief system

At the beginning of William Lilly's *Christian Astrology*, the renowned 17<sup>th</sup> century astrologer instructs his students:

### To the Student In Astrology

*My friend, whoever thou art, that with so much ease shalt receive the benefit of my hard studies, and doth intend to proceed in this heavenly knowledge of the stars, wherein the great and admirable works of the invisible and alglorious God are so manifestly apparent. In the first place, consider and admire thy Creator, and be thankful unto him, be thou humble, and let no natural knowledge, how profound and transcendent soever it be, elate thy minde to neglect that divine Providence, by whose all-seeing order and appointment, all things heavenly and earthly, have their constant motion, but the more thy knowledge is enlarged, the more do thou magnifie the power and wisdom of Almighty God, and strive to preseve thy self in his favour; being confident, the more holy thou art; and more neer to God, the purer Judgment thou shalt give. Beware of pride and self-conceit, and remember how that long ago, no irrational Creature obey him, so long as he was Master of his own Reason and Passions, or until he subjected his Will to the unreasonable part.<sup>1</sup>*

Astrology is not a belief system. It is a study of the inter-relationship between the mechanics of the universe and life on Earth. Astrologers are no more than intermediaries between them. Although we may be able to see what is likely and even advise, all people and groups are free to try to do what they wish. There will be many possible outcomes from a set group of astro-cycles, but they will be within a predictable range of possibilities.

Do not confuse an ability to project a possible range with prediction of the event. Astrologers develop this knowledge so that they can help others understand their situations and make better life decisions. They do not have this knowledge to strut their importance to an admiring fan club or twist astro-cycle meanings to pontificate personal opinions. Even well-intentioned astrologers do not serve their art well when they seek to prove it works by making specific predictions.

Eastern religious traditions give astrology an honoured place but warn against its misuse. Being able to foresee the future is one of eight siddhis (super-human abilities) given to the pure and wise to help humanity. To use any siddhi egocentrically casts us down into the lowest levels of consciousness – from healing super-hero to the cage of sub-human paranoia.

The very centre of a hurricane or tornedo is still. Immediately outside this is the most violent driving force of nature. So, it

is with the practice of astrology. Stay still and clear, objective; consider the importance of everything and everyone; give room for all. Do not allow your understanding and words to become obsessed by partial truths and manipulations which tempt and draw you into fighting for just one way of seeing and doing.

### Offering mundane advice

Be the interpreter of the technical details. Talk about the easy flows and stresses between the planets, the new experience of the sign changes. Certainly, mention the happier, more fruitful options of each astro-event in general terms, but leave readers or listeners free to choose and apply their various personal prejudices to the information – to use it in their own way.

Most people come to an astrologer seeking help with specific life situations or to understand world events. How can we avoid souring astro-advice with our own opinions and practice? The following contemporary example seeks to show where to draw the line.

**Neptune in Pisces. Jupiter (Pisces' traditional ruler) is with Saturn in Aquarius and moves in and out of Pisces during the year. Which of the three interpretations below adheres to Lilly's instruction to his students?**

Neptune in Pisces represents all that is natural, all the world's creatures and even the millions of bacteria that live within us. Covid-19 is the planet's way of reacting against our behaviour. The Covid-19 vaccine is a misuse of Jupiter and Saturn in Aquarius, a technological intrusion by humanity on the flow of nature – a conspiracy to control the world. Do not let the powers-that-be control you with their vaccines and unnecessary regulations. Take off your mask. Go on with your life as normal.

With Neptune in Pisces our vulnerability is exposed. We are powerless to survive on our own. Fortunately, Jupiter (Pisces' traditional ruler) is with Saturn in Aquarius. Humanity's inventiveness has saved us. Without it, the world as we knew it will never return. Get the vaccination as soon as you can. Science will continue to research and win the battle and all will be well. Then we can go back to life as we knew and loved it.

Through 2021-22, with Neptune in Pisces and Jupiter (its co-ruler) with Saturn in Aquarius, we will see a struggle between Covid-19, which some see as the reaction of nature to our exploitation of the planet, and modern science's ability to contain this threat to humanity. It is important to see the struggle holistically. The excesses of human intervention. It is for humanity to decide the kind of society it wishes to live in and what it is willing to do to achieve it. The virus is the challenge that makes us think. With

Jupiter and Saturn in Aquarius and Jupiter moving in and out of Pisces, the vaccines may need constant adjustment. Alone, they may not be the answer. However, they certainly offer time if we wish to adjust our relationship with the planet.

Whether advising a client or seeking to inform on the issues of the time, astrologers should be clear-eyed travellers along the cosmic flow of the heavens. They explain the easy and difficult pressures of the planets' interaction, suggesting beneficial and not so beneficial ways of coping, but never deciding for the client. If the road ahead is icy, the advice can be to wait before travelling or to go slowly may be the best way. However, that a speedy adventurer may have the skill to survive cannot be entirely dismissed. In 2007, the Pluto transit through Capricorn and the potential for a growing economic crisis building to 2020 was clear to astrologers, but whether this will lead to the collapse of capitalism, its re-modelling or dystopian chaos remains to be seen.

Certainty (be it good or bad) is the desperate desire of the insecure. Possibility is the way of the wise. Astrology is the way we explain consequences and measure possibilities – always remembering Lilly's dictum "more neer to God, the purer Judgement thou shalt give".

### Endnotes

1. The passage is quoted verbatim with the 17<sup>th</sup> century spelling unaltered. Some may wish to replace the word 'God' with "the enlightened purpose of the universe" or "the wise way of nature".