THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE IN ASTROLOGICAL DIVINATION

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Abstract

In this dissertation I am positing the idea that the dialogue which takes place within the space of an astrological consultation can facilitate a meeting with the divine, by which I mean a transpersonal or numinous dimension arising through the hermeneutic process of interpreting astrological symbolism, and which is acknowledged by both parties. The core elements of this study are: astrology, divination, dialogue and meeting.

Astrology is the tradition that has developed from the symbolic interpretation of celestial phenomena in relation to human beings and earthly events. There are many types of astrological practice and applications of its theory: I am primarily interested in its tradition as a symbol system (rather than its social or cultural history, or its expression as a natural science) and its application as a psychotherapeutic practice. I focus on divinatory astrology, and in doing so I am following a model of Geoffrey Cornelius which roots astrology within the category of divination. In putting forward the concept of ‘meeting the divine,’ I have deliberately chosen the word ‘divine’ because of its direct connection with the word ‘divination,’ and in preference to other terms that have connections with a specific theological doctrine or spiritual practice.

The two strands of theory and practice are combined throughout this study. The model of dialogue of the Jewish scholar and thinker, Martin Buber, is used as a theoretical base, and the psychotherapeutic symbolic work of the twentieth-century psychotherapist Robert Hobson gives examples of practice against which the astrological encounter may be viewed. Buber’s concept of meeting the divine in another person offers a way of understanding the ‘religious’ aspect of dialogue. The importance of symbol – which underpins the dialogue within the ‘meeting’ – is emphasised, since it plays a central role as mediator within the context of the astrological encounter. Two kinds of astrological encounter are explored: the astrologer’s meeting with events in the world, and the meeting with another person in the consulting room. In both these encounters, the symbolism in the astrological chart is shown to have a vital role.
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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the role of dialogue in astrological divination, and I hope to demonstrate that the astrological encounter can be seen as a meeting with a form of transpersonal intelligence which I shall call the divine.1 Dialogue will be shown to play a vital role in the meeting of the human and the transpersonal ‘other,’ and this can occur both in the astrologer’s ‘meeting’ with the world, and in the specific context of the consulting room.

The bridge between theory and practice is here developed by exploring the idea of ‘dialogue,’ both in its relational-theological dimension as outlined in the work of the Jewish scholar and thinker, Martin Buber (1878-1965), and with reference to the psychotherapeutic symbolic work of the twentieth-century psychotherapist, Robert F. Hobson (1920 – 1999). The original aspect of this thesis lies in applying these ideas and theories about dialogue to the area of astrological practice, and in demonstrating how this can inform a divinatory understanding of astrology. Thus the theoretical value of insights from Martin Buber’s model regarding the dialogical is combined with Robert Hobson’s example of therapeutic practice in order to illuminate the practice of the astrological encounter. I have chosen to focus on Buber and Hobson for a number of reasons. Buber’s model of the ‘I-Thou’ dialogue – namely that of a meeting with the transpersonal via the interpersonal – has been taken up by Hobson in his own ‘Conversational Model’ of psychotherapy, and both have applications to astrology, which I have argued, has both a transpersonal dimension and can be considered to be a therapeutic practice.2 Thus, in my focus on these two aspects of astrology, I hope to build on the existing connections between these two writers. To date, their work has not been linked with the astrological encounter, and in choosing to do this, I am seeking to add a new and different dimension to current perceptions of astrological practice. Here,

1 In the context of this study, I am choosing to use the word divine, since it connects directly with the word divination. This is in preference to other terms that have connections with a specific theological doctrine or spiritual practice. Here, divine denotes a form of transpersonal intelligence that may be perceived by the practitioner of divination to have agency and autonomy. This may – by diviners – be called ‘daemon’, ‘spirit’, ‘angel’ or even ‘god.’
2 See Chapter Eight for a full discussion of Buber’s model of dialogue, and Chapter Nine for a discussion of Hobson’s ‘Conversational Model’ of psychotherapy. For a summary of Buber’s model, see footnote 10 in this introduction.
I also hope to demonstrate that it is the birthchart itself that distinguishes the astrological consultation from other forms of psychotherapeutic encounter.

**Literature review**

The literature that has informed this study is fairly wide-ranging, and touches on a number of diverse areas, including transpersonal and depth psychology, new age studies, psychotherapy, Jungian studies, mythology, classical studies, religion and ecological studies. Given that this area of study is so wide, and in order to keep the focus on astrological divination, I shall limit this review to that which pertains to astrology and divination.

There is an extensive literature – both contemporary and traditional – devoted to the study and practice of astrology. The majority of these works are designed for the practitioner and could be described as textbooks, which perhaps reflects the fact that astrologers themselves tend towards a pragmatic mode, rather than a reflective one. The theoretical basis of astrology – its symbol system – has a large number of applications. Later, when we discuss the range and variety of ‘astrologies’ under the umbrella term of astrology, it will become clear that such a broad canvas produces not only a wide variety of approaches to the practice of astrology, but also considerable diversity within its literature.³ We can – very roughly – position these into four areas: firstly, ‘traditional’ (including the divinatory astrology known as ‘horary’); secondly, modern psychological astrology (also known as ‘natal’ astrology); thirdly, the literature on astrology as therapy or counselling; and lastly, the historical, social and cultural literature.⁴

This dissertation uses the term ‘astrological divination,’ and it should be clarified here that my own approach – whilst having some connection with all four areas, particularly the first three – does not properly fit into any of them. It does, however, owe a considerable debt to the work of Geoffrey Cornelius and Maggie Hyde

³ For more on this, see the end of Chapter One: a cultural overview on the different schools and traditions of astrology.
⁴ There are other areas including, for example, that of research and science. The ones I have specified, however, are those relevant to my study.
(as founders of the Company of Astrologers), and to Patrick Curry.\(^5\) Cornelius’ perspective – which posits that astrology was originally, and remains, a divinatory practice – has been described as ‘quietly but deeply subversive.’\(^6\) It offers a model of divinatory astrology that radically challenges the existing foundations of astrology. A decade earlier, Hyde reassessed the connection between Jung and astrology, exposing existing misconceptions and emphasising the importance of the symbolic attitude. Her development of this – by demonstrating the participation of the astrologer in the interplay of symbols – has been an important influence in my subsequent work as an astrologer. Curry – an astrologer and historian – has co-written with Roy Willis, an anthropologist, and their joint approach combines philosophy, science, anthropology and history. The result examines the enduring popularity of the ‘pseudo-science’ of astrology, supports Cornelius’ model of astrology as a divinatory practice, and offers a critique of the scientism of the opponents of astrology.

From this perspective, then, we can enlarge on the four areas outlined above. Horary astrology is a traditional form of divination and its most celebrated exponent was the seventeenth-century astrologer, William Lilly, whose ‘Christian Astrology’ was revived in 1985. Works by a large number of recent and contemporary horary astrologers include those of Marc Edmund Jones, Olivia Barclay, Derek Appleby and Barbara Dunn. Here it should be stated that my divinatory bias differs from many of these writers, particularly over the implications of precise prediction: my approach advocates a precision of technique, but aims to reflect rather than to predict. My case material will demonstrate the nature of this difference, since my emphasis is on the moment of astrology as a meeting – a numinous occurrence rather than a solution to a question or problem (although the latter effect may also occur).

The second area, modern psychological astrology, focuses on the importance of the individual birthchart or ‘natal’ chart as a spiritual or psychological journey. Two pioneers of this approach in the early part of the twentieth century were Alan Leo – coming from a background in theosophy – and the musician-philosopher-astrologer, Dane Rudhyar. Leo emphasised ‘character as destiny’ rather than prediction, and

\(^5\) Cornelius (2003), Hyde (1992), and Curry (2004). For full bibliographic details of these and other works referred to in this literature review, see the bibliography.

\(^6\) Curry (2004), xviii
Rudhyar ‘initiated an integration of psychological, spiritual and astrological insights’ between the 1930s and the 1970s, ‘which leads us essentially to an astrology through which we can grow.’ Another significant pioneer has been the astrologer and Jungian analyst, Liz Greene, who – since the 1970s – not only did much to link the symbolic nature of astrology with that of myth, but also wrote about the connections between Jung’s depth-psychology and astrology. The subsequent literature abounds with spiritual and psychological language and as a result, the natal chart is seen as not just a study of the human personality, but as a spiritual aid that can ‘provide a key to the progress of the soul…(for)…we contain the living spark of divinity in us.’

Hyde is one author, however, to critique the way in which psychological astrology has drifted away from the precision of the horary technique. My work respects and includes the links with Jung; the rich mythological and symbolic associations that emerged from this era; and – broadly – a ‘spiritual’ approach towards astrology. However, whilst drawing on this fertile area, my focus is not simply on the benefits astrology may confer on the human soul as a way of living one’s life in accord with the heavens. Rather, it examines the significance of the astrological moment as a particular form of synchronicity that appears to reflect the meeting with a transpersonal intelligence.

Also emerging out of the 1970s was a third area of humanistic astrology, which presents astrology specifically as a form of therapy or counselling. During this period, there was a surge of interest in the ‘healing’ power of astrology within the consulting room: much emphasis was laid on the need for the astrological practitioner to undergo a formal astrological training, and additionally to study counselling and therapeutic techniques. This produced a corresponding crop of literature. One of the pioneers here was the astrologer Christina Rose, who distinguished between astrological counsellors who were merely ‘interpreting charts and delivering advice to clients’ – which she likened to a business model – and those who engaged in a person-to-person dialogue with the client. Here, ‘through the counsellor listening to and conversing with the client, the chart is automatically “interpreted”, for the client is speaking it, living it, being it.’

Whilst many others writing at this time, such as Stephen Arroyo and Maritha Pottenger,

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7 Rose (1982), 26
8 Lind (1981), 248
9 Hyde (1992), 81-101
10 Rose (1982), 135-6. She refers directly to Rudhyar as a mentor. He emphasises that with a good consultant ‘it must be a relationship of person to person.’ Rudhyar (1976), 182.
stressed the need for professional skills combined with a personal approach, Rose’s work is perhaps closest to my own.

Nevertheless, my crucial divergence from both Rose and her fellow astrological counsellors lies in the attitude to the birthchart, and, by extension, to astrology itself. These are frequently described in the literature as a ‘tool,’ and both astrology and the astrological chart are seen as a means towards self-knowledge, personal healing and problem-solving; the astrologer is a ‘helping professional’, and the aim is the personal growth of the individual (both client and astrologer) by using the chart. This utilitarian attitude corresponds to Buber’s ‘I-It attitude,’ which we shall describe later.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, within the consultation, Rose comments that ‘the chart can become superfluous and it becomes a matter of talking with the client without that piece of paper constantly being referred to.’\textsuperscript{12} Whilst I would agree that, ineptly handled, the chart can certainly act as a distraction, my argument is that when it is included in the consultation, and related to in the spirit of Buber’s ‘I-Thou attitude,’ it has a unique role to play. Staying within the consulting room (but not the astrological field), a key inspiration for this study has been the work of Marie Angelo.\textsuperscript{13} In valuing the imagination as an important part of research, she has pioneered an educational method of developing a relationship with an image. Thus her emphasis on entering into a dialogue with the image has some interesting parallels with my approach to both symbol and dialogue within the context of the astrological encounter.

The historical, cultural and social literature is an important source in order to understand both the roots of astrology and its significance today. This has been well covered by, for example, Nicholas Campion, Neil Spencer, Tamsyn Barton, and Patrick Curry, and I include a cultural overview of astrology at the beginning of this study, which draws on these and other sources. Nothing in this area, however, focuses on the dialogue of the astrological encounter.

\textsuperscript{11} Briefly, Buber’s ‘I-Thou’ is a dialogue that is both mutual and reciprocal, in which each participant experiences the other as a person other to himself, and where each is receptive to the other in the here-and-now, in the concrete reality of that time and that place, and in a non-relative way. This is in contrast to his ‘I-It’, which treats the other as an object, to be used, and as relative to other things previously known and experienced.

\textsuperscript{12} Rose (1982), 136

\textsuperscript{13} Angelo (1997), (2005)
The literature on divination – as with astrology – is largely devoted to its history and practice. As I indicate in the section on divination, my main concern is to demonstrate how, as a divinatory practice, astrology is a unique case. Again, for clarity, we can position the literature into roughly four areas: firstly, those works designed for the practitioner that could be described as textbooks; secondly, a historical or cultural approach examining divination in classical antiquity; thirdly, an anthropological approach; and finally, the recent small body of literature which has re-evaluated the relationship between divination and astrology.

In the first ‘textbook’ area, I have named, in Chapter Five, some of the many divinatory practices, but kept direct bibliographic reference to a few examples of writing on the Tarot.\textsuperscript{14} The approach in the second area – divination in classical antiquity – is usually a historical-cultural one: authors such as Peter Struck and J.S. Morrison give a fair and objective account of the subject.\textsuperscript{15} I have referred to the arguments of Cicero and Plotinus regarding divination in Chapter One since they offer particular insights into a divinatory approach to astrology, as well as the philosophical pitfalls of choosing to see astrology as being solely about prediction. The anthropological literature I have consulted encapsulates some of the problems inherent in this study, namely the ‘emic-etic’ or insider-outsider divide (which is discussed later in this introduction under methodology). Certain contemporary anthropologists manage to bridge this divide admirably: Barbara Tedlock does this through her ethnographic method, as does Alie Bird, whose thesis uses an ethnographic approach in order to report on the state of astrology in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{16} Philip Peek shows a sympathetic approach, without himself being a practitioner.\textsuperscript{17} Susan Greenwood – an academic and a practitioner of magic, whose research method involves her own practice – is an example of a growing interest in practice-based research in the areas of magic and pagan religion.\textsuperscript{18} For reasons of time, space, and staying focused, I have chosen not to develop a line of enquiry into contemporary ecological literature. However, in the course of this study, I have been influenced by – amongst others – the work of David

\textsuperscript{14} Douglas (1972), Nichols (1980), Pollack (1997)
\textsuperscript{15} Struck (2004), Morrison (1981)
\textsuperscript{16} Tedlock (2001), Bird (2007)
\textsuperscript{17} Peek (1991)
\textsuperscript{18} Greenwood (2009)
The ecological literature, which looks at the relationship both between human persons and the natural world, and between human persons with other-than-human persons, has interesting connections with Buber’s ‘anthropological philosophy.’

The final area of research (to which this dissertation owes much) is closely connected to the argument in this study. This posits that astrology was originally a divinatory practice, and is primarily represented by three authors who have already been mentioned in the astrological literature, namely Cornelius, Curry and Hyde.

My interest and focus in this study is not merely on the connection between astrologer and cosmos, and astrologer and client, it is on what occurs in the space between them. I argue that it is within this space that dialogue occurs, centred on a living symbolic presence that is the birthchart itself. Within the areas of astrological literature that I have outlined, many issues are considered in previous works which are also a part of my approach: for example, the astrologer as therapist and counsellor, the importance of astrological symbolism in enabling astrologer and client to communicate, the psychological and spiritual dimension of the astrologer’s ‘journey,’ and the beauty of the patterns of the astrological ‘system’ through which human life may be understood. But in no previous work – to the best of my knowledge – has Buber’s sense of meeting the divine in another person been applied to the astrological encounter, nor has the chart itself been seen in terms of ‘being’ another subject, and a living presence. In considering these dimensions, I hope that my study will contribute substantially to the existing astrological literature.

Methodology

Presenting the subject matter has proved challenging from several points of view. Both astrology and divination are what may be termed esoteric subjects, and therefore unfamiliar both to the non-astrological reader, and to the reader who has never experienced or practised the art of divination. Quite apart from unfamiliarity, such material tends to arouse emphatic responses – often for good reason – and these are more likely to be critical than enthusiastic. Within an academic framework there are further challenges, not least those concerning the role of rational argument. I am writing

19 Abrams (1997)
within the discipline of religious studies, which raises issues about belief and practice that go beyond mere ‘unfamiliarity.’ This is the classic ‘emic-etic’ divide (or, put another way, an insider-outsider division), and it can be difficult to argue a case for a subject when the reader has no means of being – or the desire to be – on the ‘inside’ of the astrological or divinatory experience. Moreover, this is a practice-led study, which may produce a certain tension between the academic norm of critical distance and the presentation of the hands-on case material. However, I am convinced of the need for bridge-building between theoretical and empirical modes of research, and this dissertation is an attempt to locate the experience of divination in practice within an understanding of the power of dialogue to unlock symbolic meaning in the context of consultation. Thus the theoretical value of Martin Buber’s model regarding the dialogical is combined with Robert Hobson’s example of therapeutic practice, and both are seen in relation to the experience of the astrological encounter. For reasons of space, I have not discussed the work of Petruska Clarkson within my text, but her work is relevant to, and has helped to inform my argument. She identifies five kinds of relational qualities appearing in all therapeutic encounters, and these include the ‘Dialogic Relationship’ which equates with Buber’s ‘I/Thou’. Since Hobson directly cites Buber as an integral part of his own model of therapeutic practice, the connection with Clarkson's classic psychological text is self-evident. Hobson is thus a powerful link between Buber's theoretical model and Clarkson's more contemporary relational model for therapeutic practice.\(^{20}\) There may, as I have suggested, be a certain tension in finding a methodology for a dissertation located within a religious studies context. This is not, however, always the case within other disciplines: the work of Braud and Anderson, Romanyshyn, and Bochner and Ellis offers ample scope for new qualitative methods of research.\(^{21}\)

Outline

This thesis is divided into four sections: astrology, divination, dialogue and meeting. In order to address the issue of astrological practice within a theoretical

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\(^{20}\) Clarkson (1995). She identifies five kinds of relational qualities in therapeutic encounters. Buber’s ‘I/Thou’ is the Dialogic relationship, core to authentic connection and effectively the doorway to transpersonal relationships. Clarkson’s work was given an astrological-symbolic frame in a paper by Marie Angelo (1997) already cited in the literature review.

framework, I have set out some background on the practice and symbolism of astrology in the first section. Each of the subsequent sections then aims to develop my core theoretical argument, whilst interweaving the two strands of astrological theory and practice.

The first section introduces astrology, and it should be clarified at this point that my interest in astrology is its tradition as a *symbol system*, rather than, for instance, its cultural history. However, since the non-astrological reader will need some background, I begin by giving a brief cultural overview of astrology, and I also include a summary of its principles (which can be found in Appendix A). Astrological symbol is at the core of the study, but – since astrology has a particular way of using symbol – rather than moving straight into this, I will first introduce and define the *nature of symbol in general*. Two chapters are devoted to the function of symbol, after which we move on in the final chapter of the section, to look at astrological symbol. In addition to my consideration of symbol within the context of religious hermeneutics, my other focus is on the application of astrology as a *therapeutic practice*: this, however, is discussed later, in the third section on dialogue.

In the second section, I introduce divination. Again, I start with a general approach in order to provide background for the more specific practice of divinatory astrology. I consider the aim of divination; its relationship to prediction; and whether there is a place for divination in a culture that privileges what is termed rationality. Although there are many and various forms of divination recorded from ancient civilisations to the present day, we shall argue that astrology is a unique case. It is the only form of divination in which a symbolic map for the diviner to interpret is produced from the precise details of the chronological time when (and place where) the moment of ‘realised’ or truthful interpretation occurs. The next chapter, on divinatory astrology, marks a pivotal point between our earlier introductory material and the later focus on dialogue and meeting. Divinatory astrology is first discussed from a theoretical angle; then, using case material (illustrated in Appendices B, C, and D) its working is illustrated in practice.

Having set out the nature of astrological symbol and of divination, in the third section we move on to the central concept of dialogue. Starting with a general introduction to the topic, we continue by examining two models of dialogue and
comparing them to the experience of the astrological encounter. The first is the model of religious dialogue of Martin Buber; the second, the therapeutic model of Robert Hobson. Buber’s theoretical model raises the issue of meeting with the divine; Hobson’s ‘Conversational Model’ of therapy – illustrated from his own practice – considers the possibilities of the person-to-person relationship within the context of therapy. Thus, these two writers bring together the particular issues raised by the astrological encounter: the meeting with the divine, and an astrologer’s capacity to meet with a person rather than a ‘client’ or a ‘patient’, through the mediation of symbol as ‘embodied’ in the birthchart: ‘embodied’, since the presence of the birthchart may be perceived as fulfilling a role comparable to that of another living person. This view is then taken up in the final chapter of the section, in which I posit that the chart can be viewed not only as the third member of the astrological encounter, but also one which – via the power of symbol – facilitates a situation where ‘real’ dialogue can occur.

The final short section on meeting draws together the threads of the study, and is a distillation of all the material in the earlier sections. My aim here is to show that meeting is a particular way of understanding what ‘real’ or ‘truthful’ dialogue means.22 No previous study on astrology or divination has, to the best of my knowledge, used the work of Martin Buber as a foundation for astrological practice, nor posited that the birthchart itself can be seen as a living symbolic presence, and as another subject in the astrological encounter. Examples from Buber and Hobson are used here to support my proposition, that the astrologer – in meeting the cosmos and in meeting the client – is also meeting the divine.

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22 In the context of this study I am using the term ‘real’ dialogue in the sense implied in Martin Buber’s model of dialogue, and also in Hobson’s psychotherapeutic model, which is based on some of the ideas of Buber. The models of these two writers are discussed in detail in Sections Three and Four of this dissertation. In the astrological encounter, it also involves a third element, which I term a ‘sense of the numinous’.
SECTION ONE

ASTROLOGY
CHAPTER ONE

ASTROLOGY: A CULTURAL OVERVIEW

The practice of astrology is the bedrock of this study. It makes sense, therefore, to start with this trickiest and most elusive of subjects: tricky, because it is difficult to convey to non-astrologers – and elusive, even for astrologers themselves. This first section, then, introduces astrology, and what is covered here will form the background for all the subsequent sections on divination, dialogue and meeting. We need to be clear at this point that our primary interest in astrology is in its tradition as a symbol system, rather than its cultural or historical significance. The roots of this study lie in personal and phenomenological experience. Having said this, to give a wider perspective – and for the benefit of the non-astrological reader – we shall start with a brief general overview of astrology.

Introduction

Much has been written, and from many different perspectives, on the cultural history of astrology. The purpose of this brief overview – assuming that the reader knows little of astrology beyond its public and outer face – is to provide a background against which this study of its phenomenology as a divinatory symbol system can become the foreground. Since our perspective is a religious and symbolic one associated with divinatory astrology, we need a relatively neutral background as a starting point.

In the extensive literature on astrology, by far the major part is devoted to its study and practice, and very little to its philosophy. There are, however, some useful accounts of its cultural history.¹ In this chapter, we shall take a historical overview of astrology’s roots in ancient civilisations; its status as part of a pre-Enlightenment world,

¹ See the bibliography of astrological literature, especially Curry (2004), Cornelius (2003), Spencer, (2001), Barton (1994), and Campion (2005). For a good and concise overview, see Curry (2002).
and the various attacks against it over the centuries. We shall also consider some of the
different ‘astrologies’ which are – and have been – practised under the umbrella term
of ‘astrology’. Finally, since there will be some references to astrological factors
throughout this study, a brief summary of some of the principal factors and tenets
within the astrological symbol system can be found in Appendix A.

The origins of astrology

The literal meaning of astrology, from its Greek root *astro logos*, is ‘word of the
stars’. This should be seen as distinct from *astro nomia*, the ‘law of the stars’, or
astronomy. While astronomy is to do with the measurement of the stars and planets,
astrology deals with their meaning and significance for affairs on earth. A basic
definition of astrology might be that it is the tradition that has developed from the
symbolic interpretation of celestial phenomena in relation to human beings and earthly
events. Although the exact origins of astrology are lost in time, most cultures have an
astrological tradition: these include India, China, Egypt, Mesopotamia (modern Iraq),
and the lost civilisations of the Mayans and Aztecs in Latin America. All these have
contributed to the development of Western astrology, and – as Neil Spencer comments
– together these traditions have amalgamated to form the unique mixture that exists
today:

The roots of astrology are a dense tangle, stretching down through centuries
and across cultures, intertwined with an assortment of religions and philosophies.²

All these traditions, from ancient peoples, grew out of a similar impulse: the desire
to correlate celestial and terrestrial events. The Hermetic doctrine ‘As above, so below’
is at the heart of astrology, and while being a short, simple phrase, it has far-reaching
implications. Robert Hand, a contemporary astrologer and historian, is closely
associated with the creation of an archive for the retrieval of historical astrological
texts.³ He points out that while the basic astrological impulse – to correlate ‘above’

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² Spencer (2001), 8
³ A.R.H.A.T Archive for the Retrieval of Historical Astrological Texts, P.O.Box 2001, Reston, VA.
with ‘below’ – was ‘nearly universal among ancient peoples’,\(^4\) there is a crucial
difference between ancient practices and astrology as we know it now:

…a distinguishing mark of what we call astrology as it is practiced today is
that celestial phenomena are computed in advance of their occurrence so
that…events…can be anticipated in advance…As far as we can tell only one
group of ancient peoples ever did this, the various peoples who lived in
Mesopotamia…Since we know of no other ancient peoples who did this, we
have to assume that these peoples were the most likely to have given birth to
astrology as we know it.\(^5\)

We can perhaps say, then, that the origins of ‘our’ astrology lie with these peoples
who lived in Mesopotamia: the Sumerians, the Babylonians (later known as Chaldeans),
and the Assyrians. Their flat desert landscape and clear night skies were ideal for
observing stars, and the astronomical records of Babylon go back to around 2000 BCE,
while their earliest known horoscopes – for their rulers, and hence for the nation –
date from the fifth century BCE.\(^6\) The origins of primary factors in the astrological
tradition, such as the planets and the zodiacal signs, developed during this period. From
these early attempts to discover the fate of their rulers and their nations via divination,
astrology gradually became more systematised.

With Alexander the Great’s conquest of Babylon in 331 BCE, Greek became the
‘lingua franca’ of his empire; and Alexandria, the intellectual centre of the Western
world. Spencer comments that it was ‘the site of the confluence of numerous religions,
mythologies and traditions, not least that of Egypt itself’.\(^7\) The Greeks, very much
aware of the magic and antiquity of the country they were occupying, also brought:

…an inquisitive rationalism, the magical constructs of Pythagorean
mathematics, the cosmology and philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and others,
and the astronomy of Babylon…One result of this extraordinary confluence
was astrology, which fused elements of the various cultures into a complex
but versatile system…\(^8\)

\(^4\) Hand (1998), 1-2
\(^5\) ibid
\(^6\) While this is the time frame usually cited in historical and astrological literature, see also Patrick
Curry’s first footnote in the introduction to Curry (2004), 14. Here, he refers both to the date of
Mesopotamian origins, and to recent evidence that ‘the zodiacal constellations may be much older’.
\(^7\) Spencer (2001), 9
\(^8\) ibid
One of the Greeks’ major contributions was to emphasise the geometrical relationship or ‘aspects’ between the planets\(^9\), and also the importance of the degree of the sign rising on the Eastern horizon\(^10\) – the word ‘horoscope’ comes from the Greek horos skopos, or ‘hour pointer’ – and from Alexandria their astrology spread to Rome. Claudius Ptolemy – a second-century Alexandrian – produced his vast textbooks, the Almagest and the Tetrabiblos – which remain foundational to astrology today.\(^11\) When the Roman empire collapsed in the fifth century CE, astrology largely disappeared from the West (but survived in the Eastern Roman Empire) until it was later re-introduced from the Middle East. Justinian, a Christian emperor, had closed the schools in Athens in 527 CE, but (despite the burning of the library at Alexandria) the Islamic empire established by the Arabs in the seventh and eight centuries CE inherited the learning of the ancient world, and disseminated it from the East.\(^12\) Twelfth-century Crusaders also helped to bring astrology back to the West; Aristotle’s cosmology was adapted with reasonable ease to the Christian hierarchical system, and the classical world began to be rediscovered in Renaissance Europe.

**Astrology and the pre-Enlightenment world**

It is easy to underestimate the importance of acknowledging astrology as part of a pre-Enlightenment world. It is, however, an extremely hard thing to do from our orientation in the twenty-first century. We cannot fully enter into the mindset of ancient peoples, or of the pre-modern world, although some astrologers might say that the recent resurgence of interest in astrology (over the last hundred years) has been driven by ‘its symbolic and mythical associations in an age that has discovered the power and extent of the unconscious or subconscious mind’.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) Rochberg-Halton (1984), 129
\(^10\) According to Bird (2007), 62 the word is ‘Etymologically derived from the Greek hora (hour) and skopos (watcher) and was originally used as an astrological term to describe the degree and sign of the zodiac which was rising over the Eastern horizon at a given moment and a specific place; this is now referred to as the Ascendant.’ Cf Campion (2008), 203-4 who argues that this may be an Egyptian idea so suggests it is probably best to refer to Hellenistic rather than Greek astrology.
\(^11\) See p.10, footnote 51
\(^12\) Powell (2007), 82-3
\(^13\) Spencer, 2001, 8
But for the twentieth-century mind to be drawn to theories of the unconscious, and to the power of symbols, is a far cry from inhabiting a world which:

...was alive with animistic spirits, river nymphs...and other elemental forces, while myths and fables were spun around mountains, oceans, rocks, trees, animals and plants. Nature was viewed not as a fluke of inert matter, but as possessed of a purposeful spirit that was responsive to human intent and action.14

This was a world where another level of reality was part of human life, and of death. Whether this level was seen as being peopled with ancestors, gods, spirits, angels, demons or saints, the crucial thing was that human beings were part of an animated universe: with ancient peoples, their survival and wellbeing depended on the way in which they related to their deities or – when the three great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam later emerged – to one Deity.

Moreover, in looking to the Deity or deities for guidance in living well, and in helping their rulers to live successfully, they were involved in a constant dialogue. As Geoffrey Cornelius remarks, ‘it takes real imagination to recover the import of the “dialogue with the gods”’. This attitude is opaque to modern thought’.15 The specific focus of our study is this type of dialogue, via the practice of divinatory astrology (as opposed to other forms of astrology), and largely follows Cornelius’ argument for the divinatory roots of astrology. The wider implications, therefore, are that the mindset of ancient peoples – whether or not it can be fully recovered or ‘relived’ – is also present for the twenty-first century divinatory astrologer. So that whilst we are acknowledging that the pre-Enlightenment world was a historical and cultural phenomenon, we are also saying that it is the basis of the particular type of astrology that constitutes this present study. This is, clearly, both problematic and challenging. We cannot, as Cornelius points out, ‘simply peel back the ages and return to the practices of our ancestors’.16 Nor, as Curry emphasises, are we advocating a ‘literal-minded return to some primal undifferentiated state of mind or way of life’.17

14 Spencer, 2001, 8
16 Cornelius (2003), 141
17 Curry (2004), 111
However, we shall be addressing the nature of divinatory astrology in Chapter 6, and now turn to the various attacks on astrology over the centuries.

**Attacks on astrology and its survival**

Astrology has been continually criticised and vilified over the millennia, yet it has endured, which suggests that its status as persecuted victim of hostility is rather less remarkable than its ability to survive. We shall first look at the nature and development of the various attacks on astrology, and then consider some of the factors which might account for its survival. What follows aims simply to be an outline: for a thorough investigation of this important part of the history of astrology, see Cornelius and Curry, who are both at pains to emphasise the responsibility that astrologers should take for their part in the development of their tradition, and their response to hostility. Cornelius comments that although,

…by the end of the 18th century astrology in any shape or form had been all but wiped out as a credible intellectual endeavour…the present-day survivors… talk as if the ship never went down…A few look back to a golden age… and the modernists look forward to the new era, just around the corner. These comforting illusions can be maintained only if we are blind to our history.  

Spencer also observes that ‘astrologers themselves tend to believe their art’s survival is proof enough of its validity – if there wasn’t something in it, it wouldn’t have endured’. Its longevity is certainly remarkable, but is repeatedly cited in this unreflective way. In fact, in reviewing the history of astrology, one might observe that astrology comes out of it rather better than astrologers. Their frequent capacity for self-deception and stupidity does not make for an edifying picture, and the way in which

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18 Cornelius (2003). This thought-provoking and meticulously written book offers much insight and detail, not only into the ways in which astrology has been criticised and attacked, but also into the weaknesses within astrology itself; and how astrologers fail to understand its nature, and to some extent play into the hands of its critics. See especially Chapters 1–4 and Appendix 1.

19 Curry (2004). Curry writes the foreword to Cornelius (2003), and both these works provide thoroughly-researched material into the various forms of attack on astrology, and the weak and strong points of its own defence. See especially 49-53 and 93-104. See also Curry (1989) and Curry (1992).

20 Cornelius (2003), 1

21 Spencer (2001), 2
astrology has been practised has — like any other public activity — always been subject to public scrutiny and criticism.

But since astrology deals with such fundamental issues as our relationship with the heavens, and to the Deity or deities, it has perhaps attracted more than its share of criticism. And, in defence of astrology, Curry points out one of the least impressive qualities common to most of its opponents, namely the tendency ‘to vehement condemnation of astrology while remaining proudly ignorant of it.’ In other words, it is usually attacked by those who have little or no understanding of its internal philosophy and no desire to put any effort into doing so. Curry also, in questioning how astrology can be described (what it actually is) gives a useful summary of its enemies, through their statements on what it is not:

There have been, and remain, three main enemies…the Christian Church, scientists, and metropolitan literary professionals. Each group has answered that question in terms of a different form of superstition: that astrology is, respectively, a pagan religious practice (and therefore illicit), an unscientific kind of knowledge (and therefore delusory), and a vulgar or parochial belief-system (and therefore ignorant). The answers they have supplied are thus all negative: astrology is a not-religion/not-science/not truth.

So, in taking a historical perspective on astrology’s various enemies, whether we are going back nearly two millennia to Cicero’s scathing prose or responding to modern articles by Richard Dawkins (the zoologist and popular science writer); whether we are considering past — and recent — condemnation from the Vatican, or tracts from St Augustine, Curry’s three main categories succeed in covering all these.

22 Curry (2004), 4
23 ibid, 52
24 Cicero (transl. Falconer), 1923, 154
25 Richard Dawkins has written extensively against astrology. One of his most notable articles was in the Independent on Sunday (December 31, 1995). Much of the content of this can be found in Dawkins, (1998). Dawkins holds the Charles Simonyi Chair of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University.
26 For example: The Catechism of the Catholic Church of 1993 (paragraph 2116) rejects ‘all forms of divination’, including ‘consulting horoscopes’.
27 For example, see St Augustine (transl. Bettenson) City of God, V3, 183, where Augustine writes about the problem of twin births. Cornelius (2003), 175, comments that ‘Augustine’s observation continues to be unanswered and unanswerable’.

In struggling to accommodate paganism, classicism and astrology within its doctrine, the mediaeval Christian Church found a compromise in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, whose much-quoted phrase on the subject of freewill – ‘the stars incline but do not compel’, another version of which is ‘the wise man rules his stars’ – remains a cornerstone of defence on the part of modern astrologers. Aquinas effectively synthesised Christian theology with Aristotelian/Ptolemaic astrology, and confined legitimate astrological knowledge to the material world (what will later be discussed as ‘natural’ astrology.) Later, in fifteenth-century Florence, there were famous attacks on astrologers, by both the brilliant humanist and philosopher, Pico della Mirandola, and his fellow scholar, the philosopher Marsilio Ficino. Ficino gives a clear divinatory basis to astrology, but rejects the astrologers – the ‘petty ogres’ – who practise in a more deterministic way, but Pico rejects all astrological practice. Cornelius draws detailed attention to Pico’s *Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*, written in 1493-4, and considers it to be one of the most important attacks on astrology:

By the effectiveness of his attack, and by the status it was later accorded, Pico stands in the first ranks of assembled opponents of astrology from all ages, approaching the significance of St Augustine a millennium before him. His text is rambling and occasionally inconsistent, but it effectively marshalled a range of critics from antiquity to his own times and it became a compendium to be dipped into or copied wholesale by later critics.

More recently, modern science – or, more precisely, scientism – has been one of the sources of the most scathing critics of astrology. Before Dawkins became one of its most strident and rhetorical voices, there was the notorious ‘Statement of 186 Leading Scientists’ against astrology in 1975. Clearly astrology has always been, and will continue to be, subject to criticism.

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28 For a study of how magic was assimilated into Christianity, see the survey by Valerie Flint (1991).
30 Cornelius (2003), 11. There is also an outline of Pico’s ‘Disputationes’ in Appendix 1, 333.
31 Defined by Curry as ‘what obtains when science is viewed and presented as, in effect, a crypto-religion, with the scientific method exalted as its central ritual.’ Curry (2004), 81.
32 For a comprehensive discussion of science and astrology, see Curry (2004), Chapter 8, 93-108.
33 See Grim (1982). Also see Curry (2004), 90 who discusses the scientists’ statement and the ‘wonderful’ attack on it by Paul Feyerabend.
However, as we commented earlier, what is more remarkable is its survival. If we ask how and why astrology has survived, we might choose to take an apparently cynical position, along with its ‘rationalist’ opponents who, as Spencer points out, usually attribute its longevity to ‘superstition, to the obstinate, human need for reassurance and the comfort of religion, or to blind fatalism.’ The language of the 186 scientists echoes this accusation of ‘irrationalism and obscurantism’ with a distinctly patronising tone, from their own elevated status in (what they term) an age of ‘widespread enlightenment and education’:

In these uncertain times many long for the comfort of having guidance in making their decisions. They would like to believe in a destiny predetermined by astral forces beyond their control.

If we go back – from our apparent enlightenment in the twentieth century – to the mid-thirteenth century of Thomas Aquinas and the theological struggles of the Church Fathers, we might also conclude that compromise has often been responsible for the survival of astrology. Curry argues that the ‘Thomist arrangement gave astrology a new lease of life without which it might conceivably have diminished into just another popular mantic practice.’

And in observing the adaptability of astrology, Curry comments that:

Astrologers have always had to consider how to survive, as well as develop and extend their tradition; and to succeed as they have took not only brilliance and perseverance but a necessary element of compromise and adaptation.

Astrology, then, has a protean quality, able to shape-shift from being:

…a celestial science…a vehicle of spiritual enlightenment…[to]…a handy instrument of divination useful for foretelling football scores, finding lost property or winning battles. It is still used in weather forecasting,

34 Spencer (2001), 2
36 Curry (2004), 71
37 Curry, in his foreword to Cornelius (2003), xv
gardening, medicine and matchmaking... astrology seems, in short, to oblige whatever fancies and expectations are projected onto it.\footnote{Spencer (2001), 5}

But this very down-to-earth, human dimension to astrology is cited by Curry as – far from being a weakness, or an object of light-hearted amusement or of ridicule – rather, its principal characteristic and strength, and therefore relevant to its survival. Moreover, he is optimistic that it will continue to exist and to flourish in the future, and asserts that:

there are good grounds for supposing that astrology is... a relatively fundamental human experience. And that, in turn is surely a good reason to take it seriously as a phenomenon and therefore a subject in its own right. The words of Terence from the first century BCE – ‘nothing human is alien to me’ – are the still, unshakeable defence of its study.\footnote{Curry (2004), 3}

In addition to this important observation about its human dimension, Curry later makes another significant point about modern (twentieth century) ‘psychological’ astrology: he discusses the apparent inability of many contemporary astrologers to understand the confused nature of their philosophy and practice in a secular society, and in relation to their own history, especially with regard to the central issue of free will.\footnote{Curry (2004), 74}

They shrink, he says, from ‘recognising...what...they actually practise: concrete magic.’\footnote{Curry (2004), 73}

If we consider C.G. Jung’s own divided and ambivalent position, torn between his desire for mainstream scientific respectability and his own mystical leanings, there are connections. Jung was hugely influential on the way in which astrology developed in the twentieth century, and Curry sees his ambiguity as buying ‘a significant breathing-space for spirituality among modern Western people at a time when scientific secularism was the dominant ideology.’\footnote{Curry (2004), 73} In other words, Jung’s own ‘split’ has affected both how astrologers present themselves, and understand the nature of their own practice, and this has also allowed them to adapt, thereby contributing to their survival in the world today.
Finally, before we go on to consider the different schools and traditions of astrology, a brief word on infighting within the ranks of the astrologers themselves. It is a truism to say that in wartime, a country joins forces against the enemy, and there have been, as we noted earlier, three powerful enemies in the cultural history of astrology: the Church, scientists, and metropolitan literary professionals. Thus, although astrologers – with their strikingly embattled history – have also had their share of internal dissension, the need for continual resistance to hostility from the outside world has tended to create a united front. This, together with the nature of astrology as a human experience, and its adaptability, may have been another factor contributing to the survival of this art.

Different schools and traditions of astrology

We have now outlined the roots of astrology, and acknowledged that these – coming as they do from a pre-Enlightenment mindset – create serious problems of credibility for a contemporary scientific paradigm. We have summarised some of the objections to astrology and the attacks against it since the classical era, and considered the factors which may have contributed to its survival. We now turn to the different ‘astrologies’ which are – and have been – practised under the umbrella term of astrology. This provides the necessary context for divinatory astrology, which is the subject of this study. Listing these, in no particular order, they include esoteric, traditional, horary, psychological, scientific, financial and popular. Bearing in mind the earlier reference to the roots of astrology as a ‘dense tangle’, we need to go backwards in order to untangle the various sources and strands which have contributed to the varieties of astrological experience today. Perhaps the best place to start is to return to an ancient distinction, summarised by Cornelius,

between an astrology of causes, objective, universal, regular and astrologer-independent, and an astrology of signs which is participatory, context-specific and irregular.$^{43}$

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$^{43}$ Cornelius (2003), 74
He believes that this is the same distinction, found since medieval times between *natural astrology* and *judicial astrology*, and defines these:

Judicial astrology is what we all do in regular astrology, the work of interpretation in particular situations, most usually…from horoscopes. It is based on a symbolic approach. Natural astrology refers to a universal domain of planetary and celestial influence…natural astrology is appropriate to the domain of science while judicial astrology relates to divination.\(^{44}\)

Cornelius makes these definitions within the context of a discussion on the somewhat chequered history of recent scientific research into the validity of astrology.\(^{45}\) We have given his definitions in some detail, because, to the contemporary intelligent observer, the apparent failure of astrology to be validated by scientific testing tends automatically to condemn it as merely a superstitious practice. Since this study is based on divinatory (judicial) astrology, it is better to clarify this very important distinction at the outset. Then, as Cornelius points out:

Once this division is accepted many problems about research become clarified, as the method of testing…appropriate to one order are seen as inappropriate to another. We do not have to reduce one to the other, nor do we have to abandon one viewpoint just to hold onto the other. Both have their relative validity.\(^{46}\)

Having referred to some of the different types of astrology, we can now note that ‘scientific’ astrology includes this research-oriented area where astrologers aim to ‘prove’ that astrology is ‘valid’ in the modern, factual sense. Other types would fall into the category of ‘judicial’, and are based on a symbolic approach. This basic dichotomy underlies the history of astrology. As Spencer comments:

The tension between astrology as a scientific construct, dedicated to the study and explanation of the cosmos, and astrology as an esoteric system, which can be used in acts of divination and magic, or to unlock the secrets of spirituality, runs throughout its history.\(^{47}\)

\(^{44}\) Cornelius (2003), 74-5
\(^{45}\) For this discussion, see Cornelius (2003), 42-80; Appendix 2, 338-346
\(^{46}\) Cornelius (2003), 75
\(^{47}\) Spencer (2001), 11
We shall now very briefly summarise how the various judicial traditions have evolved, and give a short definition of each. To reiterate the point made earlier about the dense tangle of the roots of astrology, this evolution is extremely complex and beyond the scope of this summary.\textsuperscript{48} As Curry observes,

Astrology originated in the formative matrix of experience in which what we now distinguish as mythic, scientific, spiritual, physical, divine, animal and indeed human itself were inseparable.\textsuperscript{49}

Moving from our original broad distinction between natural and judicial, we can observe, within the judicial strand, another divide: on one side, Neoplatonic and Hermetic astrology; on the other, Aristotelian and Ptolemaic. The Neoplatonic stream moves (via Neoplatonism and the Florentine Renaissance) to produce the schools labelled as esoteric, psychological, humanistic and divinatory; the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic stream becomes the sub-traditions known as scientific and traditional astrology.\textsuperscript{50}

It is important to note that, in contemporary practice, psychological astrology is by far the dominant stream.\textsuperscript{51} It is what is also called ‘natal’ astrology, and considers an individual’s birthchart to be a ‘map of the psyche.’ It emphasises self-knowledge and self-transformation (hence the link with Neoplatonic and Hermetic astrology) and is strongly influenced by Jung. As we observed earlier, Jung’s own ambiguity regarding mainstream (scientific) recognition and his own more spiritual leanings are echoed in the contradictions of this school. In addition to natal charts, which are taken as a description of the character and unfolding life of an individual (often called ‘nativities’) there are a number of other ways to apply the study of charts. For example, it is possible to use them to elect a favourable time to start an enterprise (electional); to look retrospectively at the time when an enterprise or institution started (inceptional), and to study politics and public life through an examination of the charts of cities.

\textsuperscript{48} For a good discussion of this, see Curry (2004), 65-76 on the varieties of astrological experience.
\textsuperscript{49} Curry (2004), 66
\textsuperscript{50} This category of ‘scientific’ is a sub-tradition, rather than the broad distinction between natural and judicial. For a fuller exposition of these complexities, see Curry, (2004) and Cornelius (2003).
\textsuperscript{51} However (in purely quantitative terms) see Curry’s discussion for comments on the rural origins and modern manifestation of popular astrology. Curry (2004)
countries, and political and public figures (mundane). In effect, astrological charts can be used to judge whatever one chooses.

**Esoteric** astrology originated with Madame Blavatsky, who founded the Theosophical Society in 1875, and developed via an early twentieth-century astrologer named Alan Leo, who introduced a spiritual dimension into the practice, as well as an emphasis on ‘character as destiny.’ **Financial** astrology is a growing phenomenon in the modern world, and describes the application of astrological techniques to business and financial contexts. **Horary** astrology is the art of answering a specific question using the symbolism of a chart. Unlike natal astrology, its judgements are based on strict rules, rooted in the older practice of traditional astrology, as opposed to the ‘looser’ approach of modern psychological astrology.\(^\text{52}\)

It should be clear, by now, that astrology has an extraordinarily wide variety of applications. We conclude this brief survey by again noting that the importance of divinatory astrology – the subject of this study – is such that it will be discussed in depth in a later chapter. For now we simply observe its place amongst the great variety of astrological experience.

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\(^{52}\) For a critique of how traditional horary techniques differ from natal astrology, see Hyde (1992), 81-101.
CHAPTER TWO

THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOL: PART ONE

Having looked briefly at astrology’s place in the history of culture, we now move into a consideration of astrology from the more specific viewpoint of this study. We have said that our primary focus here is the phenomenological experience of astrological practice as it incorporates symbol theory. We shall, therefore, start by approaching the subject of symbol from two perspectives: firstly, by looking at the function of symbol; and secondly, by considering how symbolism in general applies to astrological symbols in particular.

The study of symbolism is a complex and diverse subject, and there are many ways in which to approach it. My sense of the enormity of the task is echoed by Raymond Firth, an anthropologist, who said: ‘What can an anthropologist do that has not been done already by logicians, metaphysicians, linguists, psychologists, theologians, art historians and the rest?’¹ My chosen perspective is a metaphysical and poetic one: ‘philosophical’ in the pre-enlightenment sense, when religion and philosophy were not differentiated as subjects for study or reflection. Thus I shall not be making more than a glancing reference to the modern study of semiotics, which has a ‘limited’ scope, in that it does not reach the area of discourse in which I am centred. My thesis is firmly rooted within the field of religious studies, and my focus will therefore be on the symbol as it pertains to the poetic and religious mode of discourse, rather than the linguistic² or mathematical.³ Tillich’s approach, therefore, is sympathetic to the area in which I am working, and he is clear and thoughtful on the subject of symbols. In writing about language, he talks of words which go beyond being merely signs for meaning and, ‘in the moment in which they get connotations which go beyond something to which they point as signs, then they can become

¹ Firth (1973), 25. He goes on to say that ‘the anthropological approach is comparative, observationalist, functionalist, relatively neutralist. It links the occurrence and interpretation of symbolism to social structures and social events in specific conditions’.
² Tillich (1955), 190
³ Tillich (1955), 190. Along similar lines, he comments that it is very ‘dangerous’ that mathematicians ‘usurped’ the term ‘symbol’ for mathematical ‘sign’ and suggests distinguishing signs which are called symbols from ‘genuine symbols’.
He is pointing out that words, as liturgical or poetic language, can in themselves, acquire power. It is this poetic and religious aspect of linguistic philosophy that interests me.

**Definitions of Symbol**

Among the many definitions of symbol outlined from within different disciplines and in different centuries, we shall start with those that are fairly well agreed. From the minutiae of its etymological roots, the general sense is of ‘joining or putting together’. Paul Avis, a theologian, both compresses and expands this nicely: ‘two things, meanings or worlds are “thrown together”’. Algis Uzdavinys, in writing about metaphysical symbols, warns that ‘one should be wary of the Greek term *sumbolon* (“symbol”) which has so many different meanings, sometimes far removed from the realm of metaphysics.’ I shall develop his line of argument later. More down to earth is Firth’s anthropologist’s approach. Having stated that ‘symbolism is a universal human process’, he goes on to say that,

...the essence of symbolism lies in the recognition of one thing as standing for (re-presenting) another, the relation between them normally being that of concrete to abstract, particular to general.

Unlike Avis, Firth does not have much to say about the imagination. Avis, however, feels that the exercise of the imagination is fundamental to how we relate to symbol:

At its simplest, a symbol means imagining one thing in the form of another... when we employ a symbol and when we respond to or ‘read’ a symbol, we are using our imagination: we are not passive in symbolising, we have to exert our creative, constructive powers.

Avis, in fact, makes two basic points when he says that a symbol means ‘imagining one thing in the form of another.’ His first point, in the above quote, concerns the

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4 Tillich (1955), 190  
5 Avis (1999), 103  
6 Uzdavinys (2008), 37  
7 Firth (1973), 15  
8 *ibid*  
9 Avis (1999), 103
imagination. ‘Imagination’, he asserts, ‘is the milieu of symbolism.’\textsuperscript{10} His second point concerns form, and he states, equally strongly, that ‘form is the key to symbols: we have the ability to abstract the form or essence of a symbol from all its other constituents.’\textsuperscript{11} And he quotes from Susanne Langer (whom he describes as a ‘pioneer of the philosophy of symbolism’):

The power of understanding symbols, i.e. of regarding everything about a sense-datum as irrelevant except a certain form that it embodies, is the most characteristic mental trait of mankind.\textsuperscript{12}

Moving backwards in time to a more divinely-oriented worldview, we hear Plotinus encouraging us to look around us, and at the heavens: ‘All teems with symbol: the wise man is the man who in one thing can read another.’\textsuperscript{13} Later we need to reflect on what exactly constitutes a ‘wise man;’ however, for now – from this variety of perspectives – we can stay with the basic sense of symbol as being two things brought together, the one standing for, or re-presenting another. We shall now change tack slightly, and embark on symbols by way of signs. Having given some definitions of what symbol is, we may reflect on what it isn’t. And given that a high level of confusion exists between the terms ‘sign’ and ‘symbol’, this is a promising (if ambitious) place to begin.

Sign and Symbol

We can take as a relatively uncontroversial starting place, Tillich’s statement that ‘both symbols and signs point beyond themselves to something else.’\textsuperscript{14} In terms of guidance, therefore, both can be helpful. We could say straightaway, then, that both have the ability to move you on; to put you in another place, both literally or metaphorically. However, my argument is that the issue is not so much about whether or not one is ‘guided’ or ‘moved on’ by either a sign or a symbol, but about the process by which this guidance or movement is achieved. If one is simply looking for an

\textsuperscript{10} Avis (1999), 103  
\textsuperscript{11} ibid  
\textsuperscript{12} Langer (1956), 72  
\textsuperscript{13} Plotinus (transl. MacKenna) Enneads 11.3.7  
\textsuperscript{14} Tillich (1955), 189
unambiguous direction, then a sign (in its various and possible forms and contexts)\(^\text{15}\) can usually serve the purpose. One might want to take a decision, receive a clear answer and set about implementing it, or to embark on a journey (again, both literally or metaphorically) without wasting any further time on the process of deciding in which direction to go. But if the process of seeking guidance is, in itself, part of the journey, and one is prepared to spend some time engaging with this, then I think this is the territory of the symbol.

Avis’s distinction between sign and symbol is fairly brisk in moving on from signs to an appreciation of symbols. Having observed that ‘some [writers] exercise great ingenuity in distinguishing between symbols and signs, signals, indexes and icons’\(^\text{16}\) he quotes from W.M.Urban: ‘All symbols are signs, but not all signs are symbols.’\(^\text{17}\) He goes on to add that ‘symbols include signs for they incorporate signification, but symbols transcend mere signs.’\(^\text{18}\) And in dispatching ‘mere’ signs with some speed, he further observes that a sign ‘belongs to the ordinary course of life’ while symbols ‘effect a connection between the mundane and the transcendent, the particular fact and the universal truth, the present moment and eternity.’\(^\text{19}\) Tillich is fully aware of the overlap between signs and symbols, and the fact that these terms are frequently used interchangeably and, often, without precision. He comes up with an interesting and potentially useful category of his own:

Many things...like the water at the entrance of the Roman Church... were originally only signs but in use became symbols. I call them sign-symbols, signs which have become symbols.\(^\text{20}\)

Gershom Scholem, coming from a Jewish rather than a Christian background, speaks powerfully about the symbol. When he says, with reference to the Kabbalah, ‘the symbol signifies nothing and communicates nothing, but makes something transparent which is beyond expression,’\(^\text{21}\) he is not, as I understand it, disagreeing with Avis’s...
view that symbols ‘incorporate signification’, but rather – as Avis does – suggesting that they both subsume and go beyond the sign’s more limited function of signifying. In fact – even more powerfully – ‘the symbol does not simply signify, but also is…’ (my italics). Whatever may or may not be signified, a core issue for both signs and symbols is their clarity or ambiguity. This becomes even more pressing when we move on, later, to the subject of divination. Not all symbols are naturally ambiguous or unclear, where signs tend to be clear – in fact the reverse can often be the case. It is more to do with the attitude of the person looking for guidance. In order to illustrate this, we can consider a specific context.

An earlier distinction between sign and symbol

About ten years ago I contributed to an astrological book, in which the title of my chapter was Signs and Symbols – communicating astrology with the client. This may well sound as if the cart has already been put before the horse. Having stated that the first consideration will be the function of symbol, followed by its application to the astrological symbol, it now seems as if we have jumped immediately into the astrological world. In fact, I am choosing to start with this particular reference because it represents areas of personal thought, rooted in living experience going back thirty years. In this way it is clearer (for myself, at least) to judge how my current theoretical research on symbol relates to established practice. It is highly significant, in fact, to acknowledge at this point that this may be difficult. My ‘general’ perception of symbol has been overlaid by many years of astrological symbolic practice. To attempt to differentiate between a general and an astrological approach to symbol may, therefore, be somewhat self-delusional. However, I was engaged for several years in the study of literature before specialising in astrology, so there is a familiarity with literary symbolism to draw upon, both as a resource and as a useful foundation. I need to be vigilant, however, about where my current observations have their roots. One of the main aims of this thesis is to throw current and theoretical light on past, continuous practice. I am simply noting the possible pitfalls involved.

22 The full context for this is quoted in Wasserstrom (1999), 85. ‘As for the symbol, it is characterized by the fusion of two contraries, the great and the particular, or to use Schelling’s favourite formula, by the fact that the symbol does not simply signify, but also is…’ (Tzvetan Todorov)

23 This argument is developed as ‘the symbolic attitude’. The other major question, of course, is that of interpretation, which will be examined as we move towards astrological symbolism.

24 Radermacher (2000)
Sign versus symbol in *Orpheus*

In this chapter I concluded that the astrologer’s task of trying, by astrological means, to communicate with clients is both difficult and wonderful. The highly complex job of the astrologer as both translator and interpreter was discussed, and my argument was that the main problem lay in the fact that many clients come to the meeting with an astrologer looking for signs, and instead they are offered symbols. In differentiating between the two, I had various ideas. I suggested that signs (when portrayed as images) are language-free, and are therefore a universal way of providing information and guidance in answer to such questions as ‘What should I do?’ or ‘Where should I go?’ A symbol can share some of these functions and characteristics: it can be an image, it can stand for something, and in some instances it can offer guidance and direction. But in addition,

[The symbol] comes with a whole web of associations. It is something to dwell upon, and it may or may not lead anywhere. That’s why I have referred to it as a work of art, in the sense that it can be endlessly explored and re-discovered.25

In discussing it further, I referred to Maggie Hyde’s important work on Jung and astrology26 in which she quotes Carl Jung as saying:

Whether a thing is a symbol or not depends chiefly upon the attitude of the consciousness considering it…some individuals have a developed sense of the symbolic and others do not have it at all.27

And one of my main conclusions at the time of writing (1998) was that both the astrologer’s and the client’s ‘sense of the symbolic’ is crucial to the level of connection between them, and profoundly affects the nature of the meeting. It is enough, for now, to remark that my perception was that those clients who come looking for a ‘quick fix’,

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25 Radermacher (2000). In writing about Coleridge’s ‘rich’ idea of symbol, Barth likens the symbol to a ‘great play’ (in the theatrical sense) (16) and to a ‘work of art’ (19). Wasserstrom (1999), 93 quotes Henry Corbin on symbol as a ‘musical score…never deciphered once and for all, but calls for ever new execution.’
26 Hyde (1992), 69
27 Jung (1971). (CW6, paragraphs 814-829)
are those *without* the symbolic attitude; the ones who are prepared to engage in a longer process which involves a degree of self-reflection are those *with* the symbolic attitude.

We shall now return, though, to the function of symbol in a non-astrological context. Here, we shall pursue in more detail the question of sign-symbol polarity before moving on to a deeper exploration of symbol. For our purposes, the earlier distinction made between sign and symbol will now form a phenomenological ‘base’ from which to now consider some theoretical differences. The following list of attributions will serve as a starting place:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGN</th>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doing</td>
<td>Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Contemplation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>Empty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick</td>
<td>Slow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finite</td>
<td>Infinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I-It’</td>
<td>‘I-Thou’</td>
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By examining each of these pairs in turn, I shall elucidate – briefly – my reason for including them in this study.

**Object-Subject**

The major question of the subject-object relation is fundamental to all four parts of this thesis. It will be addressed from various angles within the different discussions on divination, dialogue, and meeting. For the immediate purpose of distinguishing between sign and symbol, the suggestion is that with a sign, one meets an object; with a symbol, one meets an entity: another subject. Within this present, fairly limited, context the word ‘subject’ is being used in the modern and broad sense of something living (and dominant), as opposed to an object which is mere ‘dead’ matter (and ‘inferior’ to the dominant subject). In this way, the living quality of the symbol can be more effectively emphasised.

Although Martin Buber’s subject-object distinction will not be discussed until later, it is relevant to make a fleeting reference to it at this point. He expresses it in his two modes of experience: I-Thou and I-It. He describes I-It as a mode of ‘experiencing
and using’ as opposed to I-Thou as a mode of meeting in ‘the real, filled present.’

Thus to ‘use’ a sign as a means of direction, guidance, and so on, is to treat it as an object. To meet a symbol – as one would meet another living entity on an equal footing – is to treat it as another subject. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s (Christian) approach to symbol is both poetic – which one might expect – and complex. He brings in the subject-object relation, as well as the difficult theological concept of consubstantiation, which will be addressed when discussing the symbol as sacrament. He also talks about symbol as ‘encounter,’ which is highly relevant to the subject-object question, and reflects the spirit of Buber’s ‘real’ meeting.

Peter Struck has written much interesting material on the symbol and its ancient origins. In relation to the current consideration of symbol as a (living) subject, he comments that ‘Neoplatonists could make the bold claim that the literary “symbol” has a strong ontological connection with its referent.’ He sees this as a development of the ancient concept of a chain of being:

This movement from surface to hidden meanings takes place entirely in the world of things “out there,” where one thing has some form of equivalence to another, due to their sharing some property in common...these theories rest on an ontological assertion that relationships exist, sometimes intuitive, often opaque, in the world of things.

He is, of course, talking of a pre-Cartesian world, where ‘things’ are also in some way alive: not seen as dead matter or ‘mere’ objects. Gregory Shaw speaks of how ‘the symbols themselves, on their own, perform their work.’ This is in a rather different context: that of a discussion on Neoplatonic theurgy. Within the realms of ancient theurgical practice, the symbol’s role is as a receptacle through which the divinity is enabled to be present. But although linking symbols to divine power is – at this point in my argument – to anticipate a later consideration of the religious nature of symbols

28 Buber (1958), 26
29 See Barth (1977), particularly Chapter 1, ‘Symbol as Sacrament’
30 Struck (2004), 187
31 ibid
32 Shaw (2007), 13
33 Struck (2004), 211 discusses theurgy within his study of the early history of the symbol: ‘The traditional theurgic rites center on the invocation of a god who becomes mysteriously present to the celebrants in a votive statue, through a rite of consecration. The key elements of the ritual are “symbols.”’ Shaw’s particular focus is on the theurgy of the Neoplatonist, Iamblichus. See Shaw (1995).
Shaw’s description of the autonomous power of the symbol is relevant to my current suggestion that the symbol can be thought of as an independent subject – certainly not as dead matter.

Several writers use words which seem to accord living status to the symbol. Avis describes it as ‘living, dynamic,’ and Uzdavinys talks of ‘ontological traces of the divine.’ Jung also refers to a ‘living symbol, i.e. one that is pregnant with meaning.’

Firth offers a rather different, more cautious view:

Despite the metaphorical language of some commentators I do not think symbols can rightfully be described as actors operating in their own right. I think people invent them, acquire them by learning, adapt them, use them for their own purposes.

He has more to say about this:

…there is a rather different sense in which symbols can be said to serve as instruments of control – that is, as instruments ‘for transforming subjective experience’ (Nancy Munn 1969). Here the emphasis is not so much upon the way in which recognition of symbols affects overt behaviour, as upon the way in which it transforms or conditions the intellectual and emotional framework or basis from which that behaviour proceeds.

My sense here is that if the ‘recognition of symbols’ has the power to ‘transform’ so effectively, one should probably accord the symbol itself with more than merely ‘instrumental’ status. And in fact Firth himself seems to be doing this elsewhere, when he comments:

…the symbol by itself appears capable of generating and receiving effects otherwise reserved for the object to which it refers – and such effects are often of high emotional charge.

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34 Avis (1999), 106
35 Uzdavinys (2008), 37
36 Jacobi (1959), 80
37 Firth (1973), 426-7
38 ibid, 84
39 ibid, 15-16
Doing-Being

The sign has the capacity to change one’s situation by helping towards knowing or deciding what to do; the symbol has the capacity to change one’s situation by affecting what one is, one’s being. Not only does the symbol affect the perceiver’s being, it contains in itself a ‘dynamic’ quality of being. The ‘is-ness’ of the symbol was alluded to in the earlier reference to the function of signifying: ‘the symbol does not simply signify, it also is…’ When Scholem, who writes intensely about symbols, says, ‘Something of the secret of man is poured into symbols; his very being demands concrete expression. The great symbols serve to express the unity of his world…’ he seems to be describing an ontological interchange between man and the symbols which can express something from within his being. Clearly, to attempt to talk about the nature of being takes us into waters which are far too deep for the present brief purpose of a sign-symbol comparison. This will be explored further when the religious, transformative and sacramental aspects of symbol are addressed. However, it is worth bringing in Mircea Eliade at this point, to prepare the way. In discussing the difference between sacred and profane, he talks about symbols,

…that are the common property of mankind [shown to us in] the great cosmic rhythms – seasons, days, nights... Every cosmic fragment is transparent; its own mode of existence shows a particular structure of being and hence of the sacred. We should never forget that, for religious man, sacrality is a full manifestation of being.

And in discussing the religious perspective of man in the archaic societies, Eliade comments that this homo religiosus believes that ‘the world exists because it was created by the gods’ [Eliade’s italics]. Moreover,

The existence of the world itself “means” something, “wants to say” something, that the world is neither mute nor opaque, that it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance. For religious man, the cosmos “lives” and “speaks.” It is only in such a world that he participates in being, that he has a real existence. This religious need expresses an unquenchable ontological thirst. Religious man thirsts for being.

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40 Scholem quoted in Wasserstrom (1999), 86
41 Eliade (1959), 136
42 ibid, 138
43 ibid, 165
44 ibid, 165
45 ibid, 64
This is fertile territory for several aspects of my approach, including that of dialogue and encounter, and will be picked up again later. For now, Eliade’s examples of ontological cosmic symbolism make a powerful statement.\textsuperscript{46} It is perhaps worth mentioning here Tillich’s comment that one cannot kill symbols; they can only die if the situation in which they have been created has passed.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, he is not questioning the ‘being’ of a symbol, but simply remarking that their life depends on their relevance to their context. Similarly, I would imagine, a human (or other-than-human) being depends on an appropriate and nurturing environment for its continued life.

**Action-Contemplation**

This distinction has much in common with the previous one of Doing-Being. A **sign** can change one’s direction, point one towards a certain course of action. One looks at the sign, and is then enabled to act and to move on (and away from the sign, which has now served its purpose; been used). The **symbol** is multi-layered and can be a focus for contemplation. This process of contemplation may lead to a change in the way one thinks and feels. It may also, of course, lead to action, but the difference is that the symbol is rarely ‘left behind.’ We have seen earlier that Avis makes a strong case for imagination in relation to the symbol, and this seems particularly relevant here. Having suggested that there is a broad consensus as to the essential features of symbolism, and that at its simplest, a symbol means imagining one thing in the form of another, he goes on to assert that ‘imagination is the milieu of symbolism.’\textsuperscript{48} If this is so, then it makes sense of this idea of the symbol not getting ‘left behind,’ since it exerts an imaginative power over the mind and can serve to remain as a potent source for change on many levels, and for inward contemplation, indefinitely: ‘By virtue of constant meditation, the symbol ends up being imprinted on the mind, and with its constant presence it is always ready to inspire it.’\textsuperscript{49} The later discussion on finite-infinite continues this theme of (endless) contemplation and reflection.

\textsuperscript{46} It is ironic (in this particular discussion where we observed earlier how the words ‘sign’ and ‘symbol’ are frequently used interchangeably) that Eliade himself uses both words in referring to cosmic rhythms. In quoting Theophilus of Antioch, who ‘appealed to the signs (*tekmeria*) that God had set before them in the great cosmic rhythms,’ Eliade continues in virtually the next sentence by saying ‘For the Christian apologists, symbols were pregnant with messages; they *showed* the sacred through cosmic rhythms.’ See Eliade (1957), 136-7. This is a good example of Avis’s point that symbols include signs because they incorporate signification.

\textsuperscript{47} Tillich (1955), 196

\textsuperscript{48} Avis (1999), 103

\textsuperscript{49} Evola (2001), Chapter 3
**Informative-Empty**

The three differences suggested so far have been relatively clear or distinct in the sense of being polarised. The next three pairs differ in a less polarised way. The **sign** has been described as providing information. The perceiver, then, is better informed and enabled to make a decision, to take action, and – if necessary – to move to another place. We could say that in providing this information, the sign has now fulfilled its purpose. The person moves on and away from it, and the sign has no further role to play for that particular person. It is simply ready to carry out its function for the next traveller who comes along; to be ‘used’ again, for as long as its information is relevant to its context. What, then, is implied in suggesting that the **symbol** is, in comparison, ‘empty’? As it has so far been described, it has the quality of a living entity, a subject. As such it can affect and change other living entities in their being.\(^{50}\) And it is substantial enough to remain, in its own being, as a focus for contemplation. How, one might ask, can this be seen as emptiness when it sounds as if — in its substance and its being — it is the reverse of empty?

To explore the implications of emptiness, we need, here, to consider the quality of translucence\(^ {51}\) — even, perhaps, of mirroring. One looks through the symbol, rather than at it. One looks at the sign in order to acquire the information that enables one then to move away from it. In this sense, the sign is opaque; it does not invite the perceiver into itself for further engagement. Rather, it deflects attention away from itself and towards the next stage in the seeker’s journey. The **symbol**, on the other hand, does invite further engagement. Rather than deflecting, it has the capacity to reflect, and to stimulate a process of reflection (hence the idea of mirroring). It can give back to its perceivers something of themselves, and — simultaneously — it can

\(^{50}\) ‘Change’ and ‘transformation’ imply a similar process, but the **transformative** power of the symbol is considered later. For the moment, this is simply a view on the ontological status of the symbol. Perhaps we should note that Jonathan Z. Smith is quoted in Wasserstrom (1999), 94 as saying, ‘The symbol, while possessing no ontological status of its own, has quite consistently been held to be transparent to the realm of being, of ultimate value.’ (my italics).

\(^{51}\) There is considerable discussion about the translucent quality of symbol. Coleridge, and later, Corbin, Scholem and Jung have much to say on the subject. The Eranos Foundation, founded in 1933 at Ascona-Moscia in Switzerland, was a potent centre for discussions on - among many things - symbolism, and the soul. Wasserstrom (1999), 85 comments that Eranos was described by R.J.Zwi Werblowsky, a ‘student and associate both of Scholem and of Jung,’ as ‘a gigantic symposium on Symbolism.’ Wasserstrom further comments that ‘transparence became, as it were, the colour of Eranos itself’. This theme - of transparence or translucence - is developed later.
open up, and through, itself to a further level of being. Its being, its substance, is full of potential. Thus, in this apparently paradoxical sense, it is by no means empty. But the function of its substance is to lead the perceiver through itself to another plane: to act as a two-way mirror. Thus the perceiver engages with the ‘full’ being of the symbol, and moves back and forth through it, as a ghost-entity might move through an apparently solid wall. Paul Ricoeur uses the interesting expression ‘opaque transparency’ when discussing symbol and allegory, where he compares the idea of transparency with that of translation:

…the symbol presents its meaning transparently in an entirely different way than by translation…It presents its meaning in the opaque transparency of an enigma and not by translation. Hence I oppose the donation of meaning in transparency in symbols to the interpretation by translation of allegories.

Adding to ideas of both Jung and Eliade regarding the difficulty of ‘translating’ symbols, Ricoeur seems to be giving the word ‘transparency’ a somewhat different slant, and we shall return to this important question of translation later when looking at astrological symbolism.

In this consideration of sign as informative versus symbol as empty, it has been suggested that the sign offers some kind of knowledge (albeit in the realm of the known or everyday) and that the symbol, while empty of mundane knowledge, is full of ‘being’ and can take us ‘through’ to another level of being and knowledge, which some might call the ‘unknown’. Under the later heading of ‘Finite-Infinite’, the question of known-unknown is picked up again briefly. Later, when we look at the issue of transcendence, some of these complex issues to do with forms of ‘knowing’ (and whether the symbol does indeed put us in touch with the unknown) will be addressed.

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32 Bringing in the word ‘level’ here anticipates a later exploration of the mediaeval fourfold hermeneutic, the ‘four levels’ model: literal, allegorical, tropological; anagogical. ‘The full understanding of symbols consists in the perception of the anagogical sense concealed in them; if anagogically understood and employed, they may even contribute to spiritual elevation.’ See Evola (2001), Chapter 3, on ‘Knowledge of the Symbol’.

33 Ricoeur quoted in Wasserstrom (1999), 92

34 ibid, 16
Quick-Slow

As with the informative-empty comparison, quick-slow can seem paradoxical. The **sign** can quickly supply information which can guide and direct. One glance from the perceiver may be enough to access the information, and allow the perceiver to move on. Sometimes, however, the sign is confusing. The process is therefore slower, and may involve consultation with other signs, or recourse to help from another source. The **symbol**, as has been discussed, is potentially a focus for contemplation and for engagement. This tends to be a slow, prolonged, and reflective process. Yet – and this is crucial – in the first meeting with a symbol it can be instantly, unmistakeably apprehended. It is as if the perceiver immediately understands, at some level, what he is facing. This instant recognition tends to be followed by a slow (arguably endless) process of familiarisation and assimilation. Goethe captures this paradox well in describing the symbol as a ‘living, instantaneous *(lebendig-augenblickliche)* revelation of the inscrutable,’\(^{55}\) and as ‘a vivid instantaneous revelation of that which cannot be explored.’\(^{56}\) ‘Instantaneous’ adds considerable speed to mere ‘quickness,’ and inscrutability would certainly slow things down, as one endeavours to comprehend it. Henry Corbin brings in the quality of spontaneity:

The symbol is not an artificially constructed *sign*; it flowers in the soul spontaneously to announce something that cannot be expressed otherwise\(^{57}\)… the symbol announces a plane of consciousness distinct from that of rational evidence; it is the “cipher” of a mystery, the only means of saying something that cannot be apprehended in any other way…\(^{58}\)

As always, Corbin writes poetically, and there is much, here, to dwell upon. The ‘spontaneous’ flowering of the symbol in the soul condenses, as poetry does, many meanings. There is much clever juxtaposition of ideas through his careful choice of words. He distinguishes the living, flowering quality of the symbol from the ‘artificially’ constructed sign. Flowering is normally a gradual process, but here it is spontaneous, with an almost cartoon-like speed. The symbol’s spontaneity has an open,

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\(^{55}\)Cited in Wasserstrom (1999), 90. Wasserstrom goes on to comment: ‘The Goethean symbol as revelation itself was then shared by Corbin, Scholem, and Eliade. Corbin used both of Eliade’s perennial terms for revelation, “hierophany” and “theophany.”’ The concept of revelation takes us on to another dimension, in striking contrast to the simple adjective ‘quick’. However, this important revelatory role for the symbol will be a significant area to consider, especially with regard to divination, in Part 2 of this thesis.

\(^{56}\) Shutz cited in Avis (1999), 107

\(^{57}\) Corbin cited in Wasserstrom (1999), 93

\(^{58}\) Corbin cited in Wasserstrom (1999), 93
joyful feel, in contrast to the quieter aura of the mystery that lingers behind it. Its
capacity to ‘announce’ something suggests the immediacy of the process. But this is not
so much revelation as the sheer dramatic impact of the announcement. What is being
expressed (which is from another plane, another level) can only be apprehended via the
immediate, flower-like beauty of the symbol.

It is vitally important to attempt to grasp something of this quality of immediate
apprehension if we are to get closer to an understanding of the symbol. Different
writers offer their own characteristic ways of approaching this phenomenon. Scholem
and Jung, according to Wasserstrom, ‘used the same expression for such symbolic
perception. The symbol, they said, was ‘understood all at once or not at all’.59 Eliade’s
conception is of ‘totality’ or ‘the mystery of totality’, while Scholem also considers the
idea of ‘Gestalt’. We are drawn (as Eros would decree that we should be) by the beauty
of the symbol. The question of beauty in relation to the symbol is interesting, and will
be developed in the discussion on eros (see p.49). Avis follows up his assertion that
imagination and form are the essential features of symbolism by adding that:

The centrality of form in symbolism brings it into close connection with
beauty, for philosophers of the aesthetic have generally identified form
(Latin species) as one of the attributes of beauty, along with radiance
(lumen) and the capacity to give pleasure (dilectio).60

It appears, then, that there is an interchangeability to the quick-slow quality of
sign and symbol – neither could be said to be exclusively one or the other. However,
perhaps we need to move ‘behind’ this to the level of intention, or expectation. In this
sense, the difference between sign and symbol is that the perceiver or seeker looks for a
quick exchange with the sign; and a slower one, with the symbol. The sign is generally
expected to provide a quick answer; the encounter with the symbol is recognised as
offering a more meditative experience. Thus, when the sign is unclear and does not
provide a quick answer, it could be seen as failing in some way – it disappoints or
annoys the seeker, and has not lived up to expectation. The slowing down of the
journey is not welcomed. But since the engagement with the symbol is expected to be a
slow process, the seeker (perhaps one should add, the ‘thoughtful’ or ‘reflective’

59 Wasserstrom (1999), 97
60 Avis (1999), 103
seeker)\textsuperscript{61} is satisfied with this. The speed with which the symbol is initially apprehended, which gives way to the slower familiarisation, is accepted as part of the process. There are parallels, perhaps, with the human phenomenon of falling in love: an instant experience of attraction that precedes the potentially long unfolding of the relationship. This erotic aspect of the symbol, and its beauty, will both be developed later.

**Finite- Infinite**

The implications of this final pair of qualities have largely been alluded to in earlier discussions: the role of the sign is finite or limited; the role of the symbol is infinite or unlimited. Barth, in writing about Coleridge’s approach, comments,

> What is included in this symbolic perception of reality? Potentially, it is unlimited in its scope: particular and universal, idea and image, new and old, subjective and objective. The imagination, which is always for Coleridge the symbol-making faculty, is the unifying faculty, and what it can unify is as broad as all reality.\textsuperscript{62} ...It is clear that symbol potentially encompasses the depth of man himself and the height and breadth of all the world, in and out of time. Symbolic knowledge reaches out to all that man can know.\textsuperscript{63}

Barth echoes Coleridge’s soaring prose in his elevation of the symbol. We might add to this notion a reflection on the interchange between particular signs and symbols, and particular perceivers; also on the idea of the motion or ‘moveability’ of both signs and symbols.

Some kind of graphic representation may help to clarify this. Let us imagine a particular sign standing, for instance, at a point where four roads meet: a crossroads. It indicates the respective destinations of the four roads which intersect. Also present at the crossroads\textsuperscript{64} is a small shrine containing a beautiful statue representing a god.

\textsuperscript{61} There will be much to say about the nature of the **perceiver** of the symbol. This connects with some earlier points: both about Jung on the symbolic attitude, and also about Plotinus on the ‘wise man’ as ‘the man who in one thing can read another’. It will also be relevant to the later discussion on the ‘four levels’.

\textsuperscript{62} Barth (1977), 6

\textsuperscript{63} ibid, 7

\textsuperscript{64} When this image came into my mind, I was conscious both of the classical echo of the crossroads where Oedipus’ fate was enacted, and the more general metaphorical sense of a crossroads symbolising a place where a decision must be made and a direction taken: the whole idea of ‘the road taken’ (or not taken), where one might indeed hope for a sign for guidance. With Oedipus, it was where three roads
Traveller A moves along the road and passes over the crossroads. He sees the sign and uses its information in order to continue his journey uninterrupted. His interchange with the sign has been brief but effective, and he travels on. If he happens to repeat the journey some days (or even weeks, months, or years) later, his next interchange with that particular sign will be equally brief, effective and transitory. He is in motion and the sign remains still. Each interchange with the sign is limited, and is quickly completed. Traveller B arrives at the crossroads, and instead of continuing along his designated road, he enters the shrine. He is awed by the statue, and its beauty has a profound effect on his state of mind. When he eventually moves on, he feels in some way transformed. The next time he passes over that crossroads, he enters again, and is again moved by the experience. Although the statue which represents the god remains in the same physical place, its effect on Traveller B has been a metaphysical one. Its beauty and its message remain in his mind and heart for the rest of his life. Unlike Traveller A’s separation from the sign, Traveller B has participated in the reality of the symbol. As Tillich puts it:

The difference between symbol and sign is the participation in the symbolized reality which characterizes the symbol, and the non-participation in the “pointed-to” reality which characterizes a sign.65

Whether or not Traveller B returns to that particular place and that particular statue, it stays ‘with’ him, and in his memory and feelings, as he moves on in his journey. It has, perhaps, changed his life.

This description illustrates something of the finite nature of the sign’s function, and the infinite nature of the symbol’s effect. It also illustrates the relative movement (actual and metaphorical) between two particular perceivers, and the particular sign and symbol with which they interact. The sign stays physically still as Traveller A approaches and then leaves it. It does not ‘leave’, metaphorically, with the traveller, since its function is limited to that specific place, and it has no practical or aesthetic role elsewhere. While the symbol also stays physically in the same place (in the shrine), the significant difference is that it can then move on (metaphorically) with Traveller B, and

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meet. In this example, I chose to have four roads, to echo the four parts of my thesis (with Buber offering both a sense of direction, and a place where ‘meeting’ occurs).

65 Tillich (1955), 190
– aesthetically speaking – it can stay with him for a limitless time. We could say that the sign conveys a limited message (about the location of certain towns) which is briefly of use to a potentially limitless number of passing travellers. The symbol in this example has a unique message for each individual who pauses to contemplate it (in his own way, and with his own question and his own needs). The effects of this symbol’s message move on, not limited to this particular crossroads, and can spread onward and outward like ripples in a pool.

Firth refers to Langer’s argument\(^{66}\) that symbols differ radically from signs by their greater articulation and presentation of concepts. Hence a sign is comprehended if it serves to make us *notice* the object or situation it bespeaks; a symbol if it makes us *conceive* the idea it presents (my italics). He goes on to say that perhaps a better way of expressing this is to distinguish the referents by their relative simplicity or complexity, since concept formation would seem to occur in both cases. If we apply this to the crossroads example, one could say that the relatively *simple* referents for the sign are the (choice of a) road ahead, and the prospect of a journey to a particular town. The sign, moreover, helps us to notice the object (the direction in the road) and the situation (the journey ahead to a particular town); it draws this to our attention. The symbol, on the other hand, refers to the relatively *complex* referent of a god, be it Poseidon or Zeus. The concept of these gods: their powers, their attributes, their requirements of a devotee, their imagined presence and the stories which surround them and the sense of awe they inspire, all combine to offer something which is rich and multi-layered. Our imagination is made to work; we stay with the images, and the images remain with us. The work of comprehension is only just beginning. With the sign, we have comprehended all that is necessary, and we are already on the chosen road.

Langer, then, suggests that it is better to shift the attention from sign and symbol to their – respectively – simple and complex referents. We have just seen an example of this, and her argument is a helpful one. However, her introduction of the words ‘notice’ and ‘conceive’ is also important, and deserves attention. When a sign serves to make us notice something, we are moved, as it were, out of ourselves and into (or towards) the referent: the ‘object or situation it bespeaks’. It is a process of perception.

\(^{66}\) Langer (1953), 26
When a symbol makes us conceive ‘the idea it presents’, it is a very different process. It is an act of receiving; or taking into ourselves. ‘Receiving (seed) also refers to ‘forming in the mind (to form or have a conception of)’.\textsuperscript{67} This connects with certain points I have made previously in distinguishing between sign and symbol: namely the living quality of the symbol; its relationship to form, and its capacity to be a focus for engagement. More enigmatically, the word ‘conceive’ raises the question of what occurs in the highly mysterious process of the interchange between perceiver and symbol. These ideas combine towards a sense of the symbol as a fertile producer, a ‘breeder’ of life. It has, in itself, the power to fertilise our minds and imaginations; to form concepts; to interact with us as we might with a potent lover. Avis is speaking in the same vein when he says, ‘…to receive what a symbol has to give us, we need to participate in it by imaginative indwelling.’\textsuperscript{68} Barth expresses vividly Coleridge’s eloquence on the idea of mutual dependence:

It is through the mediation of symbol that growth takes place in the subject, the perceiver or creator of the symbol. We are opened up to reality and reality is opened up to us. There is a kind of mutual dependence: we depend upon symbol, while symbol depends upon our creation and perception.\textsuperscript{69}

The sign, then, in the ordinary, everyday world of travelling from one place to another, has provided a useful connection; it has referred the traveller to something that needed to be known, and – moreover – was knowable; it has made the traveller notice something. The symbol, however, has connected the traveller to a rather different place: the world of the imaginal. What the symbol has helped to conceive in (and with) the traveller, will be endlessly explored via this and other symbols, but – in some sense – may never be fully known. ‘The road of the symbol’, as Corbin puts it, ‘leads out of this world.’\textsuperscript{70} Or, if we choose to put the focus on the traveller rather than the symbol, we might observe that ‘our perception of the symbol is never complete, because we ourselves are never complete.’\textsuperscript{71} In other words, our own imaginative and spiritual journey continues as long as we ourselves have breath. Our capacity to comprehend the unknown is limited, as is the length of our life, but through the power of the symbol to

\textsuperscript{67} Langer (1953), 26
\textsuperscript{68} Avis (1999), 103
\textsuperscript{69} Barth (1977), 17
\textsuperscript{70} Corbin cited in Wasserstrom (1999), 93
\textsuperscript{71} Barth (1977), 18
connect us with the infinite, we can expand our limited capacity, and continue to reach out towards the imaginal realms.

**The Known and the Unknown**

We have spent some time considering the sign-symbol polarity in terms of finite-infinite, limited-unlimited. This has again raised the issue of known-unknown (which was briefly referred to on p.28, when we were reflecting on the informative-empty polarity). A few further ideas about this are worth mentioning, before leaving the question of sign versus symbol. Jung is clear that symbols have to do with the unknown:

An expression that stands for a known thing always remains a mere sign and is never a symbol. It is therefore quite impossible to create a living symbol, i.e. one that is pregnant with meaning, from known associations.\(^72\)

Avis comments that ‘the mediation of symbols between the known and the unknown gives them their orientation to transcendence.’\(^73\) Although, to some extent, the idea of transcendence anticipates a later discussion, it is important to note what Avis later points out:

It belongs to symbols to mediate a reality or meaning that transcends the symbol itself. This need not necessarily be a supernatural reality, the subject of theology, the sphere of divinity. The transcendent realm may be the spirit of a nation, a tradition, a cultural legacy, an ethical or political ideal. But it always carries *a value greater than the individual*. The crucial point about symbolism is that there is no access to this transcendent realm apart from its symbols.\(^74\) (my italics)

He is saying, therefore, that symbols are the only way through to the unknowable, the more-than-human, in whatever way this transcendent, unknowable realm is described. Avis has also emphasised the primary role of the imagination as the ‘milieu’ of symbolism. It is perhaps worth making the important point, here, that imagination can be a way of knowing. Moving back to the era of the Neoplatonists, Plotinus has a view on what constitutes knowledge, and how it may be possible to convey it:

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\(^{72}\) Jacobi (1959), 80  
\(^{73}\) Avis (1999), 107  
\(^{74}\) ibid
The wise men of Egypt, I think, also understood this, either by scientific or innate knowledge, and when they wished to signify something wisely, did not use the forms of letters which follow the order of words and propositions and imitate sounds and the enunciations of philosophical statements, but by drawing images and inscribing in their temples one particular image of each particular thing, they manifested the nondiscursiveness of the intelligible world, that is, that every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom and is a subject of statements, all together in one, and not discourse or deliberation.\(^{75}\) (my italics)

Although Plotinus uses the word ‘image’, rather than ‘imagination’, it is clear that images stimulate the non-discursive (imaginative) areas of the mind. For ‘discourse’ and ‘discursiveness’ we might substitute other expressions which parallel the dominant modern paradigm of the rational mind. ‘All together in one’ is a nice echo of the twentieth-century phrase of Scholem and Jung, quoted earlier: all at once or not at all. It also anticipates Scholem and Corbin’s use of the term ‘Gestalt’, and Eliade’s ‘mystery of totality’.\(^{76}\)

If we return, however, to an anthropologist’s approach to the question of known-unknown, Firth has an interesting contribution to make:

That symbolization helps us to know cannot I think be easily denied. But what comes to be known thereby is another question. What the process of symbolic representation presumably does is to abstract some quality common to both referent and symbol and allow one to perceive more clearly, more imaginatively, a particular type of relationship uncluttered by details of the referent or reduced in magnitude to comprehensible dimensions. That symbolization is a way of knowing beyond this, a mode of knowledge in itself basically different from other ways of knowledge, is a view I do not share.\(^{77}\)

Firth is supporting the role played by the imagination in symbolic perception, but with certain reservations. He not only disagrees with the claims of certain ‘Symbolists,’\(^{78}\) but is clearly in a very different position from thinkers such as Eliade, regarding the important issue of whether or not symbols are the only way to have access

\(^{75}\) Plotinus (transl. MacKenna) *Ennead* V.8. 6  
\(^{76}\) Wasserstrom (1999), 97  
\(^{77}\) Firth (1973), 82-83  
\(^{78}\) For a further discussion on the ‘Symbolists’ to which he is referring, see Firth (1973), 30-31
to a deeper aspect of reality. Instead, he reverses things, and turns the spotlight on the knower rather than the known. He says that assertions (regarding otherwise inaccessible knowledge) have to be ‘looked at in the light of the general aesthetic and philosophical position of the speaker,’ and goes on to say:

Assertions that symbols provide a unique way of knowing the truth seem to be often equivalent to defence-mechanisms. A powerful way of arguing that ‘what I say is true’ is to assert that ‘I have a unique way of getting at the truth which is inaccessible to ordinary knowledge.’ This has been the route of the mystic in all ages.\(^\text{79}\)

In other words, he not only denies the validity of symbols as a unique path to truth, but insists that ‘it invites consideration of why such a claim has been made.’\(^\text{80}\) As an anthropologist, his role is to contextualize these claims; to consider them in their social framework. This divergence of opinion, then, raises a crucial issue in relation to the religious nature of symbols, and will have important implications for the function of astrological symbols.

To conclude this consideration of signs and symbols, there is another important observation of Tillich’s, namely that while signs can be replaced, symbols cannot. This brings up key issues about the arbitrary nature of signs. Avis comments that ‘Signs are usually conventional and arbitrary: there is no necessary reason why a red light should stand for ‘Stop!’ – except perhaps some residual symbolic value: red:blood:danger:stop.’\(^\text{81}\) We have noted earlier that many distinguished writers often use the words sign and symbol interchangeably. Jung (while elsewhere making clear distinctions between sign and symbol) in the following extract refers to language as ‘simply a system of signs and symbols that denote real occurrences or their echo in the human soul,’\(^\text{82}\) without apparently making any differentiation between signs and symbols. However, although he then goes on to talk of the ‘subjectivity of such symbols,’ when he might more accurately be talking of the arbitrariness of signs, he is in an anecdotal and amusing mode, and gives a nice example of how signs, as language, are arbitrary:

\(^{79}\)ibid, 83
\(^{80}\)ibid
\(^{81}\)Avis (1999), 106
\(^{82}\)Jung (1956), 12 (CW5 para 13)
My small son gave me an explicit example of the subjectivity of such symbols which originally seem to belong entirely to the subject: He described everything he wanted to take or eat with an energetic “sto-lo” (Swiss-German for “leave it!”). The child is using his idiosyncratic application of a sign i.e. “sto-lo” to refer, emphatically, to everything he desires to have. This use of a sign is intelligible both to himself and to his family, although it differs from other, conventional signs for the objects he is denoting.

However, to return to Tillich’s idea of symbols being irreplaceable, let us stay with our four-road junction for an example. When the actual, material sign(post) is eroded by wind and weather, it is easily replaced by another one with the same information, and its function continues to operate in exactly the same way. Perhaps, though, the sign-maker has decided that instead of inscribing ‘To Delphi’ in letters, he will draw an image of Delphi which conveys the same information, but in a different way. The passing travellers are unconcerned by the fact that it is now, perhaps, painted a different colour, or constructed in wood rather than stone, or has an image rather than a word. Their journey and its directions are unaffected by the replacement sign, so long as it still clearly indicates the destination of the road.

Let us speculate, however, that within the shrine, the statue that represents a particular god (perhaps Poseidon) has been taken away, and a new one for another god (Zeus) has been put in its place. To the literal-minded observer, a shrine is just a shrine, and one attractive statue is much like another (and, as it happens, statues of Zeus and Poseidon can look remarkably similar: it is their attributes, such as thunderbolt or trident, that distinguish them). To the perceiver for whom symbols are precise and potent, everything has changed. The devotional traveller, heading for the ocean and about to embark on a voyage, does not want to invoke Zeus at this stage in his journey. The symbolic power of Zeus simply cannot carry out Poseidon’s job. One could argue, of course, that one statue of Poseidon is easily replaced by another, and that the symbolism is unaffected. And that if the traveller has become attached to a particular

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83 Jung (1956), 12, footnote 7, (CW5 para 13)
aesthetic representation of Poseidon, then this is moving into the realm of idolatry rather than symbolism. But Tillich’s point is well made. Each symbol has a special function that is just itself. We might add that the potency or efficacy of symbols is not the main issue here. A traveller wishing to pray to Zeus would find the new statue of Zeus potent, just as his predecessor who needed Poseidon, found the previous statue of Poseidon powerful and efficacious. Tillich’s point is that each symbol, or representation, has a unique function. Moreover it can only be efficacious in so far as it relates to that function. His comment is: ‘[The truth of religious symbols] is their adequacy to the religious situation in which they are created, and their inadequacy to another situation is their untruth.’

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84 Tillich (1955), 196
The religious dimension of symbol

Tillich’s comment about the truth and untruth of symbols moves us on from the sign-symbol comparison to some further general reflections on symbol. Some of these have already been touched upon in Chapter 2, and we need now to consider them more closely. Tillich’s remark about symbols and the religious situation has not only moved us away from the differentiation of signs and symbols but towards the religious aspect of symbols. Symbols, as well as being of universal significance, have specific connections with certain important concepts: those of initiation, sacrament, and transformation. When investigating these in further detail, we shall also look at several important and relevant concepts, including the idea of *eros*, of symbolic participation, as well as the capacity of symbols both to conceal and reveal.

Unlike the previous section, where we could take a more systematic approach to the material, in this section the nature of symbol as both dense and multi-layered seems to require a more subtle, multi-layered approach. Wasserstrom, commenting on Corbin’s style of writing about symbol, notes that ‘these disquisitions on symbol tend to overlap and interpenetrate, in a recursive, intentionally rhythmic repetition.’\(^85\) And this is the sort of style that I shall aim for in this next section.

The fourfold hermeneutic

We shall begin with the religious nature of the symbol in early Christianity, and consider a mediaeval hermeneutic model. The ‘four levels’ of interpretation, as commonly used within the context of medieval Christian scriptural analysis are: literal, allegorical, moral (tropological) and analogical (mystical).\(^86\) Angela Voss sees this

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85 Wasserstrom (1999), 95
86 For some background on the use of this system within the context of medieval Christian biblical exegesis, see de Lubac, (repr. Transl.) (1998 & 2000). See also Flanders Dunbar (1929).
principle, ‘explicit in early Christian and mediaeval theology and the poetic theology of Dante’ at work within the ‘Platonic image of the Cosmos as ascending spheres from the material earth to the intelligible One.’ A popular medieval verse goes as follows:

The letter teaches you the facts
Allegory what you should believe
Morality how you should act
And Anagogue what to hope for. (Anon.)

This little verse conveys the sense behind the four-fold hermeneutic methodology and breathes an air of mediaeval Christian simplicity. While hardly great poetry from a literary point of view, it manages effectively to convey the sense of ascension: of climbing upward towards a spiritual goal. The structure and momentum of the verse builds to a climax with the words ‘Anagogue’ and ‘hope,’ reflecting the meaning behind the words. These four levels are not, however, as Voss emphasises, a process of moving away from the world to ‘some sort of immutable, abstract truth.’ This, she observes, is often presented as a criticism of Platonism. Rather, it is a ‘process of deepening perception or unfolding consciousness.’

Perhaps at this point we need to pause to consider the word ‘allegory’. In the earlier discussion on the differences between sign and symbol, we observed how the two words tend to be used interchangeably, despite their areas of divergence. A similar overlap can occur with allegory and metaphor, and this needs some clarification, without digressing too far from the current focus on symbol. Avis is particularly good at summarising large and potentially confusing areas of discourse. ‘Argument,’ he says ‘has raged since Aristotle as to whether metaphor is merely ornamental to already existing thoughts or words, or actually creative and constitutive of thoughts and words.’ He goes on to identify and contrast two literary schools of thought on this subject, namely, the classical (which includes analytic linguistic philosophers) and romantic traditions. The former – identified as the ‘analytic or naturalistic’ tradition – sees metaphor as ornamental; the latter – identified as the ‘synthetic or fiduciary’

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87 Voss (2004): 2  
88 ibid  
89 ibid  
90 Avis (1999), 93
tradition – sees metaphor as ‘constitutive’ or ‘incremental.' Avis’s conclusion, which is relevant to our discussion about symbol, is worth quoting at some length:

Whereas the naturalistic or analytical view of language takes literal truth as its ideal ‘speech situation’, regarding metaphor and symbol as concealing or distorting the truth, the fiduciary view of language holds that symbolic modes of speech, particularly metaphor, are not a mere adornment to be stripped away in order to reveal the reality underneath, but themselves truly participate in the reality that they seek to convey and induct us into it. The first approach entails the fallacy that reality can be known independently of language, that intuition is separate from expression. The second approach involves a personal commitment to understanding what linguistic symbols are capable of telling us: it is the approach of hermeneutics. Theologians above all need to recognise that any quest for greater and greater degrees of literalness is a wild-goose chase. All the significant assertions of theology are expressed in language that is irreducibly metaphorical.\(^91\) (my italics)

When Avis speaks of personal commitment and participation, there is an echo of Coleridge, another Christian writer and poet strongly identified with the ‘fiduciary’ or Romantic tradition. Barth comments that ‘the making or perceiving of a symbol, in Coleridge’s view, always involves…a commitment of self-involving trust and love as well as knowledge – an act of faith…a commitment of oneself to another.’\(^92\) In referring here to ‘theologians,’ Avis has in mind his contemporary theologians, rather than luminaries of the early Christian church, such as St Augustine or Thomas Aquinas.

However, it is worth pausing a minute to look more closely at what earlier church fathers had to say on this matter. St Augustine, in discussing the theory of figurative expression,\(^93\) considers allegory or metaphor, or the nature of poetry, to have the capacity to move us beyond a mere intellectual response. Thus a text or a work of art, in so far as they can affect us, has a spiritual purpose, and is therefore of value; for him, shallower artworks, ones that merely entertain, are not praiseworthy in the same way. Thomas Aquinas, in his biblical interpretations, went further, separating the literal from the spiritual sense and dividing the spiritual sense into three stages. This gives us the method of the fourfold hermeneutic:

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\(^91\) Avis (1999), 102
\(^92\) Barth (1977), 13
\(^93\) Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, see for example II.6.7
The primary signification, through which words signify things, is called the literal or historical sense. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it.94

**The literal level**

It is worth staying with the fourfold hermeneutic a little longer, since its principle is integral to our approach towards the full potency of the symbol, and we need, therefore, to describe the four levels in more detail. The literal level is straightforward to understand: it corresponds to what we would think of as rational, objective thinking. In a material world, it weighs, measures and speculates theoretically; it remains detached from its object; it describes things at face value; stands back from what it observes, criticises and states facts. In recounting stories it might make statements such as, ‘Christ changed the water into wine’ as a simple ‘historical’ description of what happened, with no deeper implications. In this sense it is the position of the fundamentalist. Another way of seeing it might be as ‘horizontal’, as opposed to that of the ‘vertical’ thinking implied in the human attempt to connect with the Divine Mind so central to many religious studies and forms of contemplation. It is important to note that the theologians’ view is that while this literal mode of thinking is detached from any underlying or ‘deeper’ meaning in a text, it is nevertheless the basis for the more esoteric understanding of the further levels. It is, then, a kind of ‘ground’ for the more advanced, spiritual way of perception in Aquinas’s threefold model.

**The allegorical level**

In moving to the allegorical level, we have to tread carefully. We are moving into the realm of analogy, where one thing stands for another, as has already been discussed at some length with regard to sign and symbol. However, the two traditions referred to by Avis, above, suggest an emphatic division of opinion in this broad realm of analogy. This division hinges on the question of whether or not we are involved in that which we perceive: whether or not we have a personal commitment to it. For the time being, let us move one step at a time and stay in the mediaeval world. This is a world of macrocosm and microcosm, where there is a universal chain of being described by Struck as ‘an ontological assertion that relationships exist…in the world of things’; a

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94 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Article 10 (text 1.2)
linking of the invisible realm of spirit with the visible realm of matter.\textsuperscript{95} Here, says Bonaventure, the senses show us God:

All created things of the sensible world lead the mind of the contemplator and wise man to eternal God...They are the shades, the resonances, the pictures of that efficient, exemplifying, and ordering art; they are the tracks, simulacra, and spectacles; they are divinely given signs set before us for the purpose of seeing God. They are examples, or rather exemplifications set before our still unrefined and sense-oriented minds, so that by the sensible things which they see they might be transferred to the intelligible which they cannot see, as if by signs to the signified.\textsuperscript{96}

In this world, allegory is the first step towards connecting our rational thinking and our sense-perceptions with symbolic perception. In other words, allegory – as the second level of the fourfold hermeneutic – is already, for the early Christian fathers, potentially part of the spiritual quest. It serves, as Gregory the Great points out,

\ldots as a kind of machine to the spirit by means of which it may be raised up to God...For the things which are known to us from which allegory is made are clothed in divine doctrine, and when we recognise the thing by an exterior word, we may come to an interior understanding.\textsuperscript{97}

In a twentieth-century world, however, where a split has occurred and no such ontological chain of being is acknowledged by ‘rational’ thought, Corbin can make the following distinction:

The difference between ‘symbol’ and what nowadays is commonly called ‘allegory’ is simple to grasp. An allegory remains on the same level of evidence and perception, whereas a symbol guarantees the correspondence between two universes belonging to different ontological levels. It is the means, and the only one, of penetrating into the invisible, into the world of mystery, into the esoteric dimension.\textsuperscript{98}

While one might feel that ‘guarantees’ is rather a strong, pragmatic word to use in relation to the mysterious nature of the symbol, Corbin’s definition of allegory is clearly expressed. In a modern world, it can remain as a literary device, as opposed to symbol

\textsuperscript{95} Struck (2004), 187
\textsuperscript{96} Bonaventure, \textit{Itinerarium mentis ad Deum}, 2,11
\textsuperscript{97} Gregory the Great, Proemium to \textit{Canticles of Canticles}
\textsuperscript{98} Corbin quoted in Wasserstrom (1999), 93
which – for Corbin – is capable of connecting us to a different level, the ‘world of mystery.’ Symbolic perception, for Corbin, would equate to the third and fourth levels, where participation or personal commitment is implied. This also has a parallel with the earlier discussion on sign as relating to the known, symbol to the unknown, where sign – like allegory – is limited to the ‘ordinary’ level, and symbol can connect us to another extra-ordinary level of knowing.

The moral or tropological level

What, then, is implied by participation, as we move to the third level, the moral or tropological level? From the word *tropos* or a ‘turning,’ we grasp that some sort of movement or action is demanded of the observer. He must ‘move’: both in the sense of moving towards a different course of action or way of life, and in the sense of being moved or affected by the other level of reality that he is facing. Here, we definitely begin to see signs of the Christian, medieval context out of which the four levels evolved. The idea of morality and moral teaching as leading on to some form of union with the Divine, is certainly in tune with the mediaeval world. As, indeed, it is with Dante, who was writing at an interesting time, almost at a pivotal point between the Christian fathers and the era of the Renaissance. With Dante’s work, we see how the literary convention often known as ‘Poetic Theology’ emerged as an extension of a methodology previously confined to the world of scriptural interpretation, subsequently lead to another way of relating to divine reality – through the imagination, and through poetry. In his ‘Letter to Can Grande,’ Dante talks about the four levels in relation to his own *Divina Commedia*.  

However, this level, together with the final level that follows it, are less readily accepted by the modern rational or secular mind. It involves a readiness to honour, and to be open to experiences which do not sit comfortably with our post-Enlightenment perception of how the world works, or with the demands of academic critical detachment. It also involves accepting that the imagination – and what is sometimes described as ‘right brain’ activity – is another, but equally valid form of ‘knowing.’ For esoteric practices such as cabala or astrology to be understood, the observer is required to stop merely observing, and to step over the safe boundaries of observation.

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inside the potentially dangerous and irrational territory of the practice itself. Yet without such participation, there can be no real ‘knowing.’

**The anagogical level**

The final, anagogical level is an even greater challenge. It requires us to consider the possibility of a level of experience beyond our ordinary understanding, and perhaps, fleetingly, to experience it. It is one thing for medieval theologians to describe such a level (Aquinas’s ‘life with Christ in heaven’); another for us to find a place for it in more secular and modern ways of thought. This is the pinnacle of what we referred to earlier as ‘vertical’ thinking,’ or, if we prefer to stay with what Voss describes as ‘deepening perception or unfolding consciousness,’ then we are in a very deep place indeed. However, to give an example of this desirable end in medieval Christian terms, and its gradual achievement through the four levels, we could have no better guide than Aquinas:

When I say ‘Let there be Light’ and speak of corporeal light, it pertains to the literal sense. If ‘Let there be Light’ is understood as ‘let Christ be born in the Church’ it pertains to the allegorical sense. If it is understood as ‘let us be illumined in our intellects and inflamed in our affections’ it pertains to the moral sense. If it is understood as ‘let us be introduced to glory through Christ’ it pertains to the anagogical sense.

In the twentieth century, the link between symbol and the anagogical sense can be expressed differently, and in a non-specifically scriptural context:

The full understanding of symbols consists in the perception of the anagogical sense concealed in them; if anagogically understood and employed, they may even contribute to spiritual elevation. In this sense symbols are endowed with anagogic virtue.

The reference to ‘spiritual elevation’ is considerably vaguer, and more broadly aspirational than Aquinas’s ‘glory through Christ.’ Voss summarises the implications of this medieval model, rooted in Scriptural tradition, and also manages to convey something more approachable for us today, as a process which:

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100 Aquinas, *Super epistolam ad Galatos lectura*, Ch.4, Lect.7
101 ibid
102 Evola (2001), Chapter 3
...gradually moves from the cause-and-effect, ‘out there-in here’ objectivity of our habitual mode of thinking to an increasing awareness of the unity of subject and object, until the kind of knowledge is reached which can only be described as spiritual in that it fully embraces both inner and outer, or psychic and material reality in a single act of perception. It is a model which allows something to be revealed as something we have always known — an innate knowledge of how we mirror the world, of an inner cosmos as vast and awesome as the outer one.103

This, then, gives us some idea of what may be claimed as the function of the symbol, if it is linked with the anagogical level. It has the capacity, according to writers and thinkers in the ‘fiduciary’ tradition, to bring about the sort of experience which Voss is describing. Whether or not one chooses to use the word ‘spiritual,’ such an event certainly promises something outside everyday experience. It is important to conclude our reflections on the fourfold hermeneutic by emphasising that the anagogic, or mystical, dimension incorporates the other levels; it does not merely go beyond them. ‘At this stage’ as Voss points out ‘all divisions are transcended and embraced, as all four levels become contained in one.’ 104

We have now considered the function of the symbol in an explicitly Christian context, linked to the third and fourth levels of the fourfold mediaeval hermeneutic. In doing so, we noted a gradual shift — around the year 1300 when Dante was writing — from a Christian theological approach to a wider, literary convention as the Renaissance gathered momentum: Dante’s ‘poetic theology.’ It is in this context, then, that we may now return to the concepts mentioned earlier in relation to the symbol. Three of these have a more overtly religious connotation: sacrament, transformation and initiation. Eros, participation and concealing/revealing, on the other hand, are not overtly religious concepts, and we shall start with these latter ones.

**Eros or uniting**

In first offering a definition of symbol in Chapter 2, we referred to the sense of ‘joining’ or ‘putting together,’ and of ‘one thing representing or standing for another.’

103 Voss (2004), 2
104 ibid
It is a large step from simple ‘joining’ to the full implications of *eros* and of participation.\textsuperscript{105} Nevertheless, it is a step that can be made, and in order to do so, we have to nail our colours firmly to the mast of what has earlier been described as the ‘fiduciary tradition.’ (see p.42) In other words, we are in the territory where metaphor and symbol are not mere ornaments to some hypothetical separate reality, but where they ‘themselves truly participate in the reality that they seek to convey and induct us into it.’\textsuperscript{106} We have already referred to Coleridge’s view, where he famously states that a symbol ‘always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible’ and that ‘the maker or perceiver is always part of the symbol, just as is, potentially, every dimension of external reality.’\textsuperscript{107} Avis shares Coleridge’s view: ‘Symbols above all connect…In symbolism *mimesis* (representation) leads to *methexis* (participation). Symbols have this power because in some sense they participate in the reality that they symbolise.’\textsuperscript{108} The etymology of the word ‘symbol’ gives the sense of union or of uniting. A further step in this process emphasises re-uniting: of not just bringing together, but of bringing together again, and Uzdavinys – writing in the context of ancient Egyptian theological doctrines – has an interesting comment on this:

The Greek term *sumbolon*…initially denoted a half of a whole object….which could be joined with the other half in order that two contracting parties – or members of a secret brotherhood – might have proof of their identity. Therefore the symbol appears and becomes significant only when two parties make an intentional rupture of the whole, or when the One manifests itself as plurality, that is, when Osiris or Dionysus is rendered asunder. In this original sense, the symbol ‘reveals its meaning by the fact that one of its halves fits in with or corresponds to the other.’\textsuperscript{109}

This line of thought reflects the emotionally-satisfying, erotic tradition of falling in love as a recognition of being reunited with a part of oneself, or – at a folk level – of Cinderella’s missing glass slipper being reunited with both her foot and the other slipper. Both situations lead to a ‘true’ union of hearts. Re-union is always more potent because of the absence of the beloved which precedes it; the ‘intentional rupture of the

\textsuperscript{105} See for example, the comments of Voss (2009), 44 on *eros* within the context of both divination and transpersonal research as a uniting force: ‘…for love – as the impulse of *eros* – demands the union of opposites.’

\textsuperscript{106} Avis (1999), 102

\textsuperscript{107} Barth (1977), 4, 9

\textsuperscript{108} Avis (1999), 108

\textsuperscript{109} Uzdavinys (2008), 40
whole’ referred to by Uzdavinys, or the rendering asunder of that which belongs together. The symbol, this ‘half of a whole object,’ has the power to re-join and is in itself a token of authenticity. The secret brotherhood knows, because of the symbol, that this is an authentic member of their group. Thus group members can separate; lovers can part; Osiris or Dionysus can be torn asunder, and it is the symbol which has the capacity to bring about a successful re-union: successful because it is, itself, the guarantee that this is a true and authentic re-uniting. Union leads naturally to the idea of conception or birth, and we explored the sense in which the symbol ‘conceives’ while discussing sign and symbol (see pp.33-4). Symballo is to reunite and diaballo is to separate or oppose. So one might say that the symbolic is linked with union, birth, and life; the diabolic or devilish, with separation and death.

We have already noted Langer’s distinction between a sign making us notice its referents, while a symbol makes us ‘conceive the idea it presents,’ which led us towards the suggestion that the symbol might be seen as a fertile producer, a ‘breeder’ of life (see pp.33-4). At the anagogic or mystical level we hear how the ‘fecundating, magical action of the symbol’ combines with an ‘energizing virtue, a similar stimulating power, and the virtue of spiritual elevation,’ and of how union is the key to this elevated state:

It is about union, union of the act of perception with what is perceived, union of literal and symbolic, world and psyche. The world no longer imitates the divine word, as in allegory, but becomes the divine word.

As all four levels become contained in one, we move to another mode of knowledge. The Neoplatonic theurgist, Iamblichus, takes us to yet another place when he describes this state as being ‘suspended from the Gods, spontaneous and inseparable from them’. And in bringing in the gods, we may now consider the function of the symbol in theurgy.

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110 Evola (2001), Chapter 3  
111 Evola (2001), Chapter 3  
112 ibid  
113 Voss (2004), 2  
114 Iamblichus, On the Mysteries, 1.111
Theurgy

Theurgy is, literally, ‘God work’. Struck, in his work on the early history of the symbol, notes the move from a Pythagorean use of symbol to that of the Neoplatonists after the third century C.E. when ‘the idea that symbols have the power to do things and not just say them reaches a new and determining prominence.’ He comments that the Greek term ‘symbol’ begins to develop in the hands of the Neoplatonists by functioning as a ‘talisman’ which he defines as a ‘token with some form of efficacious link to what it is supposed to represent.’ He traces this development through the protracted philosophical debate between two of Plotinus’s successors, Iamblichus and Porphyry, over the ‘efficacy and usefulness of rituals in the pursuit of spiritual ascent.’ We have observed earlier, in discussing the fourfold mediaeval hermeneutic, that Voss considers the four levels to reflect the hierarchical arrangement of the Neoplatonic cosmos. Thus, according to this way of thinking, the symbol is linked by a chain of meaning that descends from the One, through the divine Mind or Nous, to Soul, and downward to matter. According to this model, the aspiration of human souls and other lowly forms is to reach back upward to the One. According to Struck, this idea was commonly accepted amongst Neoplatonists. However, the main area of disagreement between Iamblichus and Porphyry was over how individual souls might undertake this upward journey. As Struck comments, Porphyry, like Plotinus ‘thought…that contemplation alone was sufficient, while Iamblichus considered that a program of ritual action was…necessary,’ and this programme, while differing from his predecessors, also bore significant similarities to Egyptian practices. So, for Struck, as the symbol acquires talismanic powers, Iamblichus makes it the ‘central link between the divine and human realms…(it) makes the impossible happen; it becomes the node on which the transcendent can meet the mundane.’ In his lengthy treatise, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* which refutes Porphyry’s position, he describes systematically how the symbol is used in ritual actions.

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115 Struck (2004), 204
116 ibid
117 ibid, 205
118 ibid, 209
119 ibid, 213
Within this context, the symbol has progressed from mere image – a reproduction of powerful principles – to something that contains traces of these principles; to finally being regarded as a *manifestation* of divine power. The theurgic symbol, then, is a receptacle of power, not a mere representation of it. For theurgists, the presence of the higher orders of the cosmos dwell within the symbol itself. Accordingly, the practitioner of theurgic ritual is transformed, not by his own powers of contemplation, but by the symbols themselves. Shaw puts a strong case for Iamblichus’ views on finding the gods in matter and for the efficacy of such practices, arguing against some critical scholarly opinion which portrays Iamblichus as ‘superstitious.’

The claim that gods can manifest in human beings (and similarly, the claim for the anagogical or mystical level of experience) sits uncomfortably with modern paradigms of thought. Yet more alien to modern ears is the concept of ecstasy, which is cited as the principal means by which the soul is able to achieve this goal of divinisation. And ecstasy, even for Iamblichus’ near-contemporary, Porphyry, was dismissed as a sickness and a delusion. To some extent, this discomfort can be eased: Iamblichus divides *ekstasis*, ‘when the soul takes in exchange another life and is established in another order’ into two species: the inferior and the superior, and enlarges on this distinction, thereby acknowledging the inferiority of the delusional kind. And the paradox inherent in theurgic ritual, in which ecstasy ‘transforms theurgists into gods, yet because theurgists are human, the gods become human’ is mediated by the power of symbols. It is a two-way process: the soul receives divine symbols and gods can then appear as men:

All of theurgy has two aspects. One is that it is a rite conducted by men which preserves our natural order in the universe; the other is that *being empowered by divine symbols*, it is raised up through them to be united with the gods and is led harmoniously into their order. This can rightly be called taking the shape of the gods. (my italics)

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120 Shaw (1995). 241
121 Shaw (2003). See also Uzdavinys (2007), 29
122 Wallis (1972), 107. See also Porphyry, *Letter to Anebo*
123 Shaw (2003)
124 ibid
125 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 184.1-6
We have seen, then, how the symbol plays a central role in the practice of theurgy; reflected on the etymology of the word ‘symbol’, and suggested that the sense of joining, uniting, and re-uniting can be linked with *eros* and participation. We shall now conclude this section on the function of the symbol, and move on to a consideration of astrological symbolism. This next section will show to what extent the functions of the ‘ordinary’ symbol, as they have so far been described, apply to astrological symbols. In the previous discussion, certain important concepts were mentioned, but have not yet been explored, and these will be examined in the light of astrological symbolism. These included sacrament, initiation, and transformation, and the idea of symbols having the dual role of concealing and revealing.
CHAPTER FOUR

ASTROLOGICAL SYMBOL

Introduction

The ultimate focus of this study is about meeting, approached via the process of dialogue; and as such, the concept of dialogue in this study will be limited to those areas where it pertains to meeting. ‘Meeting,’ here, is in the sense described by Martin Buber as ‘real’ meeting, and specifically implies that we are talking about a meeting between man and God, between human and divine.¹ In the previous two chapters, we considered in a broader sense the function of symbol. Taking things one step further, we shall now focus more specifically on how astrological symbol compares with these general definitions of symbol, and later on, look at those aspects of it that are particularly relevant to the concept of meeting. There are, however, some more fundamental issues that need to be addressed first.

It was stated in the introduction that the approach to astrology in this work is not a study of its cultural history but an exploration of its nature as a symbol system within the Western esoteric tradition. While it is valid to describe astrology as a symbol system, we need to consider the paradox inherent in such a description: the word system suggests a logically ordered methodology and reliably consistent results, whereas the nature of symbol – as we have seen – is autonomous and often unpredictable.² We also need to consider to what extent it is accurate to use the word symbol in an astrological context. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the word symbol tends to be used very freely. We have shown, for instance, that the interface between sign and symbol arouses a degree of confusion. In searching for astrological sources that might illuminate the nature of the astrological symbol, there is an extensive literature – both ancient and contemporary – devoted to the study and practice of astrology.³ However, only a tiny fraction of what has been written has any bearing on its philosophical roots.

¹ Martin Buber’s model of dialogue and his concept of ‘real’ meeting are explored in Chapter 8 and in Section Four.
² For a further discussion of this paradox, see the section headed ‘Astrology as a symbol system’ later in this chapter.
³ See the selected bibliography of astrological literature.
Various factors may account for this. Astrology, as we have seen in Chapter One, has existed for millennia in most major civilisations. Its writings, however, tend to be focused primarily on its praxis rather than its philosophy, reflecting the fact that its authors are normally practitioners rather than scholars or abstract thinkers. Also, much of astrology’s tradition has been oral rather than written. Working within the bounds of an esoteric tradition with an extraordinary capacity for survival, the astrologers’ main concern has been to keep their practice alive: a forensic examination of the roots of their own theoretical body of knowledge might therefore have seemed somewhat superfluous in the face of continual persecution.\(^4\) In a post-Enlightenment world, astrology shifted from being a religious threat towards its secular reclassification as a non-rational body of knowledge. No longer merely a superstitious practice, or indeed, considered to be a danger to social order and orthodox belief, it came to be regarded – after the seventeenth-century split between astrology and astronomy – as no longer worthy of the serious attention of serious thinkers.

Be this as it may, our immediate point is about its literature, more specifically any texts that address the question of astrological symbol. We have commented that the majority of astrological authors are likely to be practitioners, often without intellectual pretensions and of a pragmatic – rather than reflective – turn of mind. There are exceptions, but such authors are relatively scarce, and our astrological sources, therefore, will be somewhat limited. A primary source that is central to the question of symbol and who has already been cited in relation to the theory of symbol in the previous chapters, is C.G.Jung. He was fascinated by astrology, along with a number of other esoteric subjects, and conducted a well-known ‘marriage’ experiment involving the astrological chart positions of a number of men and women.\(^5\) Although most contemporary astrologers routinely refer to the connection between Jung and modern astrology as an accepted fact, very few have addressed this connection in a thoughtful or exploratory way.\(^6\)

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\(^4\) For a critique of the opponents of astrology, see the cultural overview in Chapter One. This is also comprehensively covered by a number of authors cited in the astrological bibliography. See especially Curry (2004), 49-53, 93-104; Spencer (2000), 4, 70-71, & 95-101, and Cornelius (2003).

\(^5\) The ‘Astrological Experiment’ appears in Jung (1972), 36. (See also CW8, paras. 867-915, 453-84. A shortened version can be found in CW18, paras. 1174-1192, 494-501.) For comments on Jung’s marriage experiment, see Aziz (1990), 223-4, note 7. Also see Hyde (1992), 130-4, 137-9.

\(^6\) For an interesting study of Jung, astrology and synchronicity, written by an astrologer, see Hyde (1992). Aziz, a therapist and lecturer on Jungian psychology and the psychology of religion, observes: ‘I am personally not qualified to evaluate either Jung’s use of statistics or his use of astrological material,’ a
Jung’s influence on astrology

Jung’s influence on modern astrology has undoubtedly been enormous. Given that this has already been assessed in the cultural overview in Chapter One, together with a consideration of his work on the theory of symbol in the previous two chapters, we shall now turn our attention to his work on symbol, particularly as it pertains to astrological symbol. While Jung’s depth and range of thought was extraordinary, it is acknowledged – by both his followers and his critics – that he could be self-contradictory. This was partly owing to a personal tension between wanting to be thought of as a member of the scientific establishment, on one hand; and to follow his own mystical leanings, on the other; and partly because his thought changed and developed over a very long and prolific writing career. At the root of his work on symbol is his theory of archetypes, and this, too, was subject to considerable ambiguity. Jung himself comments:

Not for a moment dare we succumb to the illusion that an archetype can be finally explained and disposed of. Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language. (Indeed, language itself is only an image.) The most we can do is to dream the myth onwards and give it a modern dress. And whatever explanation or interpretation does to it, we do to our own souls as well, with corresponding results for our own well-being. The archetype – let us never forget this – is a psychic organ present in all of us.

Since one of the fundamental questions of this study is whether or not astrological symbols are interchangeable with the archetypes, it might seem as if we are on slippery ground.

However, in order to make the connection between the archetypes and astrological symbols, it is worth summarising some of the background to the archetype theory. According to Jung, archetypes are patterns of images and ideas in the unconscious which exert a crucial influence on our lives. His theory – and this echoes reservation not often acknowledged by the plethora of writers on Jung. For this reason, Hyde’s work is particularly valuable.

Many commentators on Jung have, of course, described the nature and content of this ambiguity at great length in their writings. While these help to summarise and to clarify the differing theories, Jung’s own observation, quoted above, is interesting.

Jung (1959), 160 (CW9, Part 1, para 271)
his personal split—hovered between ‘ordering principles,’ implying a logical, universal nature (his scientific side), and his perception of them as living, autonomous numinous forces (his mystical side). Moreover, on the ‘universal’ side, there is an ambiguity between whether their qualities as concrete images and ideas are shaped by our inherent biological brain structure, or whether they are merely abstract psychic mechanisms, producing archetypal images and ideas. Effectively, we end up with a conflict over whether the archetypes are engraved on our psyche’s ‘in here’, or autonomous entities ‘out there’—jumping out of our consciousness in the psychoanalytic session via our dreams. In summary, Jung’s awkward compromise (although he never entirely let go of his theory of historical layers of the collective unconscious) arrived at a position where there are both archetypes and archetypal images and ideas. As he himself puts it:

> We must constantly bear in mind that what we mean by “archetype” is in itself irrepresentable, but has effects which make visualizations of it possible, namely, the archetypal images and ideas.\(^9\)

He goes on to say:

> We meet with a similar situation in physics: there the smallest particles are themselves irrepresentable but have effects from the nature of which we can build up a model. The archetypal image, the motif or mythologem, is a construction of this kind.\(^10\)

Despite his comment, quoted earlier, implying that the precise nature and origin of archetypes will ultimately evade explanation, and his bringing in of literary and poetic terms such as metaphor, myth and dream, Jung is always ready to bring in scientific analogies, too.

> With this ambivalence surrounding Jung’s theory of archetypes, we now consider how, in Jung’s analytic practice,\(^11\) archetypes are related to symbol. In an analytic session, the analysand brings up a symbol from his dreams. The Jungian analyst’s task is to identify the archetype underlying the symbol and to offer this connection to the

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\(^9\) Jung (1960), 124 (CW 8, para 417)

\(^10\) ibid

\(^11\) Since this study focuses on astrology as a (therapeutic) practice, in connecting it to Jung we need to focus on his psychoanalytic practice, rather than on the debates surrounding his theories.
analysand. In this way, the analysand’s conscious can be re-connected with the archetypal (unconscious) source of primordial energy. Jung speaks passionately of this energy when describing how the archetypes ‘appear in practical experience’:

They are, at the same time, both images and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. When there is merely the image, then there is simply a word-picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity (or psychic energy); it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some kind must flow from it...they are pieces of life itself – images that are integrally connected to the living individual by the bridge of the emotions. That is why it is impossible to give an arbitrary (or universal) interpretation of any archetype. It must be explained in the manner indicated by the whole life-situation of the particular individual to whom it relates.12

The importance of context within this description of the archetypes in action has considerable implications for our future discussion of the role of astrological symbols in the astrological therapeutic session. For now, however, we shall stay with the role of symbol in the Jungian framework.

According to Jungian theory, there is thus a movement between conscious and unconscious minds as the psyche of the analysand grows, and progresses towards individuation. He is not ‘stuck’ in the conscious ego, with all the negative effects that this disconnection from his primordial source of energy can bring; neither is he trapped in the unconscious, a situation that has the potential to result in psychosis. The dream symbol he has presented has a crucial role as mediator in this process: it has provided a source of movement. It is the link which enables the flow of energy that is the basis of psychic wholeness, and has acted as a bridge between conscious and unconscious. We can extend this notion further by bringing in Jung’s ideas about the religious nature of symbols. Jung equates unconscious psychic forces (which are both life-giving and life-destroying) with the energy of God. Such forces need channelling: there must, too, be some protection from them. Jung has argued that the Catholic Church, with its complex symbolic structure of dogma and ritual, offers this more effectively than Protestant practices. However it is important to note that Jung departs from Christian theology at the point where he sees dogma becoming merely blind belief, asserting that the

12 Jung (1978), 87 (CW10, para 53)
relationship with God must be psychically alive, and that this is achieved through the active, numinous practice of religious ritual. One might compare this with the rituals of the analytic session, where symbols from the unconscious provide the numinous energy that brings life to the intellectual, analytic process.

**Astrological symbol**

From the role of the symbol in a Jungian analytic context and its part in religious ritual, we turn now to the astrological symbol, and the question of whether or not astrological symbols are interchangeable with the archetypes. The astrological literature, as discussed earlier, has little to contribute. One of the few exceptions is a relatively recent – and radical – viewpoint expressed by Geoffrey Cornelius;\(^{13}\) and earlier study of Jung and astrology by Maggie Hyde.\(^{14}\)

Cornelius uses the fourfold hermeneutic levels of interpretation common in mediaeval Christianity as a model for his approach to divinatory astrology. In the previous chapter we examined this mediaeval model in our discussion of symbol, and it is worth looking in some detail at the way in which Cornelius adapts it to his understanding of astrological symbolism. Taking us through an astrological overview in terms of the four levels is, as he points out, ‘quite different to any previous description of astrology that the reader is likely to have come across.’\(^{15}\) Starting with the **literal**, he comments that most of the ideas contained in astrology and its contents can be treated literally, including its symbols. Moving on to **allegory**, he describes it as:

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\ldots\text{a meaning over and above the literal meaning, derived in an explicitly non-literal manner…from the symbolism and conventions of astrology. As against the ‘facts of things’ posited at the literal level, astrology as a whole stands as a total allegory for all things through which those things may be revealed, discriminated or inferred through the act of divination.}\(^{16}\)
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\(^{13}\) Cornelius (2003)  
\(^{14}\) Hyde (1992)  
\(^{15}\) Cornelius (2003), 282  
\(^{16}\) ibid, 283
In effect, at the literal level, the contents and ideas of astrology, including its symbols, are stated as fact; at the allegorical level the symbols are interpreted to mean something else, such as, for example, describing aspects of the client’s personal situation or predicament during a consultation. He then observes that the first two levels, literal and allegorical, may be observed from an objective standpoint. The observer can know and state the rules and contents of astrology, and know how these are conventionally interpreted. His position is one of standing back from the astrological symbol, describing what it is, how it is named, and what it represents. This is in contrast to the third and fourth levels, the tropological and anagogical, which require participation from the observer. The tropological level now involves some form of response from the astrologer or his client. The astrological symbol ‘speaks’ in such a way as to give ethical guidance within the context of the client’s particular situation or dilemma – an opportunity to change or ‘turn’ (tropos) his behaviour and actions. Finally, at the anagogical level – what Cornelius calls the mystical nature of symbol, or its symbolic ‘path’ – we move to areas which (as is often the case, in discussing the mystical) defy articulation. The symbol now not only guides and ‘turns’ the astrologer’s behaviour, it draws him inside – and makes him a part of – what is being shown symbolically; the astrologer may find himself appearing symbolically. This, in Cornelius’ view, ‘casts astrology in the light of religious observance, with its practice as its goal.’

Cornelius, then, is differentiating between ways in which the astrologer can relate to, and work with, the astrological symbol. At a descriptive and representational level (equating to levels one and two, literal and allegorical), it can be used from the observer position to describe a client’s current life situation or elements of it, and this can be helpful to himself and to his clients, and can greatly enlarge and enrich their view of the world, and their own imaginative lives. Moving to the next two levels, which are from a participatory position, both the astrological symbol and the astrologer begin to play a more active role. At the tropological level, the astrologer and his client are offered potential guidance towards ‘turning’ their own lives with the symbol, thus moving towards a more pragmatic plane. Not only does the symbolism affect the mind and the imagination, but a further step of action may be taken. The symbols are playing their part in helping the client to make decisions, and thereby influencing behaviour. It

17 Cornelius (2003), 284
is only at the final, anagogical level that the astrological symbol moves into its full potential, as mediator and equal partner in the religious life of the divinatory astrologer. Its showing, its appearance to the astrologer can have the full numinous impact of Otto’s mysterium, tremendum and fascinans.\textsuperscript{18} In agreeing with Cornelius’ position that the anagogical level puts astrology in the realm of religious observance, I would go further, in the light of this study, to describe such a state as ‘real’ meeting, similar to Buber’s model. This will be taken up in the final section on meeting.

	extbf{Astrology as a symbol system}

Having begun to explore some ideas about the nature and potential of the astrological symbol, we need to clarify one point. Astrology, in this work, has frequently been referred to as a ‘symbol system,’ and in the introduction to this chapter we commented that there was a paradox inherent in such a description. Its constituents, as a coherent body of knowledge, have already been outlined in Chapter One. It is undoubtedly a ‘system’ in that it is made up of named parts: factors that connect with each other in an ordered and consistent sequence. More than mere consistency, these elements connect with each other to form interlocking patterns of great beauty and complexity. It has, moreover, a set of acknowledged rules and tenets relating to the links between each component, and to its practice. Whether or not astrology is regarded as rational within the context of a ‘rational’ culture is not the issue here. Its form – in whatever way the implications and effects of its content may be viewed – is undeniably aesthetic: it holds together as internally rational; it can be defined as a ‘system.’

While systems can generally be relied upon to operate consistently, the same cannot be said of symbols. As has been shown in Chapters Two and Three, the nature of symbols – which have a degree of autonomy – can be unpredictable, numinous and surprising. This, then, is the paradox in the phrase ‘symbol system.’ Astrological symbols, as discussed above, can behave in an autonomous way at the anagogic level; yet at the earlier levels, as part of a system or language, they behave predictably. The associative links attached to a particular symbol, however, may surprise the uninitiated.

\textsuperscript{18} For a summary of Rudolf Otto’s description of the religious experience, see Eliade (1959), 8-10.
observer by their apparently random nature. But they are not in any way random: they conform to some thread, pattern or vertical ‘line’ that connects their meaning. Nevertheless, such meanings tend to connect at a hidden or invisible level, and it is precisely this lack of evident (rational or causal) connection that leads to the criticism of irrationality which is levelled at astrology. Thus the non-astrologer perceives no connection and is effectively ‘blind’ to the ‘meaningful’ appearance of a symbol. For the astrologer, on the other hand, who is familiar with the associative links behind an astrological symbol, there is likely to be an immediate recognition. This recognition often carries a powerful emotional charge, since symbols can appear or present themselves quite unexpectedly and dramatically.

**Astrological symbols and vertical thinking**

Having introduced the concept of hidden connection, we need to review a point made earlier in discussing general aspects of the symbol. The mediaeval way of thinking – of ‘correspondences’ – underpins the astrological symbol system. Vertical thinking is linked with the invisible (vertical) realm of spirit; horizontal thinking with the visible (horizontal) realm of matter, and this has ancient roots. This mediaeval background was discussed in the previous two chapters, and we are now concerned with the way it connects with astrological thinking. Thorwald Dethlefsen, a psychologist with a background in esoteric traditions, talks of this ‘inner structure and way of thinking’ as ‘a typical esoteric discipline.’ Having commented that, for human beings, in confronting the multiplicity of forms in the world of appearances ‘we feel the need to bring order into this multiplicity,’ he goes on to differentiate between two ways of

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19 The adjective ‘uninitiated’ is used here, deliberately, and as a metaphorical description both of the non-astrologer and of the non-symbolically-oriented observer – it does not imply a more literal association with ancient or classical initiation rites. Nevertheless, ‘uninitiated’ is a more powerful (and less clumsy) way of describing the non-symbolically-oriented observer. Moreover, as we shall show, there is, for astrologers, an element of initiation as they move through the levels of interpretation, especially at the final level.
20 See Struck (2004), 187
21 Dethlefsen (1984), 65
22 ibid, 66
forming categories:

The first way is to create overall categories (e.g. plant, animal) …which have characteristics in common. In this way there emerges a division of reality into levels (such as the animal -, vegetable -, mineral kingdom). The second way is to seek units from which multiplicity arises…both the doctrine of the four elements and the presocratic atomic model are based on this approach…Such systems make it possible to reduce the manifold forms around us to a few basic qualities.23

These ‘few basic qualities’ or principles came to be related to the visible heavenly bodies, which were given names corresponding to the principles they represented. The ‘wise men of antiquity were able, through considered observation, to discern seven primal principles’24 – hence the classical seven principles of astrology and the great ‘natural’ symbols in the heavens.

Dethlefsen’s argument is for a complete openness of mind in interacting with the phenomenal world, and – through investigating various esoteric traditions as a more subtle way of thinking about reality – to achieve an encounter with the authority man calls God. His approach, then, reflects the aim of this study, namely to show the astrological symbol system as a way of meeting the divine. Another approach to astrological symbolism, that of Michael Harding, offers a critique of Jung’s concepts and comes from a phenomenological and existential perspective. In discussing astrological symbols he speaks of starting with a ‘core meaning’ and allowing this basic image to ‘spread out, to diffuse and reach the edges of its possibilities.’25 He goes on to say:

We treat the symbol as a spider’s web of linked affinities, each strand leading further away from the essence, but inextricably joined to it through an unbreakable network of associations. The clearer we understand the symbol and the more we have lived it, the further we can pursue the paths it takes.26

23 Dethlefsen (1984), 66
24 ibid, 71
25 Harding (1992), 135
26 ibid, 135
Harding’s phrase ‘the more we have lived it’ has an important resonance with Cornelius’ concept of ‘speculative’ and ‘realised’ interpretation. Taking a less radical line than Cornelius, Harding continues with his definitions:

We can think of an astrological symbol as a principle, as an instinct or as a source of energy that permeates our experience…or we may see it more traditionally as a clear chain of connections rigidly following the hierarchical order of its ancient rulerships… Either way we shall get a sense that there is a coherent inner purpose being expressed. We are experiencing not a random collection of images and events…but a clearly defined sequence of principles spreading out in the world, resonating in each new occurrence.\(^{27}\)

There are a number of echoes here, as well as differences between Harding, Dethlefsen and Jung: ‘principle’ reflects Dethlefsen’s approach; ‘instinct’ reminds us of one of Jung’s definitions of the archetypes, as does ‘source of energy.’ Harding, though, is keen to get away from a rigid ‘chain of connections,’ and instead, favours a metaphor of ‘spreading out’ in the manner of a spider’s web. He makes an interesting case for the way in which an astrological symbol both conceals and reveals itself: in his description of the way it is discovered, he creates a poetic and subtle picture of its capacity to be simultaneously both elusive and unmistakeable:

We may need to hunt for it carefully…to tease out the thread that runs through disparate occurrences. When we find it, we recognise it at once. We know again that we are facing something that is quite unambiguous; a clear principle; a pure energy…it is unmistakeable… however it is covered or disguised.\(^{28}\)

The idea of a symbol’s capacity simultaneously to conceal and reveal was introduced in the previous chapter, when discussing the universal chain of being.\(^{29}\) This concept, as we have emphasised earlier, is implicit in vertical thinking, which links the invisible (concealed) with the visible (revealed). Mediaeval man reaches the invisible realm of spirit through vertical thinking; the visible realm of matter relates to horizontal thinking. What is interesting is the no-man’s land between the two realms – the borderline area. Astrological symbols, like their non-astrological counterparts, exist along a spectrum: at

\(^{27}\) Harding (1992), 135  
\(^{28}\) Harding (1992), 135-6  
\(^{29}\) See my earlier discussion of this topic on pages 43-44.
one end they are instantly recognisable, unmistakeable and unambiguous; at the other, they are in a mysterious region where the symbolist may have to hunt down their meaning, or – more importantly – allow it to unfold over time, and through further manifestations in life events.

**Jung and amplification**

Harding does not, as Cornelius does, talk explicitly of allegory or extended metaphor. One might argue, though, that his portrayal of ‘complex symbols’ is another way of talking of something similar. He describes them as holding ‘an interior latticework of meaning’ which:

…may materialise as events or feelings, but are never completely one or the other. They are more an intricate series of possibilities, always embracing the essence of their significators, but capable of infinite expression.\(^\text{30}\)

Before moving on, it is worth looking further at the connection between Harding’s view of the astrological symbol as an ‘intricate series of possibilities,’ with that of Cornelius’ ‘extended metaphor’ and Jung’s practice of ‘amplification.’ We may say that Jung arrived at his theory of the collective unconscious via his own disturbing dreams and his powerful latent interest in psychosis, mythology, and comparative religion. Indeed, he came to think that much unconscious material was indistinguishable from traditional myths and folklore, and that they must have a common origin. Ultimately, in his own longstanding practice, Jung felt that a knowledge of myth and of comparative religion was a prerequisite for being able to understand and ‘amplify’ the psychic material of his patients.\(^\text{31}\)

Similarly, while astrologers may be able to attain a basic grasp of astrological symbols and their interpretation at – say – the first and second ‘levels’, their ability to work at a further level with symbols will depend on the depth of the astrologers’ own background, and familiarity with mythological and religious symbolism. Liz Greene,  

\(^{30}\) Harding (1992), 136  
\(^{31}\) Shamdasani (2009), *Introduction*, 197
an astrologer and Jungian analyst, has – as Hyde points out – pioneered the Jungian technique of amplification in astrological practice:

Before her work, few astrologers had much notion of how to evoke the numinous through symbols. Astrology has been brought to life for many astrologers by the use of myths and alchemical analogies.  

Greene, herself, talks of how she uses psychological material to ‘amplify the astrological picture so that we can see a living dynamic at work in the chart, rather than a fragmented list of character qualities.’

But while crediting Greene with this achievement, namely of introducing Jungian practice ‘in direct response to the desire for a level of meaning which astrological art had been unable to offer,’ Hyde is critical of the ‘loose and undisciplined approach it can engender.’ In support of her argument, she cites a distinction made by the seventeenth-century astrologer, Morin de Villefranche, between two ways in which astrological symbols may be interpreted: as ‘universals’ or ‘particulars,’ and gives the example of the (astrological) Moon as mother as a universal meaning. She then points out that as soon as the horoscope is cast for a particular person at a specific time and place, it (the Moon) will fall in a ‘house’ of the horoscope and then take on a particular meaning which may not, in fact, show the mother at all. Jung’s concept of the archetype, Hyde asserts, is only comparable to an astrological symbol when the astrological symbol is considered as a ‘universal,’ and her criticism of psychological astrologers is levelled at a situation where there is exclusive use of the symbol as a universal (an archetype) and their neglect of its ability to carry particular meaning for the client’s unique situation. In agreeing with Hyde’s point, Cornelius comments that ‘ordinary horoscope interpretation draws on only a fraction of a planet’s potential symbolic range of meaning’ and it is at this point that he goes on to conclude that a more accurate description of what astrologers are doing is closer to allegory or extended metaphor.

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32 Hyde (1992), 91
33 Greene & Sasportas (1987), 313
34 Hyde (1992), 91
35 For an explanation of the term ‘house’, see Appendix A. It is used to denote one of the twelve sections into which the horoscope is divided.
36 Cornelius (2003), 287
Astrology as allegory

Cornelius, then, agrees with Hyde’s distinction between universal and particular, which means that only astrology’s universal symbols can be linked with Jung’s archetypes. In making a thorough examination of the similarities and dissimilarities between Jung’s work on symbol and astrology’s symbols, he makes a number of pertinent comments. Earlier, we noted Dethlefsen’s linking of seven basic principles to the seven great heavenly bodies. Cornelius elaborates on this idea by making a further distinction between what he terms ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ symbols:

Astrology constructs its major significations from natural things treated symbolically – the literally observed objects, Sun, Moon and planets. We can easily distinguish the astrological Sun taken as a symbol from the literal Sun of non-symbolic experience, including astronomy.\(^{37}\)

He uses the term ‘significator’ for when the astrological symbol is being used in a particular sense – in other words, when it is placed in a context, such as one of the houses of a client’s horoscope. We have already suggested earlier (p.63) that the concealed and revealed aspects of an astrological symbol exist on a spectrum from ‘unmistakeable’ to ‘needing to be hunted out.’ Cornelius suggests another spectrum for the astrological significator as opposed to the notion of the ‘true’ symbol. Using the Cross as an example of a profound and ‘true’ symbol (which can also function as a sign) he comments:

There is a marked difference in level between asserting the whole horoscope, or the great cross of the four angles, as a symbol, and astrology’s familiar locating of a specific significator...If we choose to call astrological significators symbols, then they are at a different end of the symbolic spectrum to the mandala or the Cross.\(^{38}\)

If, as Cornelius suggests, astrology is an ‘omniscopic’ system, then it is able to symbolise ‘all things that can be conceived in the imagination.’\(^{39}\) Its finite number of symbols must repeatedly serve to describe an infinite number of situations in the world.

\(^{37}\) Cornelius (2003), 286  
\(^{38}\) ibid, 287  
\(^{39}\) ibid, 288
It is the specific, finite context of each case of interpretation that defines how an infinite set of references will be symbolised. Cornelius likens the whole astrological allegorical system to a game with its own set of rules, which functions in the same way as chess. He is clear that the ‘catch-all’ term of symbolism should rather be understood as allegory, to avoid some of the confusion that arises from equating Jung’s archetypes with astrological symbol. Perhaps his most important point is that, within the context of astrology, as in any game we are only saying it is ‘as if’ rather than ‘it really is.’ Understood as extended metaphor, the poetry of astrological symbolism is free to conduct its poetic dance.

Astrological glyphs

Within this study, then, ‘symbol system’ implies that astrology is an internally rational and ordered body of knowledge which nevertheless contains certain components, namely its symbols, which are capable of disorderly and unpredictable activity. We need now to clarify a further point about the astrological use of the word symbol, and this has to do with its graphic symbols, or ‘glyphs.’ The main constituents of the astrological system are the ten planets, including the sun and moon, and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, all of which are visually represented in the chart by a series of glyphs.\(^{40}\) These might more correctly be described as pictographs (OED definition: a pictorial symbol or sign; a writing or record consisting of pictorial symbols) since the marks denoting the zodiacal signs – most of whose referents are animals – mainly bear a recognisable visual resemblance to their referents; also, sometimes, to the constellations after which they are named. The glyphs for the planets are different, in that they are made up of a combination of three symbolic shapes, namely circle, semicircle (or crescent), and cross.\(^{41}\) These, then, are less like pictographs and more akin to a graphic, esoteric code. The word ‘glyph,’ on the other hand, appears to have a technological meaning connected with engraving or letter-press printing (OED

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\(^{40}\) There are a large number of other factors represented by glyphs which can be shown in the chart, but these need not concern us here. Astronomically speaking, the Sun is a star, and the Moon a satellite of the Earth, but they are normally – for convenience – described as planets in the astrological context.

\(^{41}\) In the astrological domain, the circle represents spirit; the semi-circle, soul or mind; the cross, matter. The different combinations of these shapes (for the glyph of each planet) relate to the particular qualities represented by that planet. For example, the glyph of Jupiter has the semi-circle above the cross, whilst the glyph of Saturn has the cross above the semi-circle. This reflects the more earthbound, physical nature of Saturn as opposed to the more philosophical or spiritual nature of Jupiter. Many astrologers, however, would probably learn, and use, the planetary ‘glyphs’ without being aware of this esoteric code.
definition: a sculptured mark or symbol). Nevertheless, ‘glyph’ is the word commonly used by astrologers to refer to their visual pictographs.

We have seen how, in a general sense, the word symbol tends to be used loosely, and how it is often used to speak of what, strictly, is only a sign. In an astrological context, the word symbol is also loosely employed to cover both the pictographs in the chart and the celestial bodies to which they refer. However, this is simply a question of common usage: a more telling observation concerns the effect of these pictographs.

As Spencer puts it:

…an unnecessary mystique clings to charts, spun mainly from their being written in unfamiliar glyphs rather than words. The glyphs are simply shorthand and are easily learned…Alternatively, the chart, with its degree marks, numbers and geometric configurations, is presented as cosmic mathematics, comprehensible only to the higher mind of the trained astrologer. This conceit has been pushed by astrology itself.42

He comments later that the chart, with all its complex factors, resembles a ‘cryptogram, requiring endless study to decipher.’ 43 We shall be addressing in Chapter Nine the subject of the astrologer as magician, however, it is worth noting here, in the context of our discussion on astrological symbol, how these glyphs can serve to mystify or impress the observer. Their referents – the great celestial bodies of the solar system – add grandeur and majesty; their visual representations in the chart create an aura of arcane wisdom. As we have seen, one of the main characteristics of symbol in general is both to conceal and to reveal, and we have another example of this strange spectrum in astrology’s symbol system: the code of the pictorial symbols – listed in any, easily-available astrological textbook – apparently conceals hidden information; it needs deciphering; and it creates an ‘unnecessary mystique.’ Meanwhile the great natural objects – their referents, the sun, moon and planets – sail across the sky in all their revealed glory. Yet, in my experience as an astrologer, the multiple meanings with which they are associated sometimes appear with a similar, unmistakeable clarity; and sometimes need to be ‘hunted down.’

42 Spencer (2000), 61
43 ibid, 63
Translation and interpretation

Having made a distinction between the usage of the word symbol in the astrological context, as referring both to the great ‘natural’ symbols in the heavens, and to the glyphs that denote them, it may be helpful to pursue this distinction, since it underlines a fundamental issue in the hermeneutics of astrology. In the previous chapters on symbol, one of the main observations – derived from Jung – has been that the symbol connects us with the unknown, the sign with the known.\textsuperscript{44} Within the practice of astrology, decoding and deciphering its glyphs is one step; making an interpretation about what they represent is another. We may, for convenience, call these two steps translation and interpretation.\textsuperscript{45} To ‘translate’ is relatively straightforward: anybody who wishes to can quickly learn to ‘read’ a chart, in terms of its coded sign-symbols. It is simply a feat of memory, and as Spencer points out, it is a code that is easily learned.\textsuperscript{46} To ‘interpret’ takes us to a different place altogether. Here, we have to move into the realm of imaginative association: this is the art of Hermes.

Nevertheless, as we have seen in Cornelius’ comments in his work on the four hermeneutic levels, described above, the ‘levels’ of astrological interpretation may be understood as distinct from each other, yet also form a continuous, integrated flow of meaning. Similarly, in our earlier discussion of the fourfold mediaeval hermeneutic, Voss pointed out that ‘all divisions are transcended and embraced, as all four levels become contained in one.’\textsuperscript{47} With Cornelius’ astrological take on the four levels, the literal and allegorical are related to the observer position; the tropological and anagogical to the participatory position. Yet a skilled and intuitive astrologer may operate at the tropological level without the profound and reciprocal participation implied by the anagogical. There is participation, but it falls short of the religious nature of the anagogical. Thus the final two levels, while linked by an element of participation, may still be regarded as two distinct stages of ‘progress.’ We could relate this back to our observations on the two different forms of usage for the word symbol in the astrological context and see that the first, literal level might correspond to the

\textsuperscript{44} Jacobi (1959), 80
\textsuperscript{45} See Radermacher (2000), 175. For an extended discussion of this see 157-189.
\textsuperscript{46} For example, one of the astrological student’s first lessons will be to memorise that a certain glyph represents the sign of Scorpio; another represents the planet Mercury, and so on. This is basic learning by rote.
\textsuperscript{47} Voss (2004), 2
familiarising and memorising of the glyphs, and the simple translation of one thing to stand for another, where no more than memory is required. At the second, allegorical, level, there is a combination of memory and of skill in synthesis, which might be equated with the skills of using language. Here, the sign-symbols must be combined to denote more complex ideas.

The astrologer still ‘observes’: stands apart from the translating process, but is nevertheless involved in a skill which requires considerable sensitivity and intuition, and takes many years to hone and develop.

At the third, tropological, level, a degree of interpretation comes into play that is more intensely focused on the symbols as they connect with a particular situation in the world. The astrologer is by now so well-versed in his translating craft that he relates to the sign-symbols as part of his own intellectual and emotional vocabulary without any conscious translation. He works with them in such as way as to perceive his own and his client’s choices and possible ‘turns’ in life. Something of the power of the great natural symbols of the planets and of the zodiacal signs starts to inform his process. The symbols are playing their own part; there are the beginnings of a dialogue between astrologer and symbol. But it is only at the final, anagogical, level, that the symbols come into their full potential, as part of a religious ‘path.’ Here they speak with such profound impact, that the astrologer’s – and the client’s – life is not merely ‘turned’ but transformed.

With a retrospective glance at symbols on a spectrum from the known to the unknown, it is interesting to pick up a point made earlier regarding the astrological glyphs. It might seem ironic that these are easily known and readily accessible, yet they have the power to create an aura of mystery and concealment to the non-astrologer. When, however, the divinatory astrologer is at the fourth level – potentially in an encounter with the divine or the unknown: Otto’s ‘wholly other’ – there is an overwhelming sense of recognition. As Harding put it, earlier: ‘we know again that we are facing something that is quite unambiguous…it is unmistakable.’ This is the power of the participating astrological symbol – at the fourth level, and at its fullest potential – to give the participating astrologer an unmistakable encounter with the divine, in whatever way the divine may be understood.

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48 See Cornelius (2003), 287-8 for detailed examples of this.
49 Otto (1950), 25-29
SECTION TWO

DIVINATION
CHAPTER FIVE

DIVINATION

Introduction

The primary focus of this study centres around the idea of ‘astrological divination.’ In order to approach this area clearly, we shall first address the subject of divination per se in this chapter; and divinatory astrology, in the next. Geoffrey Cornelius, as a divinatory astrologer, has done extensive and groundbreaking work in this area over many years. My own study not only owes a considerable debt – both to his earlier work and to his most recent writing – but also would not have existed without his pioneering ideas.¹

Divination, like astrology, tends to be resistant to precise definition. We would therefore probably be on safer ground if we start by establishing what divination is not, in order to move towards, if not a definition, at least a better idea of what we are talking about. However, let us – paradoxically – start with some very basic dictionary definitions, if only to use them as a point of embarkation and to provoke dissent:

**Divination** – divining, insight into or discovery of the unknown or future by supernatural means; skilful forecast, good guess.

**To divine** – make out by inspiration, magic, intuition, or guessing, foresee, predict, conjecture; practise divination.

**Divine (n)** – Of, from, like God or a god.²

This assortment of words conveys, albeit in a compressed form, some of the assumptions and misunderstandings that surround divination, but which nevertheless reflect a mainstream understanding of it. For our purposes here, and as a simple definition, we could say that divination is *the seeking of information by means other*

¹ See foreword to Cornelius (2003), xiii. Also Cornelius (2010).
than natural ones. In a predominantly secular society where the rational is taken as ‘natural’, to seek answers to questions via the supernatural is to be irrational, and hence on shaky ground.\(^3\) If one asked a reasonably intelligent person what he or she understood by divination, his or her answer would probably include the word ‘intuition.’ Here, we need to distinguish between a general and loose usage of the term divination as a ‘type of intuition,’ and a tighter, more specific one, to refer to the divinatory act itself.\(^4\) At this point, we also need to make a distinction between the word divination, as used in a generic, or a specific sense: as a generic term, it refers to the whole field of divinatory manifestation, including omens, oracles and prophecy; as a specific term, it refers to a particular instance or manifestation of divination, and its interpretation.\(^5\)

This opens up the main issues that we need to address, which are based on some of the misconceptions that surround the above definitions. In this chapter, we shall consider questions such as: What is the aim of divination? What is the relationship of divination to prediction? Finally, we shall consider whether there is a place for divination in a culture that privileges what is termed rationality.

Before I begin my investigation, I would like to briefly explore each of these points in a little more detail and offer some preliminary remarks. With regards to the first question, based on the premise contained in the simple definition suggested above, I would suggest that the aim of divination is to discover information: to make the unknown, known. This information pertains to the wellbeing of the enquirer, who hopes – in obtaining an answer – to be empowered to lead a better life.\(^6\) In responding to the second question regarding prediction, I refer to Curry, who offers a paradigmatic divinatory question ‘What should I do?’ in his analysis of divination within the context of a culture of scientism. He goes on to unpack each of these four words carefully. This is worth quoting in full at this point, since it not only cuts through

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3 The reader is referred here to a distinction between the supernatural and the preternatural. The latter implies something that is beyond the known possibilities of science, without necessarily being ‘spiritual’ or involving the idea of grace.

4 Cornelius (1998), 38

5 Cornelius (2006)

6 ‘Better’ in its widest possible sense. This may cover a range of human aspirations including the areas of morality, prosperity, and relationships. In using the broad term ‘information’, this is less to do with the acquisition of facts; more the aim of reaching a state of wisdom and ‘right action’ via these facts.
many of the speculative ideas surrounding our subject, but also introduces some of the key points that we shall be considering as we continue:7

- ‘What’ – cognitive knowledge, or rather wisdom, is sought.
- ‘should’ – this introduces a moral or ethical dimension, whether this is interpreted metaphysically (a deontological good), socially (the greater good) or narrowly (my individual good);
- ‘I’ – the query concerns the questioner uniquely, and requires his or her participation (both of which points still hold good of a ‘we’); and
- ‘do’ – an action, specific and concrete, is also involved.

The diviner, then, is concerned not so much with the future, as the present moment. As Curry points out, he is really asking what course of action should he undertake now. Our third point questions the place of divination in our present society. If we accept the hypothesis that divination cannot be considered apart from the context of the religious and cultural world views in which it is practised, it would seem that for most of us living in the twenty-first century, divination – which employs irrational means to acquire knowledge – has little place in our world today. Our contention is, however, that while its epistemological status is not regarded highly, it does indeed have a place.

**The aim of divination**

We now pursue these questions more fully, and in turn. If the aim of divination, as was suggested earlier, is to discover information that will enable us to lead a ‘better’ life, we move immediately into the murky waters of relativism. The concept of a better life must be related to the ideals of the culture in which we live: for a Spartan in antiquity, it is better to live a warlike existence and to die gloriously in battle; a modern Quaker’s ideal would be the opposite. Cultural and religious norms cover a variety of ‘good’ ways of living, and morality – a vitally important component – also varies with cultural context. Earlier, however, we suggested that divination cannot be considered apart from the religious and cultural world views in which it is practised, and it is to the crucial subject of religion that we must now turn.

After the European scientific enlightenment, belief in any form of supernatural power took a different turn. The etymology of the word divination (from its Latin root)

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7 Curry (2004), 57-8
implies addressing – or being or being addressed by – a god. In seeking information, the diviner turns to a power which is perceived as being beyond or greater than their own human capacity. There is a wide variety of ways in which they can carry out this search, and these can be classified and categorised. The type of questions asked will cover a much smaller range (previously summarised as the desire for a better life, including the areas of morality, prosperity and relationships). However, the numerous forms of divination and the particular questions posed are not our immediate concern: our present focus is on the religious – or, arguably, irrational – aspect of the search. By this we mean that the seeker, in divining, acts on the assumption that some form of supernatural agency is capable of providing an answer, and offering guidance. The roots of astrology took us back to the clear skies of Mesopotamia, which were the natural field for priestly activity, in recording and interpreting eclipses of the sun and moon and the movements of the planets, all of which might have bearing on human activity. In classical antiquity, the Greeks listened to Zeus whispering through the leaves of trees at Dodona, and also travelled to Delphi to consult the oracle of Apollo; haruspicy (liver divination) was also widely used to make crucial military decisions, based on the omens found in the entrails of the sacrificed animal. There are very many instances, of course, of divination in the Bible, of which one of the most famous is Moses and the burning bush. Whether these divinatory activities look toward pagan deities or to a single Deity, the common component is a godlike agency, and this recalls the earlier, simple definition of ‘divine’, as being ‘of, from, like God or a god.’ Does it then follow, though, that in a predominantly secular context, divination ceases to exist?

**Divination as a human and universal activity**

Like the moon, the image of divination waxes and wanes and its status fluctuates throughout history, but it can be asserted with reasonable confidence that there remains a constant stream of interest and activity. A comment made by the anthropologist Philip Peek – ‘while this need is hardly of the same order as the need for food and shelter, it is nonetheless universal’ – is focused on African divination, but is well made. The French scholar, Jean-Pierre Vernant takes the view that ‘there has never been a culture

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8 See Chapter One, 4
10 *Exodus* 3: 1-21
11 Peek (1991), 1
without it.\textsuperscript{12} It is a living tradition, as present today as it has ever been. Its forms may vary, but its common thread lies in human beings – those who practise divination – and just as divination itself cannot be separated from the religious or cultural context in which it exists, it cannot be separated from its practitioners. So the practice of divination means not only that a question is being asked, but also implies that there is a diviner or interpreter who applies a divinatory method. This second point becomes increasingly important in this study, as we move towards the idea of dialogue.

Whilst it may be difficult to delineate the boundaries of divination that tend to border upon other fields such as clairvoyance or parapsychology, we can, for the present, stay with its core practice as a way of knowledge, a search for wisdom through the asking of questions. And setting aside the variations recorded in cultural and historical evidence, it is possible, quite simply, to return to the idea of being \textit{a human being in search of guidance}. In my view, our very humanity means we shall continue to be interested in divination. It is interesting that Marie-Louise von Franz, a Swiss Jungian analyst, writing some thirty years ago, says of modern divination: ‘We do (it) more secretly…it is not built into the \textit{Weltanschauung} and remains a kind of undeveloped primitive practice.’\textsuperscript{13} Given that von Franz was a close colleague of Jung, and that the advent of the so-called ‘new-age’ culture was well under way at that time, is it not somewhat surprising that she should imply that divination was a ‘secret’ practice?\textsuperscript{14}

At this point we can return to the earlier paradigmatic divinatory question ‘What should I do?’ and consider some of the issues that arise from it. We have already suggested that the ‘What?’ (the seeking of knowledge or wisdom) is the \textit{aim} of divination. Moving onto the ‘Should,’ which introduces a \textit{moral or ethical} dimension, needs a little more attention. Curry breaks this down into metaphysical (a deontological good), social (the greater good), or narrow (my individual good).\textsuperscript{15} This takes us back to our earlier proposition that enquirers, by receiving the information and wisdom which they seek, may be enabled to lead a ‘better’ life. This is the territory of the ‘good,’ and

\textsuperscript{12} Vernant (1991), 303  
\textsuperscript{13} Franz (1980), 11  
\textsuperscript{14} Perhaps one might conclude that Jung’s well-documented mystical-scientific ‘split’, and his desire for status as a scientist also affected his immediate colleagues? Alternatively, their shame might also reveal that they were products of their time.  
\textsuperscript{15} Curry (2004), 57
it has some bearing on the question we raised about the possibility of divination existing in a secular context. Enquirers or diviners wish to do the ‘right’ thing, and seek guidance from an exterior agency. Whatever form, according to their cultural and religious context, they understand this agency to take – a god, a spirit, conscience or intuition, for example – their divinatory move is an act rooted in a moral or ethical dimension.¹⁶

‘I’ (or, equally, ‘we’), concerns the questioner uniquely, and requires his or her participation. This raises two new and important issues: first, that the divinatory act is understood as an address from an exterior agency to this particular enquirer, and that it is concerned specifically with the enquirer’s question; secondly, that as a direct response to a particular enquirer – rather than a generalised statement, edict, or nugget of wisdom – it therefore involves that enquirer in that particular divinatory act.¹⁷ Divination has shifted, over the centuries, from a collective towards a more individual practice. The point remains, however, that whether the advice or guidance inferred from an oracle is addressed to a group – for example, in classical antiquity, a state or nation embarking on a military campaign – or an individual, it is never a generalised utterance, however gnomic, riddling or mystifying its form or content may be.¹⁸ It applies to the particular question put to it by the diviner, in that context and in that particular situation. Naturally, this implies a need to consider the important question of the unique case. This will be developed later on when we come to look at divinatory astrology. Returning to the topic at hand, assuming that the supernatural agency delivering the information is doing its part in offering the information, crucially, we cannot consider a divinatory act to be taking place without the involvement of a diviner. This important point will also be developed later, in the section on dialogue, in the

¹⁶ ‘Should’ could also refer to what may be called the ‘path of good fortune’, or the will of the gods, or some ‘other’ order or destiny with which the querent wishes to become aligned. ‘Right action’ – in the Buddhist sense – might also be suggested. These strands would repay further exploration, but are not within the scope of this study.

¹⁷ For a further discussion and analysis of these crucial aspects of the divinatory process, see Cornelius (2010), particularly Chapter Two. Here, he discusses participation mystique, an important concept from the anthropologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl.

¹⁸ For an example of divine advice on military strategy in classical antiquity, see Morrison (1991), 98. In discussing divination by lots, he tells the story about the Spartan consultation ‘about’ victory before the battle of Leuctra in 371 BCE, when the local ruler’s pet monkey overturned the ready-prepared lots, and the priestess in charge told the Spartans that they ought not to be thinking of victory but of saving themselves.
sense that a divination is always a dialogue involving the participation of (at least) two parties.

The idea of active participation leads us on to the final word ‘do,’ and the suggestion that ‘an action, specific and concrete’ usually arises out of the divinatory act. The divinatory process is, therefore, not considered to be complete until the advice/knowledge/information is taken up by the diviner or the client, and acted upon. By choosing to do so, querents acknowledge the information as being meaningful for them: and further, as being appropriate for their situation and an answer to their question. However, their decision not to act (in the sense that non-action is also a form of action) can also be seen as completing the divinatory process. The important thing is that the divinatory information has been acknowledged as a meaningful piece of information, an omen or oracle for them, and there has been a response to it. Having emphasised the unique nature of the single divinatory act, we now need to place this within a larger picture.

**Forms and types of divination**

The practice of divination is so extensive that a certain degree of classification is necessary, but must be limited to those facts that serve the purposes of this study. There is a strong temptation to take an over-quantitative approach, as if, by describing the vast range of divinatory activities that have been practised since antiquity and are still practised today, we might hope to raise the epistemological status of divination from its current intellectually ‘inferior’ position. This, perhaps, has echoes in the spurious and defensive claim of astrologers – referred to in Chapter One – that, since astrology has survived for millennia, it must have validity. A more qualitative approach, however, would organise these many forms into the different types of divination: separate the drawing of lots from the observation of the flight of birds; distinguish the laying-out of a spread of cards from carrying a divining rod or using a pendulum; observe the difference between consulting the I Ching and throwing a handful of bones. We need, in fact, to do both, but only as a means of moving toward our main contention: that divination is a form of dialogue.
Nature, more especially in antiquity, has always provided the material for the omens and oracles of divination: the sound of trees, as at the oracle at Dodona; the weather, as in the ominous thunderclaps of Zeus; landscape, as in the Australian aboriginals’ ‘dreamtime’ of their ancestors; the sky and the heavens, as in the movements of the planets; sticks, twigs, stones, pebbles and bones, which can fall – and be thrown – into patterns; yarrow stalks, which are used in the ancient Chinese oracle of the I Ching. The creatures living in nature – both human and other-than-human – have also provided living material: animals have been sacrificed and their entrails examined, as in the practice of liver divination; the flight of birds across a portion of the sky has been observed as carrying meaning; the (living) bodies of human beings provide hands for palmistry; the human dead – the ancestors – are all a powerful source for divinatory activity. Human artefacts, such as cards, are used in Tarot divination, and coins and dice are thrown to determine courses of action. If only to demonstrate the pervasive nature of our subject, we can simply enumerate at length, and in no particular order, some of the divinatory methods already mentioned, with some further additions: Tarot, numerology, geomancy, dowsing, astrology, runes, the I Ching, Feng-Shui, bone oracles, palmistry, mandalas, divining by pendulum, tea-leaves, coin tossing, Mah Jong, crystal oracles, and dreams.

**Types of divination: the ‘cognitive continuum’**

Having noted the quantity of *forms*, we turn to the qualitative organisation of *types*. Here, we shall dispense with a lengthy analysis by referring to an important concept introduced by the anthropologist Barbara Tedlock.\(^\text{19}\) This is her idea of a ‘cognitive continuum’ of *spirit-head-bones*, and with it, she is moving away from the tendency in previous anthropological studies to separate different types of divination and classify them as different orders of knowledge.\(^\text{20}\) As an alternative approach, she offers a spectrum with a specific mode of practice at either end. On the ‘spirit’ end of the spectrum is the sort of divination that can be described as ‘spirit possession’ or frenzy (characterised, for example, by witch-doctors, shamans, clairvoyance or the Pythia at the Delphic oracle). On the opposite end of the spectrum is what Tedlock

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\(^{19}\) Tedlock (2001), 189-97

\(^{20}\) For a fuller discussion of this, see Cornelius (2010), 70-73. He comments that ‘a tripartite division of *methods* of divination is perhaps self-evident. The importance of Tedlock’s approach resides in seeing these methods as forming a continuum.’
terms the ‘bones’, which represents those types of divination that work according to rational and organised systems (the word bones referring to the African sangoma’s practice of throwing bones and analysing the answer to a question from the way in which they fall). Both ends of the spectrum represent the extremes of irrational activity (spirit) and rational (bones). In the middle is ‘head’ which is a combination of rational and irrational. Here the interpretation of a divination, as the central factor, is a mixture of an intuitive approach with some form of organised system. An example of this would be astrology or Tarot, and since our study is concerned with astrological divination, our focus is on the middle or ‘head’ part of the spectrum.

For the moment, however, our focus will remain more generally with the divinatory process per se and we will save any further discussion concerning astrological divination until the next chapter. The three main questions set out at the beginning of this chapter are beginning to weave together. So far, we have asserted that the process of divination aims to discover knowledge, by means of which the enquirer-diviner may be enabled to lead a better life, and that this knowledge pertains to a particular and present course of action. We now need to pick up certain threads arising from this assertion. These concern the moral aspects of this search for knowledge, including the implications regarding fate and freewill; the status of the knowledge obtained, and the relationship between the enquirer and diviner.

The moral aspects of divination

Some of the main objections to astrology (as divination) were discussed in Chapter One. To remind us of these, and to summarise, both Cicero and Augustine put a strong case against divination: Cicero – from a historical context of growing scepticism about the gods – skilfully and effectively denigrated it as a superstitious and often corrupt practice, superfluous to ordinary skills and to commonsense, but which might nevertheless be retained for strictly pragmatic, political purposes. Augustine, from a Christian perspective, saw divination as primarily being connected with devilish or demonic activity, and the Church of England, today, continues to part company with astrology on the issue of divination.21 Pico della Mirandola’s polemic in the fifteenth

21 This refers to private correspondence between the author, some years ago, and the (then) Archbishop of Canterbury.
century raises further issues. More recently, objections have come from what Curry has termed the ‘metropolitan literary professionals’: here, it is the epistemological status of the knowledge obtained by divination that is called into question (and – one might add – even in a predominantly secular age, such knowledge has a whiff of the devilish about it).

The strength of such objections holds considerable power. Whether or not one suggests they may come from a position of fear on the part of critics, it leaves divination – as practised today – with an extremely negative legacy. There remains a sense that, whatever form it takes, divination treads on dangerous ground, and threatens both the moral and intellectual health of the individual practitioner, as well as his or her hapless clients. This sense – this suspicion of black art, or an activity which is at worst immoral, and at best merely irrational – centres partly around the misconception that divination is primarily to do with prediction; and partly around the issue of the divine. Clearly, for many, there is a link between prediction of the future (information that is generally considered to be obtained by supernatural means within the context of divination) and communing with the divine (perceived as the source of that knowledge). By contrast, our contention is that divination has to do with the sincere desire to lead a better life in the present: if this is the case, there is not an issue about peering into the forbidden territory of the future. Here again, we must unravel some assumptions and misconceptions. Rather than criticising (or fearing) diviners because they threaten to uncover secrets that lie in wait for us ‘in the future’ – or, like Prometheus, dare to trespass on the territory of the gods – we have to examine our own attitude to ‘the future.’ In this study, we argue that the concept of a fixed future, waiting to be uncovered, is not the case: we can attempt to live our present life well, turning to the divinatory act – as a dialogue with an ‘other’ – for occasional guidance, from which our experience in the past helps to guide our present choices, toward a better ‘future’.

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22 See Chapter One
23 Curry (2004), 52
24 This wariness has much to do with the association, in mainstream perception, of divination with magic and prediction. See the discussion in Chapter Ten on the magician archetype within the psychotherapeutic encounter.
25 For good discussions of this see, for example, Greene (1984), Curry (2004), 55-57, and Cornelius (2003), 172-4. In both his earlier work (2003), and his most recent (2010), Cornelius has woven into his entire text a consideration of the fundamental issues of fate and freewill.
Rationality and the Divine in divination

However, even if we agree that divination may have a moral dimension, we still have to consider the dubious epistemological value of the answers to our divinatory questions, and the issue of the ‘divine.’ Regarding rationality, it may be helpful to return to the ‘cognitive continuum,’ for although the irrational or ‘spirit’ end of the spectrum does not concern us, the ‘head and bones’ areas do. These rational and semi-rational parts of the spectrum have internal consistency (as discussed earlier in looking at the symbol system of astrology in Chapter Four) even if their epistemological value does not conform to the modern paradigm of what is termed ‘rational.’ Our main focus is the middle, or ‘head’: here we suggested astrology or Tarot as examples, and we shall look closely at astrological divination in the next chapter. These are examples of knowledge obtained by a mixture of a rational system together with something else: a non-rational source. Historically, this ‘other’ would be clearly externalised: for example, as a spirit, ancestor, god, daemon, or angelic entity. In our current, more psychologised times, we would tend to internalise it, using more secular terms, including, for example, intuition, conscience, the unconscious, the higher self or innate wisdom.26

We have asserted that divination has a moral and ethical dimension (‘Should I take this action?’) and we now need to make a further link with the concept of the divine, and attempt a distinction of this from the ‘Divine.’ In its earliest practice in polytheistic cultures, the query implicit (or sometimes explicit) underlying a diviner’s specific question was ‘Do the gods approve of my actions?’ or ‘Are the gods with me in this venture?’27 Since the diviner is often seeking approval for a venture yet to be undertaken, this again raises the issue of prediction. Although the question could be seen as seeking information about the future, there is a significant difference. Diviners, in a polytheistic context, do not necessarily assume that a fixed outcome awaits them (‘The future is out there, and the gods will tell us what it is’). They know that they, or

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26 The inclusion of the word ‘intuition’ here recalls the introduction to this chapter, where it was stated that divination itself is often loosely defined as ‘a type of intuition’ as well as referring to the divinatory act. Regarding the unconscious, however, note Curry’s comment that he ‘suspects that the use of the word “unconscious” is being made to do a lot of work making something feel secular, safe and already understood that is actually none of these things.’ Curry, (2004),117
27 See for example, Cornelius (2003) Chapter 7, where he states: ‘For the cultures of the ancient near East, few matters of great consequence would be begun without invocation of the gods and the consultation of auspices. The use of divination “authorised” a course of action at its inception, by giving it the sanction of the gods.’
their clients, have to create this ‘future’ by taking a certain course of action, and their primary concern is whether the gods are on their side. If they are (as interpreted through the oracular response) then this is encouragement for the diviners to go ahead with the chosen course of action; if not, then an alternative needs to be reconsidered. This raises Cornelius’ extensive discussion of the classical concept of ‘katarche’, since it is this that demonstrates the pre-requisite of initiative, on the part of the diviner.28

Whatever action is ultimately taken, the divinatory act is a process of negotiation (which is not, incidentally, the same as bargaining).29 It is only later – historically, in a monotheistic context where it is less appropriate to negotiate with a single Deity – that the future might be seen as the exclusive territory of the sole dispenser of providence. In this case, not only is this ‘forbidden’ territory, but it also requires spiritual intermediaries (spirits, daemons, angelic entities and so forth). It was the daemons who were condemned by Augustine for leading astray those who dared to practise the dangerous art of divination.30

**Divination in a religious or secular context**

Having noted that the process of divination may be different in a polytheistic or a monotheistic culture, how is it affected by being in a religious or in a secular context?31 In historical periods before the European scientific enlightenment, when a belief in supernatural power (whether polytheistic or monotheistic) was an integral part of human life, the diviner made the assumption that the supernatural agency was capable of helping human endeavour; that it did indeed have power and efficacy. We have emphasised that the divinatory act is a joint venture. Nevertheless, it carries no

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29 Cornelius has coined two phrases which are invaluable to an understanding of his position: the ‘Machine of Destiny’ (to refer to the concept of an inexorable fate), see Cornelius (2003), Chapter 9; and ‘Destiny is Negotiable’ (to refer to the divinatory process of negotiation with the gods), see Cornelius (2003), 131. The present study is taking up this concept of ‘negotiation’ as a form of dialogue.
30 Cornelius, however, in the context of astrological divination, sees an irony in Augustine’s analysis, and asserts that ‘it is not the daemons who have corrupted astrologers, but astrologers who have corrupted the daimones.’ See Cornelius (2003), 181.
31 Here, a polarity between religious-secular is being used, pragmatically but perhaps over-simplistically: this territory of religious-secular or sacred-profane is complex and delicate. Eliade (1959) speaks of ‘two modes of being in the world’ (referring to sacred and profane) and uses the term **homo religious** (living in a world that is sacred), to refer to pre-Enlightenment society. Thus it is the man who has the religious attitude, and it is the world and its contents that are sacred. This is somewhat different in flavour from C.S.Lewis’ mediaeval ‘model’, with its intelligences and correspondences. See Lewis (1964).
force or energy unless human diviners trust that there is some form of agency capable of helping them, and, moreover, both accessible and willing to help. As we have suggested, this agency has earlier tended to be externalised, whilst in a modern, more psychologised age, it tends to be internalised. The common factor – and this is crucial – is that human diviners trust in something beyond their own human powers to give effective help when turned to for guidance. In this sense, there is no essential difference between divination in a secular or non-secular context. It remains a process of negotiation, a turning to an ‘other’ for help, whatever form that ‘other’ takes. Looked at in this way, the other may be called the ‘divine’: something that evokes a sense of the numinous, in whatever cultural, historical, religious or psychological context the divinatory act takes place.

The roles of enquirer and diviner

There remains an important issue to be discussed: we have referred, so far, to the enquirer and diviner interchangeably, and this requires some clarification. In the divinatory act there is one who puts forward a question (sometimes on behalf of a group), one who answers it, and one who interprets this answer. We have, then: enquirer, ‘divine’ agency, and interpreter (diviner). In certain cases, enquirer and diviner are the same person, in which case the divinatory act has only two participants; in other cases, if the enquirer is putting a question on behalf of a number of people – the tribe, state or some group affected by the outcome – and if, in addition, a separate diviner interprets the answer, then there can be many participants. This duality of enquirer and diviner has its roots in the classical roles of hermeios and theoros, where theoros carries out the role of the one bringing the question, and hermeios is the one who interprets the answer.32 For our present purposes, we note that the relationship between enquirer and diviner – what Cornelius terms the ‘dual-unity’ of hermeios-theoros – is an integral part of our argument regarding dialogue, as we hope to show, when considering astrological divination, and also in the chapter on dialogue.

32 For a full discussion of the origins of hermeios and theoros, see Cornelius (2010), 106-120.
Ritual and control

Before we move on to astrological divination, we shall raise, briefly, a few further points regarding divination *per se*, which will be taken up in subsequent chapters. These concern the ritual aspects of the divinatory act, the state of mind of the diviner, and the issue of control. The act of divining contains elements of quasi-religious ritual and performance, yet it is carried out by human diviners (and we have earlier emphasised the human aspects of divination) and it addresses often very ordinary matters. From an outsider’s viewpoint, this may appear to be an incongruous mix, and such rituals may be regarded as unsophisticated or superstitious, but they are a crucial part of the divinatory process, as is the state of mind of the diviner. Even for the smallest question, diviners need ritual in order to create a ‘sacred space’ or receptive state of mind in which they can be ‘visited’ by the divine. This could, moreover, be extended to include Eliade’s interesting concept of sacred time – familiar to the religious man, but not to the ‘nonreligious man of modern societies,’ who has ‘varying temporal rhythms…of different intensities’ that are essentially different from the experience of the religious man.

[He] lives in two kinds of time…experiences intervals of time that are ‘sacred’, that have no part in the temporal duration that precedes and follows them, that have a wholly different structure and origin…This transhuman quality of liturgical time is inaccessible to a nonreligious man.

We are suggesting, then, that in approaching the act of divination, diviners are careful to perform rituals that create a sacred space. In doing so, they may also find themselves transported into sacred time.

The details of whatever system is being used must be observed carefully and rigorously; there cannot be interruptions from the everyday world; the ground must be cleared in order for a divinatory act to ‘work’. Our territory is the ‘head and bones’

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33 In using the term ‘quasi-religious’ I am not intending to detract from my view that the divinatory act can be understood as a religious ritual. Rather, it is to convey how it may be perceived by an outsider.

34 Much has been written about the concept of sacred space, more recently in the context of a ‘new-age’ orientation. Here, I am particularly interested in Eliade’s approach.

35 Eliade (1959), 70-71. See also the perspective of Marie-Louise von Franz, (1980), 14,107-9, from a Jungian psychological angle, on sacred time, as it bears on Jung’s concept of synchronicity. She speaks, regarding Chinese philosophy, of two sorts of time as a ‘mysterious hole between the two worlds.’
part of the cognitive continuum, and – as we are not looking at instances of spirit possession or shamanic activity – we shall take the Tarot as our example practice.\(^{36}\) Here, such rituals might mean observing particular ways of shuffling and spreading the cards; being clear whether the Tarot reader or her client is to turn over certain cards; perhaps keeping the pack in a silk cloth or a particular container; laying out the cards on a special surface; washing one’s hands before touching the cards, and so forth. By exerting ‘control’ over these details of pre-divination ritual, the Tarot practitioner is moving towards a position where rational control is diminished, and a space opens up into which the ‘other’ can move. When that happens, the appearance on the table of particular – sometimes shockingly appropriate – cards is an autonomous event: the ‘other’ speaks, and the Tarot reader and the client respond.

The divinatory practitioner is often seen as seeking control or mastery in a negative way, and Peek comments that the European tradition:

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\text{…tends to characterize the diviner as a charismatic charlatan, coercing others through clever manipulation of esoteric knowledge granted inappropriate worth by a credulous and anxiety-ridden people.} \quad ^{37}
\]

He also points out that European and American scholarship ‘has granted divination only marginal status in human affairs and presumed it to be magical in nature.’\(^{38}\) Whether it is to extract money from a vulnerable client or to exert an influence on the outcome of events, the diviner certainly has a bad reputation.\(^{39}\) We suggest that the opposite is the case: that the true divinatory act is one of humility; of control and mastery only of the intricacies of the system, and of the ritual itself in order to open up the way for a greater-than-human power to be present. If one definition of a religious attitude is that of humility in the face of a greater power, then the divinatory act is, in the highest sense, a religious one.\(^{40}\) Moreover, the state of mind of the diviner must be intensely serious if the ‘other’ is to be enabled to speak. Unless the diviner approaches with reverence,
intensity and a focused attitude of intention, the process is unlikely to 'work.' Divination can be carried out in a playful spirit, but intense involvement is a prerequisite. An apparently trivial question (Will my cat return?) is nevertheless a profoundly human concern. ‘Playful’ implies the total absorption – as in that of a child – of serious play. This is very different from a state of casual inattention, where the would-be diviner is self-conscious about what he is doing, treating the experience as an experimental joke, is half outside the process, and thus failing to participate fully.

The aim of divination then, is to make the unknown known; the soothsayer’s job is to reveal the truth about a situation, and this involves total commitment to the act that can elicit the information sought. This ‘truth’ is only achieved by entering fully into the diviner’s role (and there is certainly an element of what, theatrically, can be termed ‘role-play’) and into the divinatory act as a performance involving certain rituals.41 In moving into the territory of the sacred, diviners may be both surprised and shocked: surprised by the truth they reveal, and – sometimes – shocked by their encounter with what they perceive to be a divine or spiritual response. The effects of these emotionally-charged encounters suggest, in my view, another ‘divinatory’ spectrum comparable to that of the cognitive continuum. As with the latter, this describes states that differ in degree but not in kind: they are not different orders of experience. These range from a slight ‘tingle’ to the full impact of the *mysterium tremendum*.42 One can, for instance, experience a slight tingle in the spine when listening to certain music, a sensation familiar to many people. At the other end of the spectrum, one can undergo an extraordinary process of physical and emotional shock evoked by an experience of a powerful other presence. The middle area of this spectrum might be described as a bodily shiver, which is more than a mere tingle and less than awe. We would contend that this shiver, neither pleasurable nor frightening, can be the sign that an authentic divinatory experience is taking place, and we shall return to this later.

41 See Cornelius (2010), Chapter Three. Here, Cornelius has an interesting discussion on the ‘chicane’ (which ‘comes to signify…symbolic and divinatory performance’, and generally has a negative reputation, as involving deception) and concludes that the diviner demonstrates ‘sophisticated double thinking’ rather than deceit or trickery.

42 Mysterium tremendum is Rudolf Otto’s term for a sense of terror and awe in the face of a terrible power. Otto (1950), Chapter IV. See also Eliade (1959) in his opening chapter for a discussion of this.
Conclusion

The focus of this study is on divinatory dialogue. In looking, therefore, at divination, our main interest is the heart of the divinatory act: the nature of the dialogue between human and divine. Towards this end, we have asserted that the process of divination aims to discover knowledge, by means of which the enquirer-diviner may be enabled to lead a better life, and that this knowledge pertains to a particular and present course of action. This emphasises that divination is not, as is commonly perceived, primarily to do with future prediction, and that it has a moral dimension. We have also pointed out that whilst the etymology of the word divination implies the presence of the divine, that this word must be broadly understood, and that divination has been practised – and still is practised – in a variety of contexts. Historically (before the European scientific enlightenment) it flourished in a religious culture – both polytheistic and monotheistic – and post-Enlightenment, it continues to flourish in a mainly secular culture, which privileges ‘rationality.’ We have shown that astrology – the divinatory system we are exploring in this study – is a symbol system with internal coherence and rational consistency, yet the epistemological value of such divinatory ‘truth’ is not, at the present time, regarded highly. As a universal human activity, however, and as a different way of seeing the world, it has great value, as we hope to demonstrate.

In conclusion, then, as we move on to divinatory astrology, it is to this human quality in the act of divination that we shall return. In considering the human-divine relationship in this chapter, we have distinguished between the roles of enquirer-diviner in terms of the classical ones of hermeios-theoros; emphasised the importance of ritual and of total participation, and noted the unique nature of each divinatory act. It is my contention that this act, as one of humility, is closer to religious experience than to magic. Finally, we tentatively suggested another divinatory spectrum in addition to the cognitive continuum, by which the impact of the divinatory experience on the human diviner might be assessed.
CHAPTER SIX

DIVINATORY ASTROLOGY

PART ONE: THEORY

Introduction

We now turn to divinatory astrology, the specific field of this study. To reach this point, we have considered the cultural history of astrology, some of the basic tenets of its symbol system, and the nature and function of symbol. In the last chapter we looked at the universal practice of divination, and we are now in a position to put together some of these observations in order to consider what exactly is meant by divinatory astrology.

A few caveats/qualifications need to be made at this juncture. As has been pointed out earlier, many astrologers do not consider astrology to be a form of divination, so the viewpoint put forward in this study – namely that the Western astrological tradition has its roots in the practice of divination – is one shared with only a limited number of astrologers.\^1 Among a vast number of divinatory practices, all reflecting their own cultural, social and religious contexts, astrology is one of the most complex and sophisticated. Its place, in our view, is in the middle of Tedlock’s cognitive continuum, as a rational system modified by some other non-rational element, variously understood and expressed as: intuition, the unconscious or the daemon.\^2 Our ultimate contention is that divinatory astrology is a dialogue with the divine. Mainstream contemporary astrologers would probably describe their practice as a rational system that needs a degree of intuition or some (psychologically expressed) ‘unconscious’ energy to heighten the level of their interpretations. Most would be unlikely to agree with the religious implication of our argument, so it would seem, then,

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\^1 For a recent example of an opposing view, see Greene (2008).
\^2 See Chapter Five.
that our position hinges on a definition of the divine. Whilst many modern astrologers would agree that astrology can be a ‘spiritual path’ — and would be relatively comfortable with this catch-all term — they would probably be unwilling to go further, in allowing some form of divine agency to be involved.

Be that as it may, we have two main problems in approaching this chapter, which acts as a turning point between our earlier introductory material and our later focus on the meeting with the divine. The first problem — initially mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation — concerns the ‘emic-etic’ (or insider-outsider) divide: namely the potential problems, in the academy, raised by practice-led research in the field of religious studies. The second lies in the nature of astrology itself, which is an intricate and highly advanced system. Without a working familiarity with the basic tenets of astrology it is difficult for the reader to appreciate fully the significance of the symbols that constitute the astrological moment. Although the principles surrounding the use of astrological symbols are not complicated to master, the deeper understanding and more subtle application of these symbols requires a level of experience that can only be developed through practice, and over time. In view of this, we have tried, in the present study, to prepare the ground, as far as possible, by introducing astrology in stages: first giving a cultural overview and then an outline of the structure of its symbol system.4

For the ‘lay’ reader, however, the state of being an observer rather than a participant; of being on the outside of a partly non-rational practice, and the unfamiliarity with astrological symbols all combine to create a problematic situation. Cornelius has used the term ‘the impossibility of certain subjects’ in talking about divinatory practice.5 This also raises the subtle and difficult issues of gnosia and initiation. Our view is that gnosia — as spiritual knowledge or ‘knowing,’ rather than rational knowledge or information — is closer to the practice of divinatory astrology. Arthur Versluis, in his recent work, puts gnosia into a wider cultural context. In writing about Western esoteric traditions, including astrology amongst several others including alchemy, Freemasonry and Jewish Kabbalah, he points out that these often disparate

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3 See the definition of the divine given at the beginning of the introduction to this dissertation.
4 See Appendix A for an outline of the astrological symbol system.
5 Cornelius (2010), introduction, 2-21
traditions have in common an emphasis on attaining spiritual knowledge or gnosis. In defining gnosis as ‘experiential insight into the nature of the divine as manifested in the individual and in the cosmos,’ he then divides gnosis into two broad categories – cosmological and metaphysical or transcendent – commenting that these are ‘not mutually exclusive but rather are complementary or overlapping’.  

Another extremely important writer who has much to contribute when it comes to making a case for divinatory astrology is Henry Corbin. Corbin, a renowned Islamic scholar, posits an inversion of the world, a way of ‘turning the world inside out,’ by means of the active imagination, facilitating a transmutation of ‘intellectual or sensible forms into symbolic forms,’ within a realm or state of mind that he terms the *mundus imaginalis*. Tom Cheetham, one of the primary authorities on Corbin, expresses Corbin’s view of our spiritual state as being determined by our orientation to the world. He describes three worlds, and suggests that in the West we are limited to only two: firstly, sense perception, giving us knowledge of the world of material objects; and secondly, rationality, which gives us abstract laws governing these objects. But if the creative power of the imagination is acknowledged, it can be understood as an ‘interworld,’ sharing aspects of both. This ontological reality of the *mundus imaginalis* is crucial. It brings the imagination into the faculty of knowledge as opposed to fantasy.

In approaching the world as symbolists, astrologers ‘read’ it differently from other people. They are ‘present’ to the world, and in exercising Corbin’s ‘creative imagination’ they look through the symbols that manifest themselves. This kind of understanding implies transformation and in opening themselves up to the symbolic epiphanies that are met, they may be changed. It is, as Cheetham puts it, ‘a philosophic and spiritual quest for a kind of understanding that is transformative’; in essence, it is a form of spiritual hermeneutics. In introducing some of Corbin’s ideas, which bear an interesting relation to the practice of divinatory astrology, we should clarify this by giving his definitions, both of the active imagination, and the *mundus imaginalis*. The active imagination ‘is the place of theophanic visions, the scene on which visionary events and symbolic histories appear in their true reality.’ The *mundus imaginalis* is

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6 Versluis (2004), 1-2
7 Cheetham (2004)
8 Corbin (1969), 4
‘best understood not as things but as events….they are not links in the Great Chain of Being, but are rather essentially liturgical dramas’

Later in this chapter we present three examples of astrological case material that illustrate this. They are both events and dramas, and the experience of participating in them is a transformative one.

**Divinatory astrology as a method of divination**

We now need to outline clearly how divinatory astrology works. A basic distinction in divination is between ‘bidden’ and ‘unbidden’ omens. A bidden omen is the diviner’s response to an enquirer’s question or situation by setting up and carrying out a chosen divinatory method. The Tarot reader spreads cards, the African *sangoma* scatters bones and the augurer in antiquity examined the liver of a sacrificed animal. The cards which appear in a certain order, the arrangement of the bones and the visible physical state of an animal’s liver all provide a pattern from which a judgement can be made. Since the details of these patterns are part of a broadly consensual system, it follows that the judgement will also, to a large extent, be agreed by different practitioners. However the experience and skill of an individual diviner also plays a part. Not only are the judgements of an experienced diviner likely to be ‘better’ than others, but also the way in which they are communicated to the enquirer(s) is important. Whatever method is used, the diviner occupies a crucial position between the oracle (the pattern of cards or bones, or the state of the liver) and the enquirer. Here, clearly, the key concept of the *hermeios-theoros* relationship is relevant. What is also interesting is the instinct for performance: whether a diviner chooses – or feels it is necessary – to create a degree of dramatic tension (or even of illusion) in delivering a judgement.

These have been examples of bidden omens. Unbidden omens are the autonomous and spontaneous appearance of some factor that attracts the diviner’s attention. As Cornelius has argued – and this is important – *an unbidden omen does not exist until it is taken as an omen*. Thus everyday life in the world provides limitless material for the omen watcher: the colliding of a bird into a window pane; a chance

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9 Corbin (1973), 168
10 For a discussion of this aspect of the diviner’s role, see Cornelius (2010), 74-104 where he addresses the issue of ‘semblance and dissemblance’ in Chapter 3, ‘Chicane.’
remark overheard; a book falling open at a certain page, or a powerful and persistent image from a dream. But only those people who are attentive to their surroundings and pre-disposed towards omen watching will find significance in such events. The majority of human beings will go about their daily business uninterested in, or unaware of, the multitude of potential omens surrounding them.\textsuperscript{11} In a rational age, if people describe some strange occurrence as extremely significant, or see it as a message for them, they may be regarded, pejoratively, as ‘superstitious.’ This attitude is part of a general tendency to dismiss and to devalue subjective experience as unimportant, which might arguably be seen as an even more pernicious tendency than the more extreme case of calling the observer’s mental health into question. William James put his own characteristic view on this over a century ago, in the context of religious experience and his views certainly have a bearing on the aim of this present study, namely to place the astrological, divinatory experience within a spiritual or religious context.\textsuperscript{12} Of course, a balance evidently has to be kept between the denial of meaning in anything, and a tendency to read meaning into everything, in an excessive and solipsistic way.

How, then, does divinatory astrology work in this field of bidden and unbidden omens? First, bidden ones. Horary astrology – one of whose chief exponents in the seventeenth century was William Lilly – is still practised today and remains one of the most explicit forms of divinatory astrology.\textsuperscript{13} An enquirer comes to a horary astrologer with a specific question, for example ‘Where is my cat?’ or ‘Should I sell my house?’ The astrologer notes the time when the question is posed and sets up a chart. This is considered according to a traditional and detailed set of rules and a judgement is offered. To an outsider (including some non-divinatory astrologers) this practice understandably appears highly irrational. Why should the arbitrary time of asking a question produce a meaningful pattern from an arrangement of planets in the heavens, capable of giving a ‘true’ answer? Horary astrology, then, is a concrete example of working with a bidden omen.

\textsuperscript{11} The moment of the ‘taking’ of an event as an omen, however, is not the only stage in the process of divinatory astrology. The resulting pattern (the chart) has to be affirmed as a ‘true’ answer, as we will show later in this chapter when analysing case material.

\textsuperscript{12} In \textit{The Varieties of Religious Experience}, James (1902) makes a case for valuing individual subjective experience.

\textsuperscript{13} See Chapter One.
With unhidden omens, divinatory astrologers (like the omen watchers described earlier) take certain spontaneous events to be omens. A chart is then set up for the precise moment of the event and — if considered to be ‘radical’ — is judged. The radicality of a chart (Lat: radix = root) is a term used in traditional horary astrology to indicate that — given the particular context of the chart, the situation it describes and the nature of its subject — its most prominently-placed symbols are totally appropriate to the perceived meaning of the event. If so, it is considered ‘authentic’ and worthy of providing an answer for the divining astrologer, who would be looking, therefore, for appropriate symbols to appear, either close to one of the prominent positions of the chart (for instance, the ‘angles’) or in an appropriate ‘house’ of the chart.14 Whilst radicality is either clearly present or absent, it should also be noted that some charts are more immediately striking than others. It can be as if the divinatory intelligence sometimes speaks quietly in the affirmative; at other times, making a ‘louder’ point in order to catch the astrologer’s attention; whilst at others, it can sometimes be perceived to ‘play’ with the diviner. The latter case can involve hiding meaning in order to necessitate a deeper search for it, which is in the very nature of ‘riddling’ oracles such as that found at Delphi. On the other hand, some charts contain symbols placed with such precision that it takes one’s breath away.15 If the chart does not have these indications of radicality, diviners may discard it and conclude that the moment was not — as originally thought — a significant event. Alternatively, they may consult with other astrologers, who might be able to perceive some further significance; or the chart may be kept, in case some — presently hidden — meaning discloses itself later, in relation to subsequent events.

From this description of the way in which divinatory astrology works, it is clear that astrology differs from other divinatory symbol systems in one crucial respect: Its method is directly dependent on a relationship with chronological time. The chart is set up for a particular place at a particular time. This then produces a detailed ‘map’ of planets in the heavens at that particular moment, the meaning of which is determined by carefully examining this pattern. Astrology, then, is a unique method of divination because it searches for, and interprets meaning through working with a specific moment

14 For an outline of the astrological symbol system, see Appendix A.
15 This term is used metaphorically. In the stricter etymological sense, such a chart would ‘add’ breath, rather than taking it away, in that it ‘inspires’ the astrologer by its beauty and precision.
in chronological time: it is this moment that is the direct source of its divinatory pattern. However, an important reservation needs to be made. Cornelius has argued convincingly against what he terms the ‘seed moment’ idea\textsuperscript{16}, and the ‘machine of destiny’.\textsuperscript{17} By this he means the assumption that a cause and effect mechanism underlies our individual destinies: that the astrological chart derived from a seed moment in time leads inexorably towards a fixed fate. We have discussed this in the previous chapter, and we must clarify it further here in the light of our present consideration of divinatory astrology. For divinatory purposes – indeed for any form of astrological judgement from a chart – we need to use a chronologically accurate time. This is not, however, because the chart that results from it would be unworkable if the time were not accurate.\textsuperscript{18} On the contrary, charts set up for the wrong time have been proved to work with extraordinary accuracy. The crucial point is this: the astrologer uses chronologically accurate time as part of his ritual method in approaching a chart for judgement. He does so in good faith, and with serious, focused intent. If he did not believe that the chart was accurate for his purposes, he would not use it. What actually happens is that he assigns significance to the chosen time. If this later turns out to have been chronologically inaccurate, it does not – strangely – seem to affect the efficacy or radicality of the chart. This curious phenomenon is part of Cornelius’ argument against the ‘seed moment’ and the ‘machine of destiny’. There is, moreover, another dimension to consider. We have implied in the previous chapter that focused intent is an integral part of divinatory practice, and this emphasises the sense of mental purpose that is a pre-requisite for effective divination. However, desire – or ‘eros’ – also plays an essential part. Modern usage of the words have debased their original power, but in a Neoplatonic context, it suggests a strong spiritual orientation – a strong desire for wisdom, and the impulse to work towards the greater good.\textsuperscript{19} We are presenting the astrologer-diviner’s practice as a spiritual one, connected with the whole being and the ‘higher self’\textsuperscript{20}, rather than an interest in the future for personal (material) gain or idle curiosity. The powerful combination of eros and intent can produce some extraordinary outcomes, as we shall show.

\textsuperscript{16} See Bird (2007, p. 64 for a fuller explanation of this notion, which has its roots in the work of Ptolemy
\textsuperscript{17} See Cornelius (2003), 173-174
\textsuperscript{18} This is the phenomenon of ‘wrong time’ charts. For more on this, see Cornelius (2003), 230-255, and also further discussion on the moment of astrology in the analysis of case material in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{19} Platonic eros is most clearly expressed in Plato, Symposium 199 c5-212c
\textsuperscript{20} For the Platonic concept of eros as a daemon, see Plato, Symposium 201-212c
Our discussion of this method has so far been an abstract and theoretical one. In order to appreciate fully the nature of divinatory astrology, we need to see it illustrated through some examples from actual life. Here, we shall see the astrologer-diviner on a philosophic and spiritual quest; he is meeting the world; being ‘present’ to it and understanding it through his creative imagination. This understanding is potentially a transformative experience; a form of initiation into mysteries which are resistant to verbal expression and come alive through the non-verbal apprehension of symbols. Having read these example cases, the reader is in a better position to understand how this kind of astrology can be applied to ordinary situations in life; and how – more importantly – these situations are transformed by a symbolic approach, into something extraordinary. Such incidents – as we hope to show – can then be perceived, and experienced, as instances of a dialogue with the divine.

THREE EXAMPLE CASES OF ASTROLOGICAL DIVINATION

Introduction to case material

The narrative for these three events can be found in Appendices B, C and D, and we shall introduce them here and comment on how they illustrate certain aspects of divinatory astrology. Each story has a related astrological chart, but to reproduce these three charts in the context of an academic work would present an unnecessarily taxing task for the non-astrological reader. However, we have picked out one or two main features from them to demonstrate their radicality and discussed these as a postscript to the narrative of each case, if further clarification is needed. Where these features are integral to an understanding of the outcome, they have been addressed within the narrative. The outline of the basic tenets of astrology in Appendix A should provide enough background for the reader to understand the implications of the symbols shown, but we have also included some more general notes on the symbolism in each narrative.

Before analysing each example individually, we shall make a few general points about the moment of divination; the relevance of narrative, and the phenomenon of

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21 See Appendices B, C, and D.
synchronicity. Some of these points have been mentioned earlier, but it is helpful – at this important stage of presenting case material – to refresh the memory by summarising them here.

**The moment of divination**

This can be characterised by three distinct features: firstly, as a moment highly charged with emotional affect; secondly, as a moment giving the sense of another intelligence making its presence felt, or ‘speaking’; and thirdly, as having a moral or ethical issue involved. Emotional charge can be a pre-requisite for generating, or bringing about, a moment of synchronicity. Recalling Tedlock’s cognitive continuum, we are not talking here of the ‘spirit’ end, where shamans or mediums experience extreme states of frenzy or possession. Rather – as discussed in the previous chapter – we suggest a ‘divinatory’ continuum, where, in the middle part of the spectrum, a bodily shiver can be interpreted as a sign of divinatory activity. We should, however, distinguish between the shiver at the moment of divination or ‘realisation’, and the state of emotional charge that not only prepares the ground for the divinatory activity, but can also be a pre-requisite for it.

The sensation of another intelligence making its presence felt, or ‘speaking’ can be very strong. So far, we have considered this in our references to a divine ‘agency’ (the daimon, the unconscious, and so forth) and this powerful sense of address, of being spoken to, will be taken further in the section on dialogue. The moral issue has also been referred to in our introduction to divination in the previous chapter, in which we cited Curry’s paradigmatic question ‘What should I do?’ This emphasised that the aim of divination is primarily to ask about the ‘right’ action required to deal with a present problem or situation, rather than asking about the future, as if it were a fixed and predetermined state of affairs.

**The relevance of narrative**

This has not yet been considered, but the stage at which we are introducing case material is clearly the appropriate place to do so. *Until the moment of divination, a narrative does not exist in a coherent or meaningful form.* Then, in this moment of
being taken as an omen, an apparently trivial everyday event becomes transformed, and becomes part of a connected series of occurrences. It is that sudden moment: the flash of awareness; the immediate ‘knowing’ of that moment, which sets in motion the retrospective construction of a narrative. A hitherto unrelated sequence of events now begins to be remembered: these events are now perceived as being meaningfully linked, and become part of a narrative. From that moment onward, when a ‘theme’ has emerged, the attention is also alerted to any subsequent developments that appear to be connecting with the theme. Such developments can deepen and intensify the initial divinatory experience, and flesh it out into a memorable stage in the diviner’s life, enriching her personal relationship to the wider world.

**Synchronicity**

The reader who is familiar with Jung will, in looking at these three cases, perhaps see them as examples of the phenomenon of synchronicity. It is important, therefore, to consider this in relation to divinatory astrology before embarking on a separate analysis of the three examples. Our primary source for the concept of synchronicity is Jung himself. However, as we are taking an astrological angle on this phenomenon, we shall also take into consideration some recent revisions of his theory, particularly those of a divinatory astrologer.22 Space does not permit more than a summary, but this subject is so crucial to any presentation of astrological ‘events’ that it must be reviewed.

To consider the phenomenon of synchronicity brings up a number of concepts central to divinatory astrology: space, time, meaning (as apart from content), significance, and the inner ‘psychic’ experience as against the outer ‘external’ event. What is significant for an astrologer may or may not be so for a ‘lay’ reader, thus an event may lose any sense of being meaningful. Synchronicity takes us into areas that appear to go beyond ordinary concepts of space and time, yet – apparently paradoxically – the chart, the method of divinatory judgement for an astrologer, is necessarily connected to a particular time and a particular space. Let us start with Jung.

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22 For material on synchronicity see Jung’s essay on Synchronicity in Jung (1972) and Jung (1957) and Franz, von (1980). See also Main (2007), and Aziz (1990). The most relevant critique for the present study is that of a divinatory astrologer. For this see Maggie Hyde (1992), especially chapter 7.
He gives many definitions of synchronicity, including such phrases as ‘meaningful coincidence’, ‘acausal parallelism’ and ‘an acausal connecting principle’. One of his clearer statements about the nature of synchronicity for our purposes is:

The simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state.

Jung’s underlying theoretical account rests on certain of his own concepts: that of ‘archetypes,’ the collective unconscious, and symbolic images. Put simplistically, the (Jungian) synchronous experience is the constellation or activation of an archetype expressed as a numinous affect. He goes on to include corresponding external events outside the observer’s field of perception. These might take place at a distance, and would only be verifiable afterwards. A famous example of this would be Swedenborg ‘seeing’ the fire in Stockholm, as it was happening two hundred miles away. This therefore takes on events that are distant in space from the observer. Additionally, he includes external events that are distant in time: such events correspond, but may not yet be existent, and would include such phenomena as clairvoyance and ‘precognitive’ coincidences.

Roderick Main takes issue with some of Jung’s definitions on the grounds of Jung’s emphasis on simultaneity, as does Arthur Koestler, who asks:

One wonders why Jung created…unnecessary complications by coining a term which implies simultaneity, and then explaining that it does not mean what it means.

Main points out that if there is a big distance in time, yet the details and correspondences are precise, it is even more likely that this is synchronicity. Similarly, he takes up Jung’s insistence on paralleling inner with outer; psychic, with external, and asserts that synchronicity can take place between two external events or two internal events. Moreover, ‘inner’ events can also be seen as outer, and the ‘primary

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23 Phrases such as these can be found throughout Jung’s writing on synchronicity (as cited above).
24 Jung (1952), 441
25 For a full account of this, see Sigstedt (1952), Chapter 31 at: http://www.swedenborgdigitallibrary.org/ES/epic31.htm (Accessed February 2011)
26 Koestler (1972), 95
experienicer’ is not the sole judge of meaning: ‘a coincidence, no matter to whom it happens, is an event in the collectively experienced world’. Main sees Jung as being (like most of us) somewhat selective in choosing which examples he relates in the interests of supporting his own view of reality, which – in Jung’s case – is his unitary world view.

Relative causality is another issue: what is currently not a ‘normal’ cause may later, when more is known, be seen as causal, thus acausality must be relative to other factors, and this undermines Jung’s ‘absolute’ view of synchronicity. Further questions, moreover, have to be asked regarding the connection between meaning and content. For Jung, meaning is grounded in his overall psychological themes of archetypes, but whilst ‘content’ is a fairly neutral term, ‘significance’ is not. Main’s critique takes up this point about Jung’s ‘absolute synchronicity,’ in pointing out that, when examining coincidences,

There is always scope, further down the line for sharper critical evaluation and a separating out of the stronger and more interesting experiences from the weaker and less interesting.

In other words, one can ‘grade’ synchronistic experience as being more – or less – worthy of attention. Main’s primary interest is in synchronicity as a spiritual experience, whereas Robert Aziz focuses on the connection between synchronicity and Jung’s ‘psychologism’ of religion. Aziz argues that although Jung is often attacked for having a reductionist approach to religion (that it is ‘nothing but’ psychological processes, and using terms like the ‘God image’ rather than God), this only holds good if it were Jung’s only model of the psychology of religion. If the synchronicity aspect is considered, we see a different story begin to emerge: synchronistic phenomena pervade Jung’s personal life and his work, not just in his formal writings but especially in his scattered notes. We should also look to the religious or spiritual aspects of the individuation process.

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27 Main (2007), 20
28 ibid, 23
Maggie Hyde, writing as a divinatory astrologer, warns that Jung’s theory of synchronicity is frequently invoked to serve as an explanation of how astrology works, based on an over-simplistic view of his approach. Crucially, she raises the issue of participation, i.e. how astrologers may find themselves implicated in the symbols that arise. Her critique of Jung and astrology demonstrates in detail how Jung’s ‘scientific’ attempts to work with his astrological marriage experiments were upstaged by the trickster presence of Mercurius.29 Synchronicity is a complex and often confusing concept, requiring very careful study. Even then, its trickster elements can tend to prevail. Nevertheless, having introduced some ideas on the subject, we are better placed to view divinatory astrology in the context of synchronicity, and we shall now move on to an analysis of the case material in Part Two of this chapter.

29 Hyde (1992), 121
DIVINATORY ASTROLOGY

PART TWO: PRACTICE

Analysis of case material

The reader, having now seen the three case studies, outlined in detail in Appendix B, C and D — together with their notes on symbolism and main chart features — should be in a better position to give them some informed attention. These three events have been chosen to illustrate a variety of forms in which the divinatory astrologer may ‘meet’ the world through an active and creative understanding of the symbols that present themselves. We have seen examples of symbols ranging from universally familiar ones (wine, a double bed, sunset, glass) to more esoteric ones recognisable only to the alchemist or the trained astrologer (for instance, the *mysterium coniunctio* or the astrological Neptune). These have been interwoven with stories from myth; with the art of fiction as it cuts across ‘real’ life, and with the shock of psycho-physical manifestations. Some of the events described have displayed an extraordinary level of detail, all of which has played its part in the eventual construction of a narrative. We have seen how chronological time plays the most central part, and how one of the classic characteristics of divination — emotional affect — is also integral to this. The resulting narratives have, in moving through varying levels of emotional affect, culminated in the moment of astrology. We have seen, too, how the assignation of significance to a certain moment of chronological time has produced a chart of dazzling precision, showing the symbols appropriate to the event in a key position in the chart. This moment has not necessarily been the chronological moment when the event or epiphany took place: it might better be described as a moment of ‘truth,’ of unambiguous recognition — an *internal* epiphany. This study asserts that the impact of such epiphanies is so profound for the astrologer-diviner that they may be described as a *meeting*. In being open to events in the world and interpreting them through symbols, the experience is akin to an encounter with the divine.
Notes on Appendix B — ‘Edinburgh event’

Let us start by taking a reductive approach. It would be perfectly possible to see this story as nothing more than a mildly interesting anecdote involving siblings and their emotional and psychological relationship to their deceased parents. It culminates in a sudden physical event that — if one chooses to have a psychological ‘take’ on it — appears to ‘mirror’ the subject of their conversation at the time when it occurred. However, if taken as an instance of divinatory astrology, how do we analyse it in relation to the features outlined above?

Regarding emotional affect, we distinguished between a prior state of highly charged energy that might generate a divinatory event, and the shiver at the moment of divination. The siblings’ conversation was certainly highly charged: both had been greatly attached to their father, and during their childhood had felt distressed and impotent in witnessing the tension inflicted upon him by his wife’s mental condition. To re-experience this via an interpretation of his chart was disturbing. The next arousal of energy came with the actual breaking of the bed. Although it transpired that this was not the moment of astrology, it was sufficiently startling — at a physical level — to increase the existing emotional state generated by the conversation. One sibling responded to it merely as the catalyst for a major practical problem; the other (the astrologer) felt a distinct ‘charge’ in recognising a potential divinatory moment. She lost momentum — literally, ‘lost the moment’ — when it was difficult to time the event; the charge subsided but simmered for about an hour until a sudden apprehension (wood splits!) burst out, and that became the unambiguous moment of astrology. However, she was not able to set up the chart for this until the next day, when she had access to her computer. Then the moment of seeing the chart brought about a further charge, when the crucial vertical axis relating to that exact time contained the exact zodiacal degree representing the sisters’ ‘marriage,’ and confirmed the radicality of the chart.

So we can observe various stages of affect: firstly, the emotion generated by the siblings’ conversation about the dynamics of their parents’ marriage; secondly, the ‘normal’ reaction for both of them to a sudden physical accident; followed by, thirdly, three ‘moments’ for the astrologer: her immediate sense that this could ‘mean’ something; the ‘wood splits!’ moment of astrology about an hour later; and finally, the
excitement of seeing the chart itself with the unambiguous appearance of symbols that precisely mirrored the event, and determined it as a divinatory moment. The sense of address echoed these three instances, since the astrologer felt sufficiently startled by them to want to discover whether some agency was, indeed, making a point. Finally, as this case describes an unbidden omen, there is no explicit question posed by a diviner and thus no overt moral issue. This is not to say that a moral issue is only present when there are explicit questions translated into bidden omens. There is, however, often a sense of an implicit question with unbidden omens: as if – rather than the usual situation of the diviner asking the question – it is the ‘intelligent other’ who brings a question to the diviner’s attention. In this case, one could argue that the question in both siblings’ minds at the time of their conversation, was, ‘Is this interpretation of the acute tension in our father’s life a valid one?’ which was then answered emphatically in the affirmative, by the splitting of the bed.

The narrative in this case worked in the following way: it did not fully take shape until the ‘evidence’ of the moment of astrology was eventually shown in the chart. However, the astrologer was already mentally starting to piece together the details surrounding the central event on the homeward train journey, and hoping for a positive culmination in the form of a radical chart. When this was affirmed, she began formally to construct the narrative by writing it down.  

**Notes on Appendix C – African Event**

Regarding emotional affect: the first mild instance of this came with the astrologer’s visit to the couple the evening before the holiday. Although it was emphasised that the gift of a wineglass was a normal occurrence, nevertheless this particular one seemed to generate a heightened level of feeling: the giver had been reluctant to part with it; the receiver (an undemonstrative man) was uncharacteristically delighted with the gift, and possessively attached to it; and his wife stated that she was envious and wanted it for herself. Seen retrospectively, it is as if the wineglass theme declared itself from the outset as being of emotional significance for these three people, at that time. The next emotional scene was the microwave incident. However (unlike the broken-bed case) the astrologer’s reaction was simply a ‘normal’ physical response

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30 With events of this kind, it is important to write down the details as soon as possible. Rather like the attempt to recall certain dreams, the details can fade unless recorded quickly.
to a shock, and although she was an attentive omen-watcher, this incident did not immediately present itself as a potential divinatory moment. At this stage, she made no connection with her earlier gift of a wineglass. It is interesting, though, that the heightened reaction brought a dramatic *mythical* event into mind (the Zeus/Semele/Dionysos story). The third emotional scene was the lively discussion in the restaurant provoked by the astrologer’s removal of a wineglass from the table; and finally there was the animated discussion at lunch that generated the next breakage, and the emergence of this as an omen. What is particularly interesting about this final discussion is its context. The astrologer-diviner had spent the morning reading about divination, and this led to the discussion about it over lunch. It has frequently been observed among diviners that a focus upon, or discussion about, the subject itself tends to generate a divinatory occurrence. It is as if the subject of divination generates the necessary emotional affect out of which omens are likely to appear.

Here, it was Sarah’s response to it as representing a *moral* issue that caused the astrologer to note the time and to sense a divinatory moment. In this instance, the moral issue might be expressed as: ‘Was the astrologer wrong to take a glass? Should she accept that she should take responsibility for – and pay in full for – her breakage?’ In the postscript to the narrative, it was pointed out that, in the end, no fine was exacted for any breakage. Sarah, in this instance, is in *theoros* role, and the astrologer fulfilled her *hermeios* role by noting the time and later producing a chart. In the broken bed case, the astrologer was both *theoros* and *hermeios*, although it would be possible to see her sibling also as *theoros*, if we agree that there was an implicit question posed by *both* of them (‘Was our interpretation of our father’s life a valid one?’). In terms of emotional affect, both stories contain similar features: there are a number of staging posts, via animated conversations and sudden breakages towards the culmination, with the moment of astrology that asks to be timed; then again later, when it proves to have been valid. It seems, then, that the emotional charge can build up slowly. We must distinguish a straightforward physical shock (the microwave explosion or the broken bed) from a psychological shock (the ‘wood splits!’ revelation and the final breakage of

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31 In giving an example of an event where myth plays a central role, this is to acknowledge the profound interconnection (as in Jungian theory) between myth, symbol and the personal and collective unconscious. There is an additional relevance with divinatory astrology. Since its planets – which act as symbols – are given the names of Olympian deities, their mythological background is also naturally implicated in the process of interpretation.
glass), but the psycho-physical ‘event’ is an important link within the total divinatory experience.

**Notes on Appendix D – Poseidon’s Gold**

This third case, as already pointed out, is different in several respects from the first two. It involves only one person, the astrologer-diviner, who also takes both *hermeios* and *theoros* roles; it relates closely, within the narrative, to astrological symbolism which makes it less immediately accessible for the ‘lay’ reader; there is no moral issue involved, or even an implicit question; and finally, there is no psycho-physical event such as the sudden breaking of a bed or of glass. The emotional affect is covert rather than overt (for instance, there are no scenes of animated discussion) unless, perhaps, one allows the gathering pace of the thriller reaching its climax as emotional affect. The most powerful feeling level, in fact, relates to the astrologer’s background situation regarding her dying husband, although this is not recognised at the time of the event, only emerging as a recognisable theme many years later when the chart is reviewed. Unlike the earlier cases, there is no escalating of emotional tension involving several people or sequential incidents. The synchronicity, however – in its inner ‘psychic’ intensity – is certainly as strong as that of the broken bed: an internal rather than an external, or shared, epiphany.

This case is an example of an astrologer-diviner attending to symbols in the external, natural world (a new moon; a sunset); making a link with her own mental awareness of the astrological symbols forming at that particular period of time; and linking these to the related mythological symbols to make a meaningful connection with a literary, fictional world. The synchronous event, moreover, is triggered by the relatively quiet action of reading a book. Perhaps, then, this is the best example of how – as astrological symbols move, moment by moment in chronological time – a diviner’s awareness of them can bring a sense of meaning into the major and minor happenings in her own life, both on a daily basis, and over a wider time frame. The death of a spouse is not normally associated with celebration, but in this case, the retrospective perception of meaning, many years later, emerging from this case, was a source of great joy and comfort. The sense of loss was mediated by a memorable and extraordinary moment of synchronicity.
**Intra-subjective versus shared experience**

A further important point needs to be made here regarding an earlier observation about an excessive or solipsistic tendency to read meaning into everything. Over many years of teaching astrology, working with clients and giving lectures on the subject of divinatory moments, I have often been approached by people in a state of excitement, bringing charts to show me, in which they regard the presence of certain symbols to be hugely significant. My (private) assessment of the astrological symbols involved is that they often seem to be either inappropriate or imprecise in relation to the given situation. This brings up an important issue about the gap between intra-subjective and shared experience in the field of divination generally. Regarding divinatory astrology, these charts evidently have meaning for the people who bring them, yet they did not ‘speak’ to me at all. How do we agree whether an experience is ‘truly’ divinatory, or whether it is a case of misplaced enthusiasm and an imprecise use of astrological symbolism?

This is highly relevant to what I am doing in this chapter. I have presented case material – what I claim to have experienced as three examples of divinatory astrology in action – and have offered rambling stories about apparently trivial incidents. If the reader’s response is that they seem far-fetched and meaningless; that I am, in effect, behaving exactly like the very people I have criticised, I would be the first to agree. This gap between intra-subjective and shared experience continues to be problematic in the field of divination, particularly when it comes to interpreting symbols and establishing their significance within a particular context. Moreover, detailed astrological and symbolic correlations – of the kind described in this case material – are of great interest to astrologers and diviners and of considerably less interest to anybody else. The craft and tradition of astrology relies on an intricate observation of detail: the pure exactitude of degrees and minutes of longitude will always, for the astrologer-diviner, provoke the ‘divinatory shiver.’
Conclusion

The two parts of this chapter have been the turning point between our earlier introductory material about symbol and astrology, and the later focus on dialogue and meeting. By introducing case material at this point, we have attempted to show how divinatory astrology might be seen as a meeting with the divine, and will develop this in the remaining chapters. We have outlined some features of divinatory astrology; described its method — namely the setting up of a chart for the moment, and then making a judgement on this chart if it is thought to be ‘radical’; distinguished between bidden and unbidden omens; and discussed several key concepts. These include the relevance of narrative; the role of emotional affect; the presence — or absence — of a moral issue, and of explicit or implicit questions. We have addressed the concept of the moment of astrology, noting that although the method of divinatory astrology is directly related to chronological time, nevertheless ‘wrong time’ charts can still work. Chronological precision is both an integral part of the chart-based divinatory approach, and part of its ritual. Also integral to the diviner’s approach is serious intent, and *eros* in its ‘highest’, Neoplatonic sense.

Whilst astrological symbol is at the centre of the astrologer-diviner’s mental focus, attention is also paid to universal or ‘natural’ symbols, and to mythological ones (which are, in any case, linked to astrological ones through the mythological names of the planetary ‘deities’). All these can form meaningful connections, but this depends on the attentiveness of the diviner, and the depth of her experience. Jung’s theory of synchronicity has been addressed, and observed as being central to an understanding of the case material. An important source for our material is Henry Corbin, with his emphasis on the ontological reality of the *mundus imaginalis*; also, the recent work of Arthur Versluis, which — in including astrology among other Western esoteric traditions and emphasising its role in facilitating access to spiritual knowledge or gnosis — supports the view that divinatory astrology offers its practitioners a way of participating in a particular kind of initiatory experience and acquiring transformative knowledge.

Finally, we have noted several problematic issues in writing about divinatory astrology, of which the primary one is the ‘emic-etic’ divide. This not only confirms
the gulf between informational and experiential knowledge of symbols, but also increases the gap between the observer (the ‘lay’ reader of this material), and the participant (the astrologer-diviner). Nevertheless, by illustrating our proposition with case material and giving detailed analysis and notes on it, we have attempted to bridge this divide. By illustrating different ways in which divinatory astrology can work through actual narratives, we have hopefully offered the lay reader an opportunity to gain access to the more esoteric worldview and mindset of the astrologer-diviner. It may still appear to be a strange and rarefied place, but it is also – it should be added – highly mysterious for the diviners themselves, even with the guiding presence of familiar symbols.
SECTION THREE

DIALOGUE
INTRODUCTION TO DIALOGUE SECTION

This section on dialogue is divided into four chapters, reflecting the complex task of dealing with several different types of dialogue. This must be woven into our other core themes of astrology and divination as a dialogue with the divine. Moreover, since our focus in this study is on astrology’s application to ‘client work,’ the concept of astrological dialogue needs to be considered still further as being a particular and idiosyncratic form of psychotherapy. Thus dialogue needs to be defined not only in general terms, but also in the context of the consulting room, where the psychotherapeutic encounter is evidently a particular and specialised form of dialogue. Finally, we must consider – within all these strands of thought and practice – the notion of meeting between human and the divine, or transpersonal ‘other.’

In this section, then, I am attempting to maintain a difficult and delicate balance between analysis and synthesis: between both the separation and clarification of ideas and their intermingling, perhaps reflecting the reality of lived life, in all its woven textures. Chapter Seven is a general introduction to dialogue that will also serve to define its role within the context of astrological divination, and propose a distinction between what is here termed ‘human’ and ‘divine’ dialogue. In Chapter Eight, we take up the human/divine theme by introducing the model of dialogue proposed by Martin Buber, and consider both its connection with the astrological encounter, and some of Buber’s views on therapy and other ‘pastoral’ roles. Chapter Nine then focuses exclusively on the therapeutic encounter. There is a brief summary of the relation between therapist and patient, and I then continue by adopting a specific model of therapy: Robert F. Hobson’s ‘Conversational Model’.¹ I consider its relation to the broad therapeutic picture and to Buber’s ideas; its relevance to the astrological therapeutic encounter; and then examine what is here termed ‘the magician archetype’: a feature that may differentiate the astrologer-client relationship from other forms of therapy. Finally, in Chapter Ten we consider the role of the birthchart in the astrological encounter. By trying to define exactly what the birthchart is and whether it has a role as a third member of the astrological encounter, I hope to ascertain whether

¹ Hobson, (1985)
astrology is different from other therapies that have theoretical and physical ‘third parties.’ I will also consider the dynamics between astrologer, client and chart; and finally, look at whether the presence of the birthchart makes the astrological encounter unique in any way.
CHAPTER SEVEN

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO DIALOGUE

The previous chapters have provided the building blocks and the necessary background to my central focus of enquiry, which is the role of dialogue in astrological divination. So far, I have examined both astrology and divination, and we have seen examples of the way in which divinatory astrology can work. Now, we turn to dialogue. The first thing to note is that our previous exploration has been in what might be termed the esoteric areas: the dimension of symbol and its relationship with astrology, as well as the relationship between astrology and divination. Then, in linking astrology with divination, we have needed to clarify how divinatory astrology differs from other forms of divination, before further illustrating it through case material. Since the reader may have brought a certain amount of prior knowledge to the esoteric subjects of both astrology and divination, our task has been both to add to that knowledge, to dispel possible misconceptions, and also to offer a particular viewpoint.

With dialogue, however, we face a slightly different challenge. Unlike the previous subjects, the notion of dialogue does not require a detailed introduction or specific background information. Whilst there is much that can be said about it in specific contexts, it does not present problems for the reader; nor is it inaccessible. Since this is the case, then we appear to have a simpler task ahead. For our purposes here, I will offer a working definition of dialogue as some form of exchange between two or more subjects that often – but not always – involves language. However, given that astrology and divination are by their nature esoteric, it follows that any discussion of dialogue involving these subjects is unlikely to imply an ‘ordinary’ conversation – whether the dialogue is between two persons, or a number of persons. The general concept of dialogue may be a more accessible one, but – as we have already pointed out in the introduction to this section – it is the discussion of different types and forms of dialogue that is complex.

2 By ‘problems’, I am referring to earlier discussions regarding the difficulty of the insider/outsider position, and also to the issue of credibility for two practices that are apparently non-rational.
An exchange of information

Having said that dialogue – as being non-esoteric – is an accessible concept, and defining it as an exchange or a conversation, let us start by asking what kind of exchange we mean. It can be an exchange of practical information, or an exchange of thoughts, opinions or ideas, or a mixture of the two. For example, ‘How do I get to Piccadilly Circus?’ You must take the Underground from Hammersmith,’ gives practical information, but is also an *opinion* of the respondent (since one might also travel by bus); whereas ‘I think exercise is a healthy activity’ followed by ‘Yes, but it can be harmful to the joints,’ appears to be an exchange of ideas and opinions, but might also be offering practical information to the first speaker, who is ignorant of the danger to his skeletal system. However, both dialogues could be classified as recognisable, human and ‘ordinary.’ When it comes to divinatory dialogue, however, although it has all the hallmarks of these ‘normal’ exchanges, including a mixture of information, opinions and ideas, the information being sought is acquired via ‘non-natural’ means, making it a special form of exchange. Having said that, we should also make it clear that, in many cases, the diviner may be asking – on behalf of his or her client – for information that is rooted in everyday, human practicalities. We gave an example in the chapter on divination, in which the horary astrologer is asked, ‘Where is my cat?’ Or she may be asked for an opinion, as in ‘Should I move house?’ The answer to the first divinatory question will offer an indication of place; whilst the second query demands a simple yes or no type of answer, perhaps with a few modifications or additional comments. Yet both answers will provide what the act of divination seeks: namely a mixture of practical information, and an opinion that can offer guidance in making a decision.

Horary astrology, however (as we commented in the earlier chapter on divination), can tend to be weighted on the side of the practical. In the attached case material, we have seen rather more complex examples, and it is this latter type of divinatory dialogue that is our concern. As we have shown, the nature of divination is to look *through* the answer (which may be in the form of an image or a symbol) to arrive at the truth of the matter, rather than to accept it at face value. This involves a process of interpretation (that might also be understood as looking *through* received information to find a truth). The divinatory dialogue is, potentially, more than the mere
receiving or reciprocation of information or ideas, although it is that, also. We need to add two further observations here: that it requires the full participation of its subjects, and that it is potentially a transformative act.

**Participation and Transformation**

In saying that divinatory dialogue requires full participation, and that it is potentially transformative, are we then implying that ‘ordinary’ dialogue lacks these attributes? Let us firstly consider participation: it seems to be the case that whilst ‘ordinary’ dialogue may benefit from a quality of focused attention, it can also be a casual exchange that still achieves its aim of exchanging information or ideas. Yet the raising of its level, so to speak, to a more focused exchange does not mean it can then be equated with divinatory dialogue. Our view is that divinatory dialogue is qualitatively different. This takes us to the second point, regarding transformation, and again it could be argued that ‘ordinary’ dialogue can dramatically affect its protagonists: the exchange of information and ideas can be a stimulating process, and can have life-changing outcomes. If this is not what we mean by transformation, and if – as we are proposing – divinatory dialogue is of a different order, then what are the qualities that contribute to this? How is the nature of its participation and its transformatory power to be understood?

**A continuum of divination and dialogue**

In discussing divination in earlier chapters, I referred to Barbara Tedlock’s cognitive continuum, and also suggested a continuum of my own in relation to divinatory astrology. The point was to demonstrate that the act and experience of divination in general, and astrology in particular, takes place along a spectrum: that the faculties employed and states involved in different types of divination can differ qualitatively and that one can practise divination not only in different cognitive modes, but also at different levels of intensity. However, as Roderick Main pointed out in relation to synchronicity, certain events are considered more worthy of attention than
In other words, whilst they may all be classed as synchronicities, some are more qualitatively significant and dramatic than others. The continuum of ordinary dialogue could be seen to range from casual to focused: from the exchanging of relatively minor pieces of information and ideas at one end to a profound exchange of ideas at a philosophical or spiritual level at the other.

The continuum of divinatory dialogue, however, does not include a ‘casual’ mode. Rather, it moves from the intentional divinatory act to the unexpected one (which could, for our purposes, be understood as the synchronous event). This equates to an earlier discussion of bidden and unbidden omens: the bidden omen is the intentional act; the unbidden omen is the ‘surprise’ address via an event. With the intentional act, diviners – as initiators – go through the rituals of setting up a space in which the divination can be performed, and carrying out the prescribed methods by which a question may be posed; with the unexpected event, however, it is as if the diviner is addressed spontaneously, and the rituals are then followed as a result of this event (or, more precisely, as a response to it). In both cases, a divinatory dialogue takes place, but the emotional affect can be different in degree. As we have commented in relation to synchronicity (and seen in the case material) the element of shock or surprise evoked by a sudden event tends to increase the intensity of the experience. An intentional divination may be a calmer – but not a casual – procedure, but it is also a divinatory dialogue and, as such, is therefore qualitatively different from the ‘casual exchange’ end of an ordinary dialogue.

A divinatory dialogue, then, is not merely a more focused or intense ‘ordinary’ dialogue, since it has its own continuum of intensity. Its difference lies in some of the qualities discussed earlier that are associated with Rudolf Otto’s definitions of religious experience, namely awe, a sense of mystery and of numinosity. At the very beginning of the section on divination, our first working definition of it was ‘the seeking of

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3 Main (2007), 23
4 See for example, this statement by Ira Progoff about the meaningful element of synchronicity, which could equally apply to divination: ‘There are occasions, however, when events that are not causally related to one another take place at the same time in a way that is so filled with meaning that it seems to hold more than coincidence…It is these events of meaningful coincidence that Jung sees as the essence of Synchronicity.’ Progoff (1982), 130-131
5 See discussion in Chapter Six.
information by means other than natural ones. It is this non-natural quality that sets the divinatory dialogue apart.

**The full participation of both parties**

Having emphasised the particular quality of divinatory dialogue, let us look more closely at the issue of participation. We have said that the process of divination requires – on the part of the diviner – serious intent, an element of Platonic eros (being in touch with the highest level of desire\(^6\)) and total attention. Without these qualities, the desired information or opinion is unlikely to be evoked. All this seems to imply that it is the diviner – rather than the divine ‘Other’ being approached – who needs to enter into a state of full participation. In this kind of scenario, the divine ‘Other’ appears to issue an edict, rather in the nature of a public address system where no response is either required or possible. This edict is listened to, translated, interpreted and taken away by the diviner, in order to act upon it.

This would certainly appear to be an unequal exchange, more like a divine monologue than a dialogue, where by contrast, the diviner is fully engaged but the other party is relatively distant. This scene, however (even if we felt it was an accurate picture) could only apply in the case of the bidden omen, or the intentional divinatory act. When the diviner is suddenly surprised by an apparent address – the unbidden omen or synchronous event – we must allow that the ‘Other’ is also fully present. In fact, for the impact of the event to jolt the diviner into action, the presence of the other must be exceptionally strong. In this case, it is the other who has initiated this exchange: it is for the diviner to respond, and the dialogue is then set in motion. As we have seen in the case material, this form of dialogue can then become an ongoing process: there can be further manifestations of presence, and further responses on the part of the diviner. In some cases, the dialogue can even be picked up again years later.

\(^6\) See my earlier observations about the function of eros in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6.
The Annunciation

A graphic example of the full participation of both parties in the divinatory dialogue might be taken from the Christian tradition. A familiar scene, portrayed by numerous artists over two millennia, is what is usually referred to, simply, as The Annunciation. The archangel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary to deliver the news of the impending birth of the Christ child. The portrayals of this scene are many and various: in some the angel kneels to a standing Mary; in others, she kneels to a standing angel. In some, both kneel, or both stand. Mary is often engaged in contemplative pursuits such as praying or reading. In whatever form we view it, it has a powerful, universal appeal, and can be portrayed with extraordinary beauty. It is as if the subject matter touches some part of our hearts; it is one of the ultimate meetings between human and divine. There is consummate grace in the body language of the figures; a profound courtesy in their relation to each other. It is the emotional affect aroused by our perception of this level of meeting that contributes to the true goal of any divinatory dialogue: no question, here, of casual or half-hearted participation. Both figures are fully attentive, fully present. Whilst most divinatory acts would not represent, or aspire to, such heights of beauty, nevertheless it is useful to retain that image as a paradigm of a divinatory exchange

Human to human, human to divine

We now need to bring together certain things. In the earlier discussion of divinatory astrology – together with the case material that illustrated it – we described a particular kind of dialogue: that of astrologers in their encounters with the cosmos. At that point, we were primarily concerned about showing the way in which astrological divination differed from other forms of divination. Now that we are focusing on dialogue (and have made some comments on the nature of divinatory dialogue) this is the place to look at another form of astrological dialogue: that between the astrologer and his or her client. We are, therefore, suggesting two types of dialogue, and for convenience of reference, will term these ‘human’ and ‘divine’. In Chapter One, our introduction to astrology took a broad overview, but also emphasised that our primary interest in this study is in divinatory astrology. It is also – and it must be clarified at this point – rooted in astrology as a therapeutic practice. In order to gather together these
points, as they form our argument for the role of dialogue in astrological divination, in Chapter 8, we shall introduce two models against which some insight may be gained.

In terms of dialogue, we shall consider the model of dialogue presented by the Jewish scholar and thinker, Martin Buber; in terms of therapy, we shall use a twentieth-century psychotherapist, Robert F. Hobson, whose ‘Conversational Model’ offers an interesting comparison with astrological therapy. Buber’s two-fold attitude is an appropriate background for our proposition of two types of astrological dialogue, particularly as his central idea is the dynamics between the human-human and the human-divine relationship; Hobson’s ‘conversational’ model is an effective one for the idiosyncratic nature of the astrological encounter.
CHAPTER EIGHT

MARTIN BUBER’S MODEL OF DIALOGUE

In choosing to compare Buber’s model of dialogue with the astrological encounter, I anticipated a number of interesting comparisons, but was unprepared for the scale and complexity of the project. This was, however, a welcome outcome, for his model has proved both relevant and fruitful, and has opened up questions that – if they were to be followed – would take us far beyond the scope of this present study.

Martin Buber (1878-1965) was a religious thinker, philosopher, teacher and scholar. His extensive writings encompass subjects ranging from Hasidism, Arab-Israeli relations, the Jewish-Palestinian conflict and Zionism, to education and the problem of evil. A formidable intellectual figure, he influenced and inspired many prominent thinkers and writers in different fields, from Paul Tillich and Gabriel Marcel to Albert Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Maurice Friedman, a major interpreter of Buber’s work, comments:

More remarkable still, Buber has accomplished the rare feat of combining this breadth and intensity into an integral unity of life and thought, and he has done this without sacrificing the concrete complexity and paradoxicality of existence as he sees it. Buber’s writings are unusual in their scope and variety, dealing with topics in the fields of religion, mythology, philosophy, sociology, politics, education, psychology, art, and literature. Despite this variety, Buber’s philosophy attains a central unity which pervades all of his mature works.7

It is this ‘central unity’ that sets him apart from other thinkers who may be less grounded in human relationship. Among the considerable number of commentators on his work, the most telling observations, in my view, come from those who have known

7 Friedman (1955), 5
and spent time with Buber, face to face. His person, they say, does not give the lie to his work: with all the warmth and love that emanates from him, he is an authentic spokesperson for the qualities he advocates. Perhaps this is why one needs, constantly, to return to his original writings. For all its apparent simplicity, however, his writing can be extremely dense, and the many perceptive and helpful interpretations of those who critique his work are necessary to broaden one’s own understanding and to appreciate the subtleties of what he is saying. Nevertheless, the reading of his own words, just as he wrote them, must lie at the heart of any endeavour to get close to Buber. His primary philosophy – that which concerns dialogue – can only be experienced in a heartfelt way by engaging in direct communication with him. One must ‘listen’ – on the page – to him ‘speaking’ to oneself as a reader. If the major part of one’s effort to understand him is via interpreters, then one loses the core sense of his philosophy. Whether or not one may reach a position of being able to articulate his theories is another matter: one has to be in dialogue with Buber himself even to begin to sense what he is writing about.

The choice of Buber’s model of dialogue as perhaps having relevance to astrological dialogue seems, retrospectively, to have been a fortuitous move, and his best-known work I and Thou has proved a goldmine for the present study.\footnote{Buber (1958)} His work offers a unique contribution to the study of divination, as I hope to show.\footnote{I had bought a copy of I and Thou very many years ago (drawn by the promise of the word ‘dialogue’) and only dipped into it briefly, since when it sat on the bookshelf, unread. As books do, however, it remained a presence, and Buber himself might have commented that it remained ‘present’ to me. Now, years later, in this study which argues the case for the astrological encounter, Buber has moved from the bookshelf and offered his voice. It is as if the dialogue that started years ago has been re-opened.} First, I shall briefly summarise his model of dialogue; then discuss some aspects of the astrological encounter, and finally, compare the two, both for similarities and for points of divergence.

Buber’s most famous, and arguably his greatest work, was I and Thou, published in 1923. His earliest published essays were written around 1900, and his writing from then until the publication of I and Thou can be seen as a progress towards his later ‘mature’ philosophy. This twenty-two year period (taking him as a man from the age of about twenty-two to the age of forty-four) has been divided by some critics...
into three stages: an early period with a focus on mysticism; a middle period of existentialism; and a final period in which he was developing his dialogical philosophy, including a dialectic of religion and culture and a study of community and religious socialism.\textsuperscript{10}

‘All real living is meeting’

Buber writes poetically and elegantly: \textit{I and Thou} in some ways reads more like poetry than prose, and contains a considerable number of memorable lines. ‘All real living is meeting’ is one of these, and is a good place from which to start an exploration of his theory of dialogue.\textsuperscript{11} Like many of Buber’s clear and powerful propositions, though, its sheer simplicity both clarifies the idea and also masks the depth and complexity behind it. Additionally, one should not forget that the original text is in his native German. However well his writings are translated, there will always be the pitfalls inherent in a work written in a different language from one’s own, especially when it is conveying a deeply-felt and highly individual philosophy. ‘All real living is meeting’, though, does indeed convey effectively the core of Buber’s thought: that the process of relationship is at the root of meaningful life. This relationship, moreover, is not restricted to that between one human being and another. It includes encounters with animals, trees, and even stones. It also extends the idea of ‘meeting’ to everyday events that may present themselves to a person, and it is this latter aspect of meeting which is, as we have seen in the case material, particularly relevant to the astrological encounter.

\textbf{I-Thou and I-It}

Within this fundamental concept of relationship there are two strands. Buber has two phrases: I-Thou and I-It, which he calls ‘primary words.’ According to Buber, ‘I’ does not and cannot exist in isolation, but should instead be seen as one co-element of the I-Thou or I-It equation. I-Thou is the primary word of relation; I-It is the primary word of experiencing and using. The basic difference between the two could be expressed as the difference between, respectively, a subject-subject relation and a

\textsuperscript{10} Avnon (1998), 33-47
\textsuperscript{11} Buber (1958), 25
subject-object relation. Some further observations may help to fill out these bare statements: I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being, but I-It can never be spoken with the whole being. I-Thou is characterised by the qualities of mutuality, presentness, directness, intensity and ineffability, but I-It is merely subjective within a man who is lacking in mutuality, and the I-It process simply reinforces a previous definition of the object. Thus I-Thou occurs in the present, and I-It is related to the past. By the ‘past’ is meant that the person in I-It mode regards his object as something – or somebody – whose purpose or function has already been defined: the ‘It’ to his ‘I’ has already been part of his previous orientation to the world and has therefore moved into the past. The I-Thou relation is one of realisation in the ‘real filled present’: for the person involved in I-Thou, it is as if he is seeing something for the first time and he is caught up in the uniqueness of that particular relationship; he does not wish to – or cannot – categorise it. The person in I-It mode, on the other hand, is only interested in things as they relate to things of a utilitarian nature; they represent parts of a previously-defined ‘category’ of knowledge and he is not interested in their uniqueness.\(^{12}\)

**Hasidism**

Even from such a brief summary of the nature of I-Thou and I-It, our introductory comments about the density of Buber’s writing will already be evident to a reader unfamiliar with his theories. His early connections with the pietist movement of Hasidism may help to illustrate the background to his developing thought. As a boy growing up in Poland, he spent his summers on his father’s farm in Bukovina and discovered their communities. Later, in his twenties, in the early years of the twentieth century, Buber retired from his political and journalistic activities and spent five years among the Hasidim of Galicia, in isolation and in close study of Hasidic texts. Maurice Friedman observes that ‘it was only after he emerged from this isolation into renewed activity that he entered on his real life work as a writer, a speaker and a teacher.’\(^{13}\) Aubrey Hodes – a friend, and former student of Buber’s – comments that ‘He withdrew into one of the most rewarding periods of his life, a time of meditation and private

\(^{12}\) Buber (1958), 26
\(^{13}\) Friedman (1955), 16
study…discovering a new world of thought and symbolic imagination.' \(^{14}\) It was a turning point in the gradual approach to his focus on dialogue. Hasidism developed in eighteenth-century Poland and was characterised by joy, love, and mystic fervour. Hodes expresses this well:

> The Hebrew word hesed means ‘loving-kindness.’ So a hasid is a man who meets the world with loving-kindness, affirming the reality about him, hallowing it and so transforming it and himself. \(^{15}\)

For Buber, the ‘reality about him’ came to be of primary importance. This reality was the everyday world of people he encountered, and of events that he met and which met him. He reconsidered what, for him, was the real significance of the ‘mystical’ and the ‘religious’ and found it in the world around him, and his constant dialogue with this world. From Hasidim he learned to ‘accept the world with gladness.’ \(^{16}\) He came to a point where he felt that the ‘poetry of the everyday’ constituted the truly mystical and religious life. \(^{17}\) The Hasidic way of being was a living endorsement of the precept, ‘love thy neighbour.’ ‘Meet the world with the fullness of your being and you shall meet God. If you wish to believe, love!’ \(^{18}\)

**The astrological encounter**

Earlier, we suggested two types of astrological encounter, termed as ‘human’ and ‘divine’, and we can now expand on this.

**The ‘human’ astrological encounter**

By this, we mean the astrologer-client relationship: an encounter between two human beings. The structure and details of this will vary from one astrologer to another, though a formal meeting is likely to share a broad number of factors. These will be similar to the traditional psychotherapeutic or counselling session, and might include: a specified period of time; a reasonably private place; a fee paid to the

\(^{14}\) Hodes (1975), 64  
^{15} ibid, 62  
^{16} Hodes (1975), 65  
^{17} At the Turning, (1952), 150, quoted in Hodes (1975), 67  
^{18} ibid, 65
astrologer; a discussion of the client’s situation, motivation and state of mind; and a current question or decision for which the client is seeking guidance.

The main – and crucial – difference from the traditional psychotherapeutic or counselling session would be the presence of the client’s birthchart as a point of reference for the discussion. A secondary, but important, consideration would be whether the astrologer offers more than a one-off session. Many contemporary astrologers encourage – and are open to – ongoing work with their clients. It is not unusual, however, to find astrologers who offer a single session without encouraging any follow-up work. This may be for a number of reasons: possibly some astrologers feel (justifiably?) that they are not specifically trained to deal with the hazards and complexity of in-depth analytical work. Or they may simply not feel attracted by (or, again, sufficiently trained to carry out) the counselling-mode approach required by regular ongoing work with a client. The astrologer who chooses to structure a practice based on ‘one-off’ readings is a different sort of practitioner from a typical counsellor or therapist, for whom a series of sessions is the norm. Counsellors tend to arrange a series of sessions at the outset, and psychotherapeutic practice can continue on an open-ended basis for many years.

In this study, we are concerned with the astrologer who practises on a longer-term basis, and here there will be technical and practical variations. Practical variations would be the length of time of the session (anything from half an hour to two and a half hours); the location, which could be a formal consulting room, family sitting room or kitchen, a garden, or a public café (and these very different locations would clearly affect the degree of privacy); the amount of the fee; and whether the session is recorded or written up in any form. Technical variations would be to do with the type of astrology being practised: whether modern ‘psychological’, traditional horary, or other variants. This would affect whether the focus is likely to be on a general character analysis of the client, as opposed to a more specific focus on a current question or decision. What would also be relevant is the astrologer’s personal position on the question of prediction. More generally – and this will be important for the question of dialogue addressed in this study – there is the issue of whether the actual birthchart plays a prominent part in the session. In a more broadly counselling-oriented approach, it may only have a peripheral or background role.
What has been outlined above refers to a formal astrological encounter, carried out by astrologers ranging from those who are highly trained and experienced to those who may only have studied astrology briefly and are dabbling in a recreational way with that category of client usually referred to as ‘family and friends.’ Perhaps not surprisingly, the former type of astrologer represents a small minority of those who would describe themselves as ‘astrologers.’ Over the last decade or so, however, there has been an interesting surge of focus on ‘professional’ (sic) training. An earlier generation of auto-didacts and casual ‘new-age’ enthusiasts is slowly being replaced by a body of astrologers who have committed themselves to several years of formal astrological training, with demanding examinations at the end of their courses. Many of these ‘serious’ astrologers will have also received specific training in counselling skills.

This new and focused ambition to ‘be a professional astrologer’ stands in marked contrast to an earlier more leisurely situation, where people moved gradually and organically towards this position, often without any sense of intention.\(^{19}\) This earlier stage in the evolution of astrological training would have been marked by relatively informal encounters: brief exchanges at a social gathering, or a conversation over a cup of coffee or a meal, and in such meetings, a fee would be unlikely to be charged. Indeed, even in a contemporary climate of business-like meetings, many astrologers – in training or otherwise – may still choose not to charge a fee, preferring to keep it ‘friendly,’ or perhaps because they doubt their own skills and experience.

**The ‘divine’ encounter**

Having considered some aspects of the ‘human’ astrological encounter (and focusing on its practical side) let us now turn to a rather different type of meeting: the ‘divine’ encounter. We have already discussed and given examples to illustrate this phenomenon, presented earlier as the astrological divinatory dialogue. We include further comments on this here, in the more specific context of dialogue, in order to expand on these ideas. We mean, therefore, those moments when the astrologer has a strong sense of being in touch with something outside the parameters of normal human experience. As with the human astrological encounter, these will vary from one

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\(^{19}\) This important shift has, in our view, been reflected by – and to some extent caused by – a vast increase in the amount of astrological literature over the last fifty years.
astrologer to another, and we should emphasise that this type of encounter is only characteristic of those astrologers who would perceive astrology as being ‘divinatory.’ As has been pointed out earlier, there are many astrologers who do not see astrology as divinatory in the sense we have portrayed it in the case material. They might either deny this aspect of astrological experience, or simply not understand what it is about. It is important, therefore, to be clear that the divinatory approach is not a typical one. Moreover, the view presented in this study – whilst it will be understood, and perhaps appreciated by, a relatively small number of astrologers – is entirely our own.

**Human versus Divine encounter**

To summarise so far: the main distinctions to be observed between these two types of encounter is that all astrologers would recognise the description of the human encounter (whether or not they choose to practise formal client work), but only ‘divinatory astrologers’ would recognise the divine encounter, in the way it has been described here.²⁰

The human dimension of the encounter – if conducted on a formal basis – is arranged mutually by the astrologer and client to occur at a certain time. Even the informal meetings tend to be part of a fairly predictable pattern to astrologers’ daily lives. Since the subject of astrology tends to attract attention, both favourable and critical, if people are known to be astrologers, they are likely to find themselves in (often lively or combative) dialogue with other people in a range of situations. The divine encounter, on the other hand, is characterised by an element of surprise, and sometimes of shock, as the case material demonstrated. It is, as observed earlier, as if the ‘other’, in whatever form it is described, takes the initiative and speaks to the astrologer: the address comes from the other and is not, therefore, within the control of the astrologer. An unexpected address from another human being in an ordinary social situation can be surprising; the divine encounter, as we have seen, has an extraordinary quality, and this quality which can be termed ‘numinosity’ goes beyond mere surprise.

²⁰ Most astrologers – from whatever background – would talk in terms, for instance, of a ‘dialogue with the cosmos.’ This, however, would be a generalised concept of astrology as connected with cosmic symbolism. The encounters described in the case material here are suggested as a ‘meeting with the divine,’ and this theological slant is a very different orientation.
Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that these numinous experiences, while they may occur ‘out of the blue,’ could not occur without some preparation on the part of the astrologer. By this, we mean that astrologers who practise intensively; who follow the progress of planetary movements on a daily basis; and who are open to these movements as potential signs, are more likely to experience these encounters. We might term them ‘attentive’ astrologers, poised – so to speak – for meeting, but without in any way assuming that such a meeting can be coerced or prearranged. There is a striking similarity between this description of an attentive astrologer and Buber’s ‘attentive man,’ responding to a situation.

The attentive man would no longer, as his custom is, “master” the situation the very moment after it stepped up to him: it would be laid upon him to go up to and into it. Moreover, nothing that he believed he possessed as always available would help him…for now he would have to do with what cannot be classified, with concretion itself. This speech has no alphabet, each of its sounds is a new creation and only to be grasped as such.21

‘Concretion’ is a key word for Buber. He seems always concerned with holding us in the reality of the here and now: in what is in front of us, rather than in abstractions. This passage has an important echo for our descriptions of the astrological synchronistic event, as presented in the case material. It is the inability to classify what is happening that marks such encounters as I-Thou, rather than I-It.

**Buber in relation to the astrological encounter**

Having summarised the characteristics of both types of astrological encounter, we are now closer to considering the similarities with Buber’s model of dialogue. In the two types of astrological encounter, we have seen the human type to be predominantly an arranged meeting, while the divine is largely a spontaneous one. The human meeting may or may not be initiated by the astrologer himself (the practitioner is usually approached by a client, requesting a session), but it is a ‘natural’ occurrence, within the bounds of everyday human experience; the divine meeting, on the other hand, is ‘non-

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21 Buber (1947), 16
natural.\textsuperscript{22} Whilst it can be initiated by the astrologer (as in the earlier descriptions of horary astrology, or a planned divination) the divine meetings initiated by the ‘other’ have a more powerful element of surprise and shock: in this sense, astrologers are not ‘in control,’ nevertheless they would not be likely to attract such a meeting without a considerable amount of preparatory awareness.

Since Buber’s I-Thou model is generally presented as being a spontaneous occurrence, we might therefore expect this to bear a closer resemblance to the divine astrological encounter, with the I-It mode more like the human meeting. Buber, however, always insists that the divine can only be met through the human. The comparison, then, will be a rather more complex one. We cannot take Buber’s twofold approach to dialogue and assume – or hope for – neat parallels with the two-type division we have suggested for the astrological encounter. This division was offered in order both to illustrate and to clarify some aspects of astrological practice that might otherwise be obscure to a non-astrological reader. Moreover – to our present knowledge – it will not be found (in the way we have delineated it here) in any current astrological literature. It is, however, only an artificial construct, and neither astrologers nor their practice fall into reliably neat categories. Nevertheless, it is interesting that in writing about astrological practice, we conceived the division of human and divine dialogue many years before coming across Buber’s model.

**Buber’s view of educator, healer and pastor in relationship**

In beginning to unravel some of these issues, we need to look at Buber’s postscript to the revised, second edition of *I and Thou*, written in 1957. This was written thirty five years after the first edition, which came out in 1923. In it, he includes a reference to other types of relationship such as educator and pupil, pastor ‘with a cure of souls’ and psychotherapist/doctor/healer and patient.\textsuperscript{23} Such relationships appear to resemble the astrologer-client relationship – or human encounter – as described above. In looking at these relationships, Buber gives the subject a relatively brief consideration.

\textsuperscript{22} See references to ‘natural’ in the introduction to Chapter Five.
\textsuperscript{23} Buber (1958), 167
However, he is very clear that these relationships ‘in their nature may not unfold to full mutuality if they are to persist in that nature.’ By ‘full mutuality’ he is, as we have seen, referring to the I-Thou relation. We might then infer from his comment that he sees these more pastoral relationships as somehow inferior or less admirable than more ‘equal’ ones where there can be full mutuality. In other words, the spectrum of ‘pastoral’ relationships would fall under under the category of I-It.

It is necessary, however, to clarify that in describing his twofold attitude, Buber is presenting neither as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, superior or inferior, simply as different. I-Thou is characterised by full mutuality (as in subject-subject), and I-It by an attitude of greater objectivity (as in subject-object). Both are appropriate to certain situations in life, and Buber does not suggest that it is possible, or desirable, to sustain the more intense I-Thou relation for most, or all, of the time. The differences, which were indicated briefly earlier, are that I-Thou, with its ‘full mutuality,’ has a real awareness of the other as present and unique; is fully open to that other in the moment of meeting; and is fully met by the other in return. I-It, with its detached approach, draws on past knowledge to notice the qualities of the other; relates these to other (previous) beings and situations; and, moreover, is able to use this knowledge. This is, so to speak, a process of assessing and categorising in which the other is treated as an object rather than another subject. I-Thou, then is described by Buber as a relation of realisation; and I-It, as a relation of experiencing and using.

Astrologer as educator, psychotherapist and ‘pastor’

Astrologers, whatever type of astrology is practised, tend – like Buber’s educator and psychotherapist – to be in what might be termed the ‘expert’ position. Since they are, apparently, in possession of specialised information, they are (to some extent) deferred to by those who consult them. As educators, they may teach students; prepare them for examinations; give non-astrologers informal yet ‘informed’ comments

24 He discusses the educator-pupil relationship at more length in Buber (1947), section 111 on Education
25 Buber (1958), 164
26 This is also discussed later in this chapter under the heading ‘I-Thou and I-It in relation to good and evil’.
on their birth signs, and ‘educate’ their ongoing clients into a familiarity with the principles and workings of astrology. As psychotherapists and counsellors, their aim may be to help clients towards a better understanding of their character and motivation; to discuss and guide their progress towards making life decisions; and generally to support them in this process. In all of this, they could certainly be seen as having a pastoral role (‘pastoral’ as a broadly descriptive adjective). The support they can offer comes from a basis of specialised knowledge. It may also include many other qualities characteristic of – and desirable for – the role of teacher, therapist or pastor. These would include teaching and counselling skills; psychological awareness (both instinctive and knowledge-based); compassion, intelligence, diplomacy, intuition, and so forth. However, they are rarely seen as ‘just’ a counsellor, wise adviser and friend, though they may perform any – or all – of these functions.

The ‘cosmic’ dimension of astrology

The particular nature of the astrologer’s expertise – linked, as it is, to the sun, moon and planets, and therefore on an impressively ‘cosmic’ scale – will always affect the balance of the relationship. The power balance in any formal psychotherapeutic relationship has been a focus of serious psychological consideration for several decades, but nevertheless the astrologer as therapist and counsellor wields an extraordinary weapon – the cosmos itself – as part of a professional persona. In a sense, no amount of specialised psychological knowledge of the workings of the human mind – the unconscious, the ego, and so forth – can compete with this. What goes on ‘within’ the human head is not on a par with a system that claims to connect us to the vast mysteries which are daily and nightly visible in the sky. That these heavenly factors may be reduced, by psychological theory, to ‘mere’ projections, does not entirely remove a more instinctive human response of cosmic awe. We shall consider later what we have termed the ‘magician archetype’ in relation to the astrologer as therapist. For now, it is sufficient to say that whilst an astrologer may aim to meet a client on an ‘equal’ basis as just another human being, by its very nature, the astrologer-client relationship is not an

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27 A comparison with the Jungian concept of ‘individuation’ would perhaps not be inappropriate here. Briefly, this refers to the process of becoming who you ‘are’; fulfilling your own unique potential; becoming the person you are meant to be.

28 On the power balance in therapy, see, for example, Guggenbuhl-Craig (1971).
equal one. Not only does it fall into the categories to which Buber refers in his 1957 postscript (and is therefore an I-It relation), but it also occupies a unique position by virtue of its cosmic connotations.

**I-Thou, I-It and Buber’s view of pastoral relationships**

In talking of whether the educator may achieve an I-Thou relation with his pupil, Buber comments that,

> He must not know him as a mere sum of strivings and inhibitions, he must be aware of him as a whole being and affirm him in his wholeness. But he can only do this if he meets him again and again as his partner in a bipolar situation...he must practise the kind of realisation which I call inclusion (Umfassung).

So we have a statement from Buber that the educator relation can operate as I-Thou only if the educator is prepared to be open and equal with his pupil (the significant words are ‘bipolar’ and ‘inclusion’). He also comments, though, that ‘it is plain that the specifically educative relation as such is denied full mutuality.’ In other words, if the educator's relation with his pupil develops beyond the specifically educative; if the teacher reaches a point of being able to open himself fully to the pupil, the I-it can become I-Thou. If it remains at the stage where education is the primary purpose, then it remains as I-It.

In turning to the psychotherapist-patient relation, Buber states that this relation is an ‘example of the normative limitation of mutuality.’ Buber talks of a ‘genuine psychotherapist,’ but does not – as far as we can see – develop this further to explain what a non-genuine psychotherapist might be. Moreover, the question of whether the astrological consultant – highly trained or not, and even now in the twenty-first century – may be considered to be a ‘genuine psychotherapist’ remains a difficult one to answer.

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29 Buber (1958), 165
30 ibid, 165
31 ibid, 165
32 ibid, 165. Over the course of a long life, however, Buber’s ideas developed and changed. He has more to say about the role of psychotherapy much later. See, for example, his conversation with the psychotherapist, Carl Rogers, in 1989. Carl Rogers Dialogues (1989).
Given his comments elsewhere on ‘the augurs’ and ‘those who cast a horoscope,’ Buber himself would have been unlikely to see an astrologer as a genuine psychotherapist. However, if he were writing now, his sheer humanity and his ability to step outside ordinary ways of perceiving things would not – in my view – make him judgemental about practising astrologers. Rather, his remarks about the ‘augurs’ would have referred to those astrologers whose attitude to their work demonstrated a negative approach: in other words, using prediction in a manipulative or purely commercial way, and promoting the idea of a ‘fixed fate.’

This is speculation, though, for at the time when he was referring to augurs and horoscope-casters, the concept of astrologers practising in a psychotherapeutic way was unknown in the sense that we would recognise it today. At that time (around 1929) only those with some historical knowledge of, for example, the 17th century horary astrologer William Lilly, would have even begun to concede that the practice might have a therapeutic effect. Alan Leo, the British astrologer who was practising at the turn of the twentieth century, might be regarded as an important modern pioneer of the ‘therapeutic’ effect of reading horoscopes, but Buber is unlikely to have been aware of this. However, for the purposes of this study (and writing from a twenty-first century perspective) we are treating the astrological practitioner as potentially a genuine psychotherapist. Buber sees the psychotherapist as doing helpful work: ‘…he may help a soul which is diffused and poor in structure to collect and order itself to some extent.’ He concludes, though, that ‘healing, like educating, is only possible to the one who lives over and against the other and yet is detached.’

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33 Buber (1947), 11
34 This has clear echoes of any criticism of astrologers as charlatans, both historical and contemporary, as discussed in Chapter One.
35 William Lilly was discussed in the earlier chapters on astrology. See Chapter 6.
36 Alan Leo’s mail order service was rather like a prototype of our modern computer horoscopes. However, his emphasis on character (rather than prediction) was an important move towards the now-familiar phenomenon of a ‘personal’ character reading, carried out face-to-face with an individual client.
37 Buber (1958), 166
38 ibid, 166
Buber on the Pastor relationship

Buber’s comment on the pastor relationship is striking and deserves to be quoted in full:

The most emphatic example of normative limitation of mutuality could be provided by the pastor with a cure of souls, for in this instance an ‘inclusion’ coming from the other side would attack the sacral authenticity of the commission…Every I-Thou relationship, within a relation which is specified as a purposive working of one part upon the other, persists in virtue of a mutuality which is forbidden to be full.\(^{39}\)

It is the word ‘forbidden’ that stands out here. Since with the pastor we have now moved into the realm of a sacral undertaking, this could never reach full I-Thou status. If pastors move to a bipolar relation, or if the ‘soul’ to whom they are ministering attempts inclusion with the pastor, then the sacral authenticity of the relation fails.

In summary: the roles of the educator and the psychotherapist are by definition I-It. As fellow human beings, albeit ones with specialised or superior knowledge, they can choose at some point to move to I-Thou with their pupils and patients. Pastors, however, stand in for the Divine. Their healing role is I-It, and if matters move towards I-Thou, they are profaning the ‘sacral authenticity of the commission.’\(^{40}\)

The Eternal Thou

This brings us to a crucial issue, which Buber addresses in the final remaining paragraphs of his postscript:

…it must be discussed since it is incomparably the most important of all. The question is, how can the eternal Thou in the relation be at once exclusive and inclusive? How can the Thou relationship of man to God…nevertheless include all other I-Thou relations of this man, and bring them as it were to God?\(^{41}\)

\(^{39}\) Buber (1958), 167
\(^{40}\) ibid
\(^{41}\) ibid
This question is, evidently, at the heart of our study. Our immediate task, however – in relation to the astrologer – is limited to a consideration of the educator and the psychotherapist, and the implications of this issue for the astrological dialogue must be addressed later. These roles can be described in a broad sense as pastoral, and the astrologer’s role can be similarly described. In using the word pastoral here as an adjective, we are not implying a link to the priestly vocation of the pastor who is ordained (in certain religions) as a representative of the Divine. Buber is Jewish, and Christians have related strongly and positively to his writing. In this study, we use the word divine (lower case ‘d’) in an altogether broader sense, which includes a more classical or pagan sense of divinity. Nevertheless, there are interesting psychological and sociological observations to be explored: modern astrology – like depth psychology – has to some extent been seen to acquire a priestly mantle in a secular age.

At this point we might well be asking certain questions. If the educator and ('genuine') psychotherapist are, apparently – in Buber’s view – doing good work within the limitations of the I-It relation, what is the advantage of ‘moving on,’ so to speak, to the I-Thou relation? If, as Buber implies, I-It has an essential place in man’s life in the world, might we not agree that I-It is an appropriate relation for educators and psychotherapists towards their respective pupils and patients? Certainly, as men in the full expression of their lives (as Buber might have phrased it), they should be open to I-Thou relations, but does this need to be with their pupils and patients? The answer to this – in our view, and in relation to the role of the astrologer – is both yes and no. It relates to certain issues to be explored later, namely the presence of the birthchart and the implications of the ‘magician’ archetype. It also hinges on the distinction we have made between the human and the divine astrological encounter. In order to address this, we need to return to Buber’s ‘twofold attitude’.

The twofold attitude

At the very beginning of I and Thou, Buber raises the idea of the twofold attitude when he introduces and differentiates between what he calls the two ‘primary words’ - I-It and I-Thou. In this chapter, I have attempted to present the astrological

42 See the definition of ‘divine’ at the outset of this study, in the Introduction.
dialogue in such a way as to be reasonably comprehensible to non-astrologers and to those unfamiliar with its practice. In doing so, we have also posited a twofold approach, termed the human and the divine astrological dialogue. At the same time, we have pointed out that this is a deliberately artificial distinction, and one that is not necessarily shared (or even understood) by many astrologers. As we commented earlier, this is likely to lead us into a level of complexity and paradox that perhaps could have been avoided if we had chosen to approach the subject matter differently.

We could, for example, initially have described the human dialogue – the astrologers as they practise with clients at an educative and psychotherapeutic level – and then compared it with Buber’s model of I-It and I-Thou. Later, divinatory astrologers and their ‘numinous’ encounters could have been introduced and compared with Buber’s philosophy, and we might then have moved in an orderly way towards some conclusions. It is one thing, though, to separate aspects of astrological practice into two hypothetical categories for the sake of clarity. It is another thing, having done so, to then imply that they operate on different ‘levels’ or planes. The very terms human and divine (which pervade this study) have an implicit hierarchy – as in, for instance, the terms sacred and profane. If the idea of the ‘divine’ astrological dialogue is presented as a different order of activity, it fails to do justice to the complexity, richness, and potentially numinous quality of astrology as it operates in all its various guises. The word ‘guise’ is a deliberate acknowledgement of the trickster archetype, which – as many astrologers know – is a pervasive and highly active feature of the practice.

Buber’s mode of writing may be dense and deceptively simple, but he does not shrink from mixing his concepts together as he writes: he moves back and forth as he develops his ideas. He insists on placing the divine within the everyday; he accepts the confusion and paradox of the interweaving of human and divine, both in his life and in his work. Similarly, if we decided to separate ‘ordinary,’ everyday work with clients from the divinatory aspect of astrology, it might suggest that one could exist without the other. It would be as if Buber started I and Thou by writing at length about I-It and then later introducing I-Thou. It might read less densely, but it would risk losing the very point and nature of what he is writing about. This present project of relating his model to an astrological one should, in my view, have a similar tolerance of confusion –
‘confusion’ in its most poetic sense – and thus offers a more authentic reflection of how the practice of astrology may be experienced.

I-Thou and I-It in relation to good and evil

Buber’s view, in his mature writing, is that the relation with the Eternal Thou is encountered in everyday life: in relations with other men, with animals, with the natural world and within daily occurrences. He turns away from the type of mysticism that describes melting into union with the Divine in an ecstatic state. There is always the man himself, and the other. In these meetings, the crucial thing is the event of meeting; the process of relationship. Whilst the I-It relation is not a meeting with Thou, it nevertheless has its proper place in man’s life in the world. We could never, Buber says, be in I-Thou mode all the time. When he tackles the subject of good and evil, he is clear that I-It is ‘not to be regarded as simply evil’: it is only when man never emerges from this mode that there are problems.43 The I-Thou relation, he says, ‘similarly is not an unqualified good.’44 In fact, he goes further with this to emphasise that ‘in its lack of measure, continuity, and order it threatens to be destructive of life.’45 The moments of the Thou are:

...strange lyric and dramatic episodes, seductive and magical, but tearing us away to dangerous extremes, loosening the well-tried context, leaving more questions than satisfaction behind them, shattering security.46

Moreover, at some point I-Thou always becomes I-It. To re-emphasise our earlier point, namely that the artificial division of astrological encounters into human and divine can be misleading, it is evident that this might suggest the opposite of Buber’s model. If this division is taken too far, it would appear that on the one hand, we have astrologers meeting clients in their everyday practice, doing an effective job within the limits of the I-It relation; and on the other, we have astrologers experiencing occasional

43 Friedman (1955), 60
44 ibid, 60
45 ibid, 60
46 Buber (1958), 51
encounters that bring about a sense of the numinous ‘other’, which could be classified as I-Thou moments.

It would be as if astrologers operated on two levels: their everyday work and their inspirational moments. It could even be inferred that there are two classes of astrologer: those who are only capable of practising at an I-It level, and those who are able to experience the full I-Thou level. Thus, our human-divine division, whilst not wholly inaccurate, can create the impression of – so to speak – a ‘hierarchy’ of astrological practice. Buber can be paradoxical, and comes in for his fair share of criticism for perceived contradictions, but he does consistently make it clear that I-It continually interweaves with I-Thou. Similarly, with astrology, intense or inspirational moments are, by their nature, unpredictable and often baffling. They may or may not occur when an astrologer is working with a client; equally, they may or may not occur in the course of everyday life, well away from the consulting room.

**Buber’s model and the astrological encounter**

What, then, can be said accurately, about Buber’s statement, ‘all real living is meeting,’ in terms of the human astrological encounter? Three points can be made. Firstly, although we have likened the work of practising astrologers with their clients to Buber’s definition of educator and psychotherapist (and, as such, to an I-It relation), this does not take into account the influence of what we might term the ‘magician’ archetype in astrological practice, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter Nine. Secondly, this magician aspect of astrological work may enable a different quality of meeting to occur within a session, but this is not synonymous with an I-Thou encounter. Thirdly, the crucial presence of the birthchart in astrological work can be seen as a ‘third party’ in the encounter. In addition to the magician archetype, this distinguishes astrological work from ‘ordinary’ psychotherapeutic practice. Having now, in this chapter, compared the astrological encounter with Buber’s model of dialogue, we shall now move on to compare it with a psychotherapeutic model.
CHAPTER NINE

A PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC MODEL

Under the heading of ‘the human astrological encounter’, we outlined the way in which a contemporary astrologer might typically work with a client. Now, moving still under the umbrella of dialogue – to an exclusive focus on the psychotherapeutic encounter, we shall look, firstly and in very general terms, at the relation between therapist and client. Next, we shall do so using Hobson’s Conversational Model, comparing it with both a broad therapeutic picture, and as it corresponds to Buber’s ideas. Lastly, we shall consider the astrological therapeutic encounter in the light of both Buber and Hobson.

The therapist-client relationship

It is not my intention here to describe in detail the many and varied ways in which a one-to-one professional therapeutic encounter can operate. Even if we possessed expert knowledge of these practices, an exhaustive account of them would serve little purpose and just become a distraction from our particular focus. These will be broad-brush strokes: a background against which both Hobson’s model and the astrological encounter can be seen more clearly. My use of the word ‘professional’ here refers to an exchange where one party has certain skills for which the other party pays an agreed fee.

Within the field of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, the figure of the analyst-therapist can be perceived in many ways. The one-to-one therapeutic consultation, according to its position along a spectrum, offers very different experiences. Professional analytic and therapeutic organisations have emerged – most noticeably over the last fifty years or so – with a host of rules and guidelines for their practitioners, and with many of these organisations, a process of accreditation has developed. Regarding the professional role and ethical conduct of the therapist, these range from the strictest and most detailed instructions to extremely loose guidance for ethical
behaviour and practice. As with any such set of rules, these are likely to be transgressed or ‘creatively interpreted,’ and in some cases the supposed miscreant will be cautioned, punished and, sometimes, struck off the accredited register. In other cases, which do not reach this level of attention, practices may occur that fall under the currently ubiquitous term of ‘abuse.’

There are a number of roles in which to cast therapists, whether or not they are adhering to the recommended code of practice for their particular professional organisation. They can, for instance, be seen as a friend and companion on the therapeutic journey, or perhaps as a surrogate parent, or even a slightly intimidating professional ‘expert.’ It can be assumed that even if they are required to take a ‘heavier,’ more parental role, they do so with the patient’s best interests in mind. Sometimes patients may appear to be infantilised by this: like naughty or ignorant children, they are ‘in denial’ of the therapist’s view. The patient is the one who has come to be ‘improved’ in some way, both by a better understanding of personal motivations and through being given the tools by which previous behaviour may be altered. The aim is, usually, that patients should emerge from the process of therapy as ‘better’ people: more capable of living their life in the way they want to; wiser, stronger, and perhaps in some way ‘redeemed.’

In certain cases, however, the process may not be seen as a success. Patients’ situations do not improve; they continue to regard the therapist’s approach in a negative light (they remain, that is, in the ‘denial’ stage); and they may feel their money and time have been wasted. In extreme cases, their treatment may have reached the disciplinary areas of therapy, where they have accused their tormentor-therapist of some form of abuse. At the more cheerful end, they may emerge (as described above) with a positive view of the therapeutic process in which they have participated, and which has succeeded in bringing about a significant change in their life. The process has reached its benign, natural end, and – despite the host of emotions that normally accompany the end of any close relationship – patient and therapist part company with a general sense of satisfaction and good will.
A therapeutic continuum

In earlier chapters we have used the concept of a spectrum or continuum to clarify certain subjects: referring to Barbara Tedlock’s ‘cognitive’ continuum to clarify our understanding of divinatory practice, I suggested a similar one for divinatory astrology. I related Roderick Main’s ideas regarding synchronicity to a spectrum ranging from significant to insignificant; and commented that ‘ordinary’ dialogue might range from casual to focused. Here, we might suggest a therapeutic continuum: at one end is the stricter, rules-oriented, and highly theoretical form of traditional psychoanalysis, which focuses on the exchange of speech (as in Freud’s ‘talking cure’); at the other is the ‘looser’ (possibly ‘new-age’) end, with a number of practices that may be more physical in nature, and are not restricted simply to talking. At whichever end, the therapist-client relationship can often be described as in some way hierarchical, with the therapist taking the senior role; and the client, the junior one. The therapist has something – in terms of professional knowledge, experience and training – to offer those who seek him out; and this, obviously, is reflected in the financial exchange, for the client pays money to the therapist and not vice versa.

At the ‘looser’ end of the therapeutic spectrum, the relationship will tend to be described in terms of equality: the therapist is here regarded as someone in the nature of the advisory friend and helpful companion in relation with a fellow human being. It may be one where an expression of warm, mutual personal regard is not seen as counter-productive to the effectiveness of the therapeutic process. At the ‘strict’ end, the relation is likely to be more parental, and there may be more formal behaviour, perhaps expressed in the seating arrangements in the consulting room: for example, with the patient on a couch, out of eye contact with the analyst (as with a Freudian analysis). Sometimes the analyst is required to maintain an enigmatic silence to promote an associational or confessional mode on the part of the patient. Here, the analyst – whilst in the role of invisible ‘prompter’ – might certainly appear to be more in control of the encounter than the ‘new-age’ advisory friend. In certain forms of therapy, the therapist is trained to ‘mirror’ the client, rather than to respond with his own viewpoint, although for some, this ‘echo’ technique might perhaps be regarded as another type of silence. Later, when we come to Robert Hobson’s Conversational Model, we shall pick up on a useful term that is worth quoting now, because of its relevance to what we have been
discussing. In talking about the concept of disclosure between therapist and patient, Hobson comments that ‘in psychotherapy, for the most part, such confessions are one-way: there is an asymmetry. It is not the job of a therapist to burden a patient with details of his or her problems’ (my italics). The term ‘asymmetry’ neatly encapsulates much of what we have been describing: it is not a value-judgement; more a statement of what is normally the case in psychotherapy.

We have now, very broadly, outlined some of the familiar dynamics of the one-to-one therapeutic exchange, as it has evolved since Freud’s concept of ‘the talking cure.’ This would seem to affirm that it is not an ordinary or informal dialogue – on the contrary, it takes place within often highly formalised structures, and has an infrastructure containing detailed codes of practice and ethics. Moreover, although the more ‘new-age’ types of therapy tend to move away from a hierarchical or parental relationship, the therapist necessarily remains in a professional role by virtue of the fee structure, whereby the client gives money to the therapist. We are now, therefore, in a better position to consider how the astrological encounter fits in with more recognisable forms of therapy. Three questions might initially be asked: Firstly, if therapeutic structures can be seen on a continuum from ‘strict’ to ‘loose’, which end is closer to astrological practice? Secondly, if we are asserting that the astrological encounter is not an ordinary dialogue, to what extent is any type of professional therapeutic encounter an ‘ordinary’ dialogue? Thirdly, if we are asserting that the astrologer takes on the magician role, to what extent might the non-astrological therapist, as described in general terms above, also embody this archetype?

Regarding the second and third question – about ordinary dialogue and the magician role – these will be addressed as we continue. The quick answer to the first question is that the typical astrological encounter – in the public perception, anyway – is probably nearer to the looser end of the (‘general’ therapeutic) spectrum. For a minority of people – those familiar with the practice of astrological therapy – astrology is recognised as having its own spectrum. At astrology’s ‘looser’ end are the people who have read a little about astrology and dabbled in chart reading on an informal basis; at its ‘stricter’ end are experienced, professional astrologers, who have completed

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47 Hobson, (1985), 27
several years of rigorous training involving examinations, and who have subscribed to a code of practice and ethics. As defined earlier, the use here of the word ‘professional’ refers to an exchange where one party has certain skills for which the other party pays an agreed fee. It is, however, in the nature of most professional practice that there will be a number of practitioners who are described as ‘charlatans.’ The practice of astrology has been particularly notorious for its charlatans – so much so that the public impression has often been that most astrologers are likely to be rogues and tricksters. Astrology’s poor reputation with the public has been discussed in earlier chapters, but it is worth commenting here that it may well have a connection with what we shall shortly be exploring as the ‘magician’.

**The Conversational Model**

Having looked briefly at the therapist-client relationship, we now turn to our therapeutic paradigm: Robert Hobson’s Conversational Model. The choice of this seems appropriate for our purpose for many reasons: one of the main ones is that it has a direct link with the thinking of Martin Buber. Hobson acknowledges the work of Buber as central to his own ideas (with certain modifications), and quotes ‘all real living is meeting’ as an epigraph for one of his chapters. As with Buber’s model of dialogue, Hobson’s has an essential simplicity and is rooted in the development of a close relationship with patients as *persons*. ‘My main theme’ he says ‘is day-to-day therapy in personal conversations.’

Like Buber, he is wary of being seen as presenting a final, theoretical system, preferring to stay with an essentially simple *idea*: that of relating to his patients as people. Nevertheless, he does give his model not only a name, but also a detailed structure. In describing his own field (of psychotherapy) as a ‘nebulous process,’ he insists on the need for clarity and guidance for trainees:

The Conversational Model is designed for the therapy of patients or clients (the words are used interchangeably) whose symptoms and problems arise from defects and disturbances of significant relationships…A situation is created in which problems are disclosed, explored, understood, and modified within a therapeutic conversation.

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48 Hobson (1985), Introduction, xiii
49 ibid, 182
Thus relationship problems are addressed *within relationship*, or – put another way – ‘real’ dialogue (in the therapeutic situation) is the way of improving inadequate dialogue (in the patient’s everyday life). However, in addition to this straightforward description of his purpose, Hobson offers a lively mixture of theoretical discourse interspersed with practical examples. Much of his book recounts stories and cases from his clinical practice, transcribed from recordings and in considerable detail. This compelling material is used to illustrate his theory, and he devotes an entire chapter to a careful exposition of his model: this includes areas headed Conversation, Persons and Things, Symbolical Transformation, Feeling-Language, and Aloneness-Togetherness.50 He discusses basic skills, investigates concepts such as the ‘persecuting therapist’ (as an example of how not to work), and advocates the use of audio-visual recordings as one of the most effective ways for a therapist to learn. Just as Buber brings the ‘whole being’ to the I-Thou encounter, Hobson emphasises that the creative imagination and insights from literature and religious imagery should be allowed to permeate the process, giving a sense of the ‘whole person’ in both the therapist and the client.

Throughout all the practical and theoretical input, Hobson is always careful to bring us back to the simplicity of ‘real’ dialogue. Whilst giving solid theory (as opposed to generalised exhortations), he constantly warns against getting lost in abstractions. He keeps us in the here-and-now, on the two persons facing each other in relationship, much like Buber’s insistence on ‘concretion.’ Effectively, then, he honours the necessary I-It side of a psychotherapeutic model by advocating the need for structure, theory, and the discussion of patients-as-things. In other words, he agrees that people may be given consensually-agreed ‘labels,’ and that their conditions may acquire some fearsome technical names – also that they may bring problems that then need to be categorised, and treated according to prescribed methods. He emphasises, however, that this I-It side of his model is more appropriate for trainees in the early stages of learning, when there may be more of a need for a ‘clear model with definite techniques.’ Later, when these trainees have acquired both clinical and life experience, these principles can then be ‘questioned, modified or rejected.’51 Always, though, he returns to the I-Thou

50 Hobson (1985). See Chapter 12  
51 ibid, 209
side as the source of healing and transformation: he speaks of the need to work with a ‘deep respect for people who go on becoming persons in genuine relationships.’

In the work of Hobson, there are many overlaps with the ideas of Buber, not only in Hobson’s adoption of the I-Thou relation within his practice, but also in his own relation to his peers and professional colleagues. Without denigrating their work, he refers to the contributions of academic and experimental psychologists in his field and acknowledges the necessity of their theoretical input. He continues, however, to keep his emphasis on personal conversation at the forefront of his work. Thus, he can be seen as cutting across existing schools of psychotherapy from an insider position: he offers an alternative and individual approach, rather than being a ‘rebel’ psychotherapist, or a ‘flaky’ outsider. He uses, and builds on, his orthodox training, and the academic network to which he belongs, but is clear where his own priorities and beliefs lie. Similarly, Buber was a respected academic thinker, but also very much his own person. After years of wide-ranging study in his youth, he let his own ideas settle into shape. He was secure enough to follow an individual path, having incorporated the more orthodox theories of other philosophers and theologians without needing to reject them: instead choosing to stay in discourse with them.

In taking on the core idea of Buber’s thought, and discussing the implications – for clinical practice – of I-It and I-Thou, Hobson offers some interesting observations, relevant to our theme. Having commented, for example, about the ‘radical difference between a man’s attitude to persons and his attitude to things,’ he goes to say, ‘I shall change the word I-It into I and It, since, for me, the hyphen implies a reciprocity, a togetherness.’ This, in his view, is in contrast to the ‘sharing’ of a meeting between persons which is

…and a dialogue, which cannot be reduced to ‘I say this’ and ‘Thou saith that.’ There is a hyphen between I and Thou. Regrettably, in recent translations of Buber, the primary word has been rendered ‘I-You’ with a serious loss of the force of the intimate second person singular.

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52 Hobson (1985), 209
53 ibid, 18
54 ibid, 19
Hobson continues, later, to develop this concept of sharing and separation, which he terms ‘aloneness-togetherness’ in personal relationships, and distinguishes

…aloneness from isolation or loneliness; and togetherness from non-differentiation or fusion…I can only be alone in so far as I can be together with another. I can only be together in so far as I can stand alone.\(^{55}\)

Just as Buber is clear that in I-Thou, there are two distinct persons who are nevertheless bound together in their relation, Hobson talks at length about this state as his own ideal for therapist and client when they are together. His writing style often sounds uncannily like that of Buber: ‘There is an apprehension of distinction and mutuality, of autonomy and of reciprocity, of identity and of sharing.’\(^{56}\)

**Hobson’s model and the astrological encounter**

We have already indicated some of the ways in which the astrological encounter works in the context of a traditional psychotherapeutic situation. In Chapter Eight, where Buber’s model was outlined, we discussed how the practice of astrology may be carried out, incorporating Buber’s I-Thou and I-It paradigm as an echoing of – but not a parallel to – our own proposition of two astrological encounters: the human and the divine. Now, we are in a better position to observe some similarities between Hobson’s model and the astrological encounter. Hobson’s explicit endorsement of Buber’s I-Thou attitude as a framework for therapeutic conversation was a clear link between the two writers, as was the simplicity of their message and their very individual positions in relation to more mainstream thought. The connections between Hobson’s model and the astrological encounter are less explicit, but nonetheless significant. Hobson writes at length about a ‘feeling-language’; he has much to say about symbolism; he places great value on insights from literature and religious imagery; and he emphasises the importance of stories. All these are intrinsic to the way in which an astrologer can work with a client. We have neither time nor space here to do more than summarise Hobson’s theories: they need, ideally, to be read in the context of his whole text, and his

\(^{55}\) Hobson (1985), 194
\(^{56}\) ibid, 26
specific anecdotes and case studies. Nevertheless, we shall try to do them justice, if briefly.

‘Feeling Language’

We will start with ‘feeling-language’. Hobson describes, via many detailed accounts and transcriptions of work with his patients, how ‘real’ connection with them arises when they create between them a common language. ‘The aim or rather hope of a psychotherapist,’ he says, ‘is to share with his patient in the creation of a language’ (my italics). He goes on to emphasise how such a language was integral to their personal connectedness – not merely an improved way of understanding shared information.

The vital factor was the mutual creation and expansion of a common feeling-language…It was not merely a matter of talking about events. It was a dialogue, a meeting, a talking-with in mutual trust – a personal conversation. A simultaneous giving and receiving. A finding and being found.57

His theory of feeling-language, which is subtle and complex, draws directly on the language theory of Ludwig Wittgenstein (whose ideas, like Buber’s, Hobson describes as being ‘central’ to his own model).58 Wittgenstein says that language primarily has to do with shared activities of living, or ‘forms of life,’ and his ‘language games’ are about language and the actions into which it is woven. Thus Hobson gives verbatim (often recorded) dialogues between himself and his various patients in which – over long periods of time – they establish mutual connections from their lives, the shared expression of which brings about a transformation in their relationship. It is as if they have previously been in I-It mode (with Hobson thinking about his patients; about what they are saying and their symptoms – or, indeed, the patient himself talking about his own symptoms), and then, suddenly, a verbal act of mutuality comes up: they both come alive through a shared expression or symbol, and the relationship becomes I-Thou. Hobson states quite emphatically that ‘a symbolical attitude is a central feature

57 Hobson (1985), 7
of the Conversational Model’. He devotes three chapters to a discussion of different types of symbolism, and we shall refer to his term ‘presentational symbols’ in the final section on meeting.

In earlier chapters on symbol and astrological symbol, and in the astrological case material, I have discussed how symbol is central to the way in which astrologers communicate. I showed how the apprehension of an astrological symbol can be like a sudden epiphany, and also – for instance in the experience of synchronous events, and in Jungian therapy – how the symbol can play a similar role in the therapeutic relationship. Nevertheless, when Hobson speaks of creating a common feeling-language, it is closer to the way in which astrology works. The recognition of a symbol in a Jungian therapeutic situation can be a peak moment, as we observed with his famous ‘scarab’ case in Appendix B. My view, though, is that the Jungian encounter is nearer to what Hobson terms the ‘asymmetry’ of therapist and client – as in my own general summary of the therapist-client relation we talked of a similar asymmetric, power ‘imbalance.’ In the astrologer-client relation, even allowing for the existence of the magician role, this can eventually be worked through – as we shall show – to achieve something altogether closer to Hobson’s ‘real’ dialogue.

**Insights from literature and religious imagery**

Insights from literature and religious imagery are close to Hobson’s heart, and he quotes extensively from Wordsworth, the Bible, Rilke and others to bring his ideas poetically to life. As we have shown in the case material, astrological symbols can also be enriched by literary allusion, and especially by their intrinsic association with myth. Jungian therapy is, of course, embedded in a wealth of symbolic imagery, but with astrology – as we pointed out in the chapter on astrological symbol – there is a difference: the wide, universal associations in astrological symbolism have a capacity to spring to life, suddenly, in a particular context and at a particular time; and this seems to be nearer to Hobson’s sense of a feeling-language suddenly bringing about a transformation. Astrologer and client work together over time, and gradually come to

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59 Hobson (1985), 142
60 Hobson (1985), Chapters 5,6, & 7
share the client’s individual ‘take’ on certain symbols. It can be very precise, very specific, and it is this shared experience of discovery that generates the sense of ‘real’ dialogue between them. I have referred at intervals throughout this study to the idea of the astrologer as magician. Having seen how Hobson’s method has similarities not only to Buber’s ideas about dialogue but also to the astrological exchange, we now note a difference.

The client’s perception of the astrologer

My suggestion is that this difference lies in the client’s perception of what the astrologer – as opposed to another type of therapist – can offer. If one asked the intelligent non-astrologer (as a potential client) about the purpose of having a chart reading, one might receive a number of responses. The following statements are some of those most frequently given: ‘To find out what the future holds in store’; ‘To get some advice about a current decision regarding my relationship – or my job, or my possible house move or my business venture’; or ‘To see what my chart says about my character and personality.’ In a less specific way, potential clients might simply say, ‘I’m just curious’ (implying that they are relatively relaxed, and are not coming with a particular question or problem); or ‘I’ve always wanted to have my chart read.’ Two assumptions appear to underlie these statements: firstly, that what is ‘in’ the chart and what is going to happen is already pre-determined – it already pre-exists; and secondly, that the astrologer – using the client’s chart – possesses this hidden information, or can gain access to it, and is able to share it with the client.

The astrologer’s perception of his/her work

An astrologer’s response to the question of what is involved in a chart reading is less predictable, since astrologers, as we have seen, practise and apply their craft in many different ways. Their replies, therefore, are less easy to summarise – in addition to the self-evident fact that a cross-section of astrologers will produce great variations in temperament, background, education, outlook and so forth. Their replies will depend on a personal philosophy. Some are likely to be pragmatic and may talk in straightforwardly commercial terms, such as, ‘I aim to provide a service for my client,’ or ‘I’m simply running a business,’ or ‘primarily, I need to earn a living.’ Others, with
a thoughtful or reflective approach, may see their work as part of their own philosophical or spiritual ‘journey,’ and prioritise this over commercial concerns, preferring to generate their main income in other ways. There will be yet others who locate themselves somewhere between these two positions.

Most astrologers, however, whatever their outlook or circumstances, would agree with a statement along the following lines: ‘As a practising astrologer, I work with a person using their birthchart – and any other relevant charts – as a focus of reference. Our work will be centred on whatever may arise in the course of our session, whether the client comes with specific questions, or just an open and curious attitude. I use the astrological symbols in the chart as guidance, and hope to provide some ideas which are both interesting and helpful for my client.’

**A predetermined future**

We have discussed, in the chapter on divination, the concept of a ‘fixed’ future, and referred to Geoffrey Cornelius’ term ‘destiny is negotiable.’ To summarise here: my position in this study is that the concept of a fixed future, waiting to be uncovered, is not the case. We can attempt to live our present life well, turning to the divinatory act – as a dialogue with an ‘other’ – for occasional guidance, from which our experience in the past helps to guide our present choices towards a better future. There is a prerequisite of *initiative* on the part of both diviner and client: the future must be *created* by taking a certain course of action, as guided by the divinatory process.

The potential client, we suggested, brings assumptions about hidden information. This may include the idea of a supposedly predetermined future contained in the chart (‘the stars’ or ‘my stars’), which can be revealed by the astrologer. Thus clients may see their own role as a relatively passive one, of merely going to the session to receive information. Astrologers responding to questions about their work may have a different emphasis. They acknowledge that the symbols in the chart require attention and focus, but anticipate that this work will be a *joint enterprise*, involving both

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61 Cornelius (2003), 131
astrologer and client. They understand their own role as both translator, and as interpreter, of symbols, and are ready to deal with questions as and when they arise. They are unlikely, though, to regard the chart as reliably pointing forward to the ‘future’; indeed, they are unlikely to see the future as ‘ahead’ in the sense that it already exists. Nor do they talk in terms of character, personality and motivation as if they were quantifiable factors that the chart will ‘accurately’ describe, independent of any input from the client. Their approach, as we have suggested, depends on an expectation of a joint enterprise, which does not merely require the passive presence of a listening client. They are prepared to adjust their approach in response to a particular type of client, and to what the client brings or requests. The chart and its symbols will simply be the focal point of their interchange. Moreover, it is the chart – or charts, if more than one is being used – that guides the course of the encounter with the client. As we described in the chapters on symbol, the astrological symbol may be understood as a ‘living entity’. Since the chart is a cluster or pattern of symbols, it opens up the possibility of mutual and fluent interpretation within the context of the astrological encounter, rather than being a static repository of ‘information.’ It activates a process of dialogue, and is itself part of that dialogue.

So, if there is no fixed information available regarding a pre-existing future, and if the chart does not ‘contain’ it, then astrologers should not be seen as magicians with access to secret or hidden facts. They cease to be that, and become simply another therapist. It appears, rather, to be a case of a mismatch of perceptions between what many clients expect from a chart reading, and what many astrologers think they are providing. Individual astrologers should, instead, be seen as consultants, perhaps possessing good communication skills, fluency in their expression, and a capacity for eliciting their client’s desires, and for helping them towards a better outcome in their lives. They may even, in their work with clients, be close to Hobson’s model of ‘real’ dialogue, or to Buber’s I-Thou relation. Although several astrological organisations and teaching schools offer ethical and practical guidance in their training, the astrologer’s work is relatively free from the tighter structures of many psychotherapeutic practices. This leaves the individual astrologer far more scope and potential for developing a person-to-person relationship with the client.
CHAPTER TEN

THE ROLE OF THE CHART IN THE ASTROLOGICAL ENCOUNTER

The astrological chart in the divine encounter

Any astrological encounter, almost by definition, involves a chart – or at least the presence of astrological symbols. As we have shown in the case material, if an astrologer ‘meets’ an event in the world, his way of interpreting the meaning and significance of that event is via the symbols in a chart set up for that moment. To note a time for that moment becomes the astrologer’s reflex response to the impact of a sudden or surprising occurrence; and trying to remember a retrospective event brings the same response, namely trying to recall the exact time it occurred. A time and place enable a chart to be set up, and thus create the opportunity for an event to offer meaning. There can, as we have also shown, be subtle differences in the role of the chart in a particular story: sometimes (as, for instance, in the ‘Edinburgh event’ in Appendix B), certain key symbols in a specific area of the chart provide instant affirmation that the event has expressed a truth about the nature of the astrologer’s experience; at other times, as in the chart for ‘Poseidon’s Gold’ in Appendix D, the chart acts more as a record (on paper) of a visible moment (in the heavens); sometimes the chart is altogether more open-ended: in the ‘African event’ in Appendix C, it was by no means clear what might be going on, and the chart was set up to provide some clues. We have called this type of chart an ‘event’ chart, and this is the one that has its place in the ‘divine’ astrological encounter. It is a chart with which to interpret the unbidden omen that arrives unexpectedly in the astrologer’s world. A chart is also set up for a bidden omen, but – as we have described – this type of chart is set up to answer a specific and carefully considered question, as part of the ‘intentional’ divine astrological encounter.

We should note that in this chapter, my concepts, ideas, and material are – to the best of my knowledge – original, and entirely derived from my personal practice. There will not, therefore, be any specific citing or referencing of other sources.
The birthchart in the human encounter

My immediate focus, for now, is on the chart at the centre of the human astrological encounter, namely the birthchart. This usually denotes a chart set up for the birth of a person – rather than, for instance, the moment of an event, the birth of an organisation, the inception of a project or the birth of a nation. One might argue that, like the divinatory or event chart, the birthchart is also set up both to ask – and to answer – a question: in this case, ‘What is the nature of this person, and how do directions in this chart suggest the shape of the life at this time?’ In the previous chapter we placed the astrologer-client encounter in relation to more traditional therapeutic practice, and looked at some of the implications of the magician role which the astrologer may be perceived to play by a potential client. We are now, therefore, in a position to turn to the idea of a triad rather than a dyad: to the chart as a third member of an apparently one-to-one encounter.

A third member of the psychotherapeutic encounter

We have said that the presence of the birthchart provides a crucial difference from other types of psychotherapeutic exchange. One can, however, undoubtedly find examples among the latter where both physical and theoretical entities constitute the third member of an apparently one-to-one encounter. For example, on the physical side, there are some forms of therapy (probably at the ‘looser’ end of the therapeutic spectrum) that incorporate extra ‘props,’ such as cushions or chairs, to represent third parties. These provide a tangible object on which the client can discharge emotions, both positive and negative, in a safe and monitored environment. This opportunity for ‘acting out’ such emotions may lead to another (‘imaginary’) dialogue with figures from the client’s life, which can then be discussed with the therapist and contribute towards a perspective on the client’s situation.

On the more theoretical side, psychotherapists might claim that there are, in the consulting room, other ‘presences’ in addition to therapist and client. Theories of both the personal and the collective unconscious were forming – and became part of the literature – from the early twentieth century, primarily by Freud and Jung, and have since become part of everyday vocabulary. This was part of the advent of
psychoanalysis, or the ‘talking cure,’ and it became possible to suggest that the unconscious provided another level of discourse in addition to the literal verbal exchange between analyst and patient. In this sense, the unconscious might be considered a new, secular presence, replacing the daemon or other spiritual agencies or intermediaries between human and the divine. Since such a concept tends to be internalised rather than given external form (as, for instance, with medieval daemons) this can lead to some interesting hypothetical structures. Instead of just the visible, literal encounter between analyst and patient, a *fourfold* exchange may be posited:

1. Analyst’s conscious to patient’s conscious
2. Analyst’s conscious to patient’s unconscious
3. Analyst’s unconscious to patient’s unconscious
4. Analyst’s unconscious to patient’s conscious

These possibilities would suggest – at least at a theoretical level – that the analyst and patient are not alone in the consulting room, and that this is far from being a one-to-one situation.

**The birthchart as a third member of the encounter**

In the light of these examples, we can now start to examine our original suggestion that the astrological birthchart constitutes a unique presence in the astrologer’s consulting room. I am not, therefore, asserting that the concept of a third member of a one-to-one therapeutic exchange is, *per se*, a new idea. On the contrary, one could draw on many illustrations in addition to the ones outlined above. Our proposal is, rather, that the nature and role of the astrological birthchart is both mysterious and challenging. It is an idiosyncratic entity, both in itself and because it has agency as a third member of the astrological dialogue. It presents something that is both difficult to explain to a non-astrologer, and often difficult for the astrologer himself to understand.

We can begin by asking what, exactly, is the birthchart? A starting point might be to define it as a *pattern of astrological symbols, representing a person*. In Chapter Four, we discussed at length the nature of astrological symbol. To summarise: we considered how astrological symbols connect with Jung’s archetypes, but may be
thought of more as allegory; how, as significators, they act rather like chess pieces in
the ‘game’ of astrology; how the astrological glyphs (or pictographs) – commonly
referred to as ‘symbols’ – are an easily accessible shorthand, and yet can create an
‘unnecessary mystique.’ We also established that whilst one can translate this symbolic
shorthand by memorising each glyph as a code, to learn to interpret them can take a
lifetime, and moves us into the realm of Hermes and into imaginative association.
Finally, we looked at how – in terms of the medieval hermeneutic of the four levels,
alapplied to astrological interpretation – there are extremely subtle and complex stages
through which the astrologer can move from the position of observer of symbols to that
of participant with symbols – a potentially transforming experience.

What, then, is this chart that sits between astrologer and client in the human
astrological encounter? Viewed literally, it is a piece of paper with a circle drawn on it
containing marks and squiggles. In a representational sense, it stands for a specific
moment in time when a number of planets in the heavens, viewed from a particular
place, were in certain positions in relation to fixed points and to each other. In terms of
meaning, it relates to clients, as being ‘their’ chart, since it is drawn up for their own
time and place of birth. It is therefore said to describe their nature and character, and –
in acting as a focal point for the continually-moving bodies in the heavens – it will
continue to indicate movements in their life as it unfolds. Such a description would be
agreed by most contemporary astrologers. What follows, however, is less consensual.

The dynamics of astrologer, client and chart

At a physical level, regarding the seating arrangements in the consulting room,
astrologer and client sit facing each other, as in most therapeutic exchanges.
Somewhere between them is the chart. Astrologers vary in their technique, and clients
in their inclinations. Some astrologers will constantly point to the chart, identifying
symbols, tracing patterns, and drawing the client’s attention to certain features. In this
way, the chart can become not only a focus for their dialogue, but also hold its own
place within the triangular therapeutic situation. Other astrologers may place the chart
on their lap or near to their side. They glance at it occasionally, but basically keep to a
one-to-one exchange, using the chart as – so to speak – part of their own persona and
ideas, an extension of themselves. It then appears to be their chart rather than the client’s, and is an unbalanced encounter, rather like a pair meeting a single person.

Other dynamics are also possible. Sometimes an astrologer will first ask clients whether they wish to look at the chart. If clients choose this option, it opens up the way for a triad; if they decide simply to listen to the astrologer’s interpretation, it will remain an ‘unbalanced’ dyad. The control or the power-base – if it can be described in this way – is voluntarily handed to the astrologer. Sometimes, the reverse appears to be the case: clients who are already familiar with astrology (who may, for example, be competent students, trainee astrologers, or already with a good grasp of astrological symbolism) can take the more prominent role. They may bring a clear agenda: they know their own chart well, and do not need to point to it for reference. They may ask specific questions, and thus place the astrologer in more of a ‘service’ role, with themselves as ‘customer.’ From their own specialised knowledge, they are in a position to agree or disagree with the astrologer’s interpretation, and therefore have more control. If they choose to have the chart visible, and to refer to it together with the astrologer, the power-base is more likely to be a shared one. If not, they – as ‘customer’ – become the stronger side of an unbalanced dyad.

To summarise then: in the astrologer-client dyad, only one with specialised knowledge is capable of taking the prominent role. Since astrologers, by definition, possess this, it is only when clients are also knowledgeable that the dyad can be weighted on their side. However, the presence of the chart, visible to both of them, is the factor that can change the dynamic. Either can choose to have it in a central and shared position in their dialogue, and when this is the case, the power is more evenly distributed, and the session becomes a triad.

A relatively recent variation – and one that introduces extremely interesting dynamics – is when the astrologer, rather than bringing a printed chart, chooses to work directly from a computer screen within the session. The screen, like the paper chart, may or may not be a dominant feature: it depends, as described above, on the choices of

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62 It should be noted, however, that the client is capable of dominating the conversation in other ways, unrelated to astrological knowledge: for instance, by talking in an uninterrupted stream of words, and ignoring the astrologer’s focus on the birthchart.
both astrologer and client. If it is a large computer, and if its keyboard is frequently being tapped to produce different charts and additional information, it may be that its sheer physical size and the noises it makes increase its dominance in the room. A tiny screen or laptop computer is probably less intrusive. Nevertheless, an electronic presence perhaps suggests more of a business meeting, less of the magician-therapist – unless one’s perception of technology is as an equally ‘magical’ entity. In which case, the chart, on the screen, takes on the magician’s role as the ‘one who knows’, providing answers and a kind of certainty.

I want to make a final point regarding the astrologer-client dynamic before moving on to the ‘presence’ of the chart. There are occasions when astrologers will ask another professional colleague to give them a ‘formal’ session in order to work on a current situation in their chart. Here, the balance of the relationship will depend both on the way in which the two astrologers communicate and the way in which they choose to treat the chart. It may be an even-handed exchange rather like a professional discussion. If both are familiar with the details of the chart of the one requesting the session – the ‘client’ – it may be put aside and only referred to verbally; if their technique is to place the chart physically between them (whether or not they feel it is sufficiently familiar to both of them) it may then add to their discussion and become a triad. Even experienced astrologers can have blind spots and get stuck in their interpretations, and it may need the fresh vision of another astrologer to shift the situation for them. Although, as we have said, it seems that the chart can certainly shift the power balance, it is perhaps less important in this ‘professional advice’ session that it should be a third member. Perhaps, however, a very familiar symbol seen by the ‘advising’ astrologer in the chart in front of them both may be exactly the trigger needed in helping colleagues also to see their own stuck situation with new eyes.

The chart as a presence in the consulting room

We have seen, then, that the dynamics between astrologer, client and chart depend on a number of factors including the relative degree of astrological knowledge (on either side, but primarily the client’s) and the preferences of an individual astrologer and an individual client for how they work in relation to the birthchart. The chart can be used as an adjunct of the astrologer (creating a ‘pair’ of astrologer and chart versus a
‘single’ client), or – if knowledgeable clients with their chart ‘in their head’ decide to ask many questions – as adding weight to the client’s position as ‘customer’ requesting answers. The chart can also be put almost entirely aside, leaving the astrologer and client, as a pair, to have their own one-to-one dialogue, only making occasional references to it. In such a case, it is a source of information, but it is not given a visible or prominent place in the room.

My view, however, is that the chart not only deserves its visible place in the consulting room, but that the astrological encounter is at its most effective when the chart is given this place. When there is a triad rather than a dyad dynamic at work, it seems as if the hermeneutic ‘current’ of activity is very powerful indeed. This triangular situation can be created either by the astrologer making a point of placing the chart between himself and the client, or by the client insisting that it should be in view of both of them. Even if the client has virtually no knowledge of astrological symbols, the chart still has a strong presence. The astrologer can choose to do a certain amount of ‘translation’ within the session: in other words, explaining the glyphs and de-coding at least a few of them for the benefit of the client. This not only makes better sense of the interpretation, but – far more importantly – clients who know nothing of the symbols are then drawn into a state of participation rather than just passive listening.

By involving the client in the interpretation by means of a physical relationship with the chart – touching, pointing to symbols, indicating certain areas of it – a different and active energy is generated. It becomes a shared initiative, and by the end of the first session with a non-astrological client, clients can be contributing crucial insights, based on perhaps just one astrological symbol to which they have been ‘introduced’ in the session. They may point to the chart between them, possibly to the ‘wrong’ pictograph, but this is less important than the fact that the physical presence of the chart is able to generate in them an authentic response, which can be the turning point of the encounter. It is a curious phenomenon, but a typical one in this context. Among many possible outcomes from a first session with an astrologer, the most important, perhaps, is that there should be a spark of recognition from the client, which may go on to be a transformative one. In our experience, this most frequently arises when clients are enabled to make a physical relationship with their own chart. The chart itself then seems to acquire agency, and to bring about a healing in the client, by its presence.
The chart as I- Thou rather than I-It

It seems that, in the astrological therapeutic encounter, by working with the chart as I-Thou, rather than I-It, the optimum level of exchange can be reached. Hobson’s idea of a ‘real’ dialogue in therapy is also more possible to achieve than in most other psychotherapeutic exchanges. Once the client’s projection of magician on the astrologer has been withdrawn (and astrologers can do this for the client early on in their conversation, by clarifying their approach to prediction), then there can be the potential for an equal exchange. At this point, the astrologer-client relationship is, in our view, far more able to move into I-Thou than other therapist-client relationships: it is less ‘asymmetric,’ and even the formal codes of practice and ethics within professional astrological organisations do not recommend the type of strict personal boundaries that exist in many other forms of therapy.

If, as can often happen when clients have worked for a long time with the same astrologer, they acquire considerable knowledge about astrology, then the exchange is potentially a balanced rather than an asymmetric one. This, though, will be addressed in the final section on meeting. Our focus here, however, has been the presence of the chart, and I shall now summarise what has been discussed. Firstly, it is the existence of a birthchart that differentiates the astrological encounter from other therapeutic exchanges. Secondly, the presence of the birthchart is able to change a traditional therapeutic dyad into a triad. Thirdly, it is the position in which the chart is placed within the consulting room (by both astrologer and client) that determines whether it can achieve the full potential of its role. If it is related to in I-Thou mode, it adds a powerful energy to the exchange; if it is referred to as I-It – in other words if it is merely *used* as a source of information and treated as a ‘thing’ – then it has no presence. If it is appropriated as a tool, an adjunct to the astrologer’s (or the client’s) own skills and viewpoints, then it remains in I-It mode. It is only when it is given its due as a Thou, and related to as a physical, visible presence, that it can respond, have agency and bring to the astrological encounter a different and powerful atmosphere. When the chart is Thou, the astrological encounter – as a participatory, tropological and transformatory experience – is a unique opportunity for the creation of ‘real’ dialogue, in which the chart itself becomes an active participant.
SECTION FOUR

MEETING
MEETING

This relatively short final section on meeting aims to gather together the threads of the whole study: it is a meeting of all the separate strands – astrology, divination and dialogue – that have been introduced in the earlier chapters. It re-considers our basic question about the role of dialogue in astrological divination, and puts forward the concept of meeting as ‘real’ dialogue; and here we shall draw on Martin Buber and Robert Hobson to support our case, and to move towards a conclusion: that the moment of astrology is potentially a meeting with the divine. We shall look at five aspects of meeting central to the ideas of Buber and Hobson, and connect them with the astrological divinatory dialogue. These are: the acceptance of otherness; symbol as mediator; the space between; the movement involved in relationship, which includes turning; and the concept of uniqueness.

The acceptance of otherness

When Buber moved away from his youthful study of mysticism and into his mature ideas of I-Thou and I-It, he was very clear that the I-Thou relationship should not be considered one of merging: ‘Genuine conversation…means acceptance of otherness…one accepts and confirms him in his being this particular man made in this particular way.’¹ He is clear, too, that the subject-to-subject relation is not merely a question of being warm and friendly to another human being, but must involve mutuality:

He who treats a person as ‘another I’ does not really see that person but only a projected image of himself. Such a relation, despite the warmest ‘personal’ feeling is really I-It.²

Hobson also emphasises the need for mutuality: ‘In a pseudo-mutual state…there is a stifling, static proximity of two isolated individuals – not a relation between persons,’ (my italics) and he distinguishes a truly mutual relationship from a merely

¹ Friedman (1955), 82
² Friedman (1955), 61
‘sympathetic’ therapeutic relationship, which masks loneliness. 3 He also suggests that ‘an asymmetric therapeutic relationship can ripen into a friendship which is never lost, but which expands to others in the client’s world.’ 4 We referred earlier to his version of Buber’s ‘otherness’: what, in the psychotherapeutic context, Hobson terms ‘aloneness-togetherness’.

Aloneness-togetherness involves explicit and implicit rules…The relationship of psychotherapy is not more nor less intimate than a friendship: it is different. The rules are not immutable: they are modified in negotiation by persons genuinely choosing, and adjusting. 5

Connecting, now, these ideas regarding otherness with both the human and the divine astrological encounter, we remember that the defining quality of the divine encounter – as we have shown – is that it brings, above all, a sense of meeting and being met by an ‘other.’ In the human, therapeutic encounter, we would, along with Hobson, feel that the initial asymmetry has the potential to ripen into a friendship that may change the client’s world. Initially, astrological therapy has an advantage in that it tends to be less formal or restricted (in terms of client boundaries) than many other forms of therapy. Its mutual creation of a feeling-language – the language of astrological symbols – brings about a particular intimacy unlike many other counselling situations or frameworks. Astrologer and client, over a period of time, ‘discover’ together how the universal astrological symbols relate in a particular way to the client’s own life and experience. The client’s sense of being connected to the universal can have a healing and affirming effect. 6 Also, if the chart is allowed its own presence in this relationship – its own ‘otherness’ – it can certainly increase a sense of mutuality between astrologer and client. Hobson comments that, ‘I can never fully enter into the experiencing of another, but I can receive intimations of it by virtue of living symbols.’ 7

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3 Hobson (1985), 279
4 Hobson (1985), 278. Buber, however, never really concedes that the therapeutic relation can, in itself, have mutuality. For more on this, see his dialogue with the psychotherapist Carl Rogers in Kirschenbaum & Land Henderson, (1989), Chapter 3.
5 Hobson (1985), 27
6 This is similar, in therapeutic work, to finding one’s personal experience echoed in the great mythological stories. This can be one of the great benefits of myth for a person’s sense of ‘belonging’ in the world.
7 Hobson (1985), 191
If therapy can, as he asserts, reach ‘real’ relationship through the sharing of symbols, how much more can the astrological encounter create relationship when astrologer and client share the experience of symbols not only between themselves (as their mutually-created feeling-language), but also with the chart, the ‘other’ between them, and the source and container of the symbols.

**Symbol as mediator**

Hobson, then, sees living symbols as ‘intimations’ of the ‘experiencing of another’: a way of reaching out to their otherness. He also sees them as a source of meaning:

> Symbolical transformation is a primary need of man...(it)...weaves a pattern of significance, of ‘meaning in life.’ The key to this sense of ‘meaning,’ especially in the dialogue of personal relationships, is the living symbol.8 [my italics]

Moreover, he sees one of the therapist’s main tasks as being

> …to convey and promote a symbolical attitude. This means endowing words, gestures, drawings, and dreams with value; regarding them...as living symbols. They are intimations of what is as yet unknown.9 [my italics]

We have already discussed much of this in the chapters on symbol: how signs connect us with the known; symbols with the (otherwise) unknown. What is important to emphasise here, in relation to the astrological encounter, is Hobson’s use of the words *meaning* and *value*. We have seen, with the case material, how sudden occurrences (as unbidden omens in the divinatory encounter) can be mediated by symbols – in the chart of that moment – to bring a sense of *meaning* to the event. In the human encounter, it is the value (as well as the meaning) given to the astrological symbols in a person’s birthchart that is so central to the astrologer-client relationship. In the session, an interpretation of the chart – the symbol of symbols – mediates what arises from the clients’ material (their life situation, their words, their dreams). In so far as the

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8 Hobson (1985), 85
9 Hobson (1985), 199
client identifies with the chart as ‘my’ chart, this value spreads by association. If the chart and its symbols are valued, clients themselves feel valued. This in itself can be a source of healing, as well as a ‘meeting’ with themselves via the meaning arising from the symbols.

In Hobson’s extensive discussion of symbolism, he makes a distinction between what he terms ‘discursive symbolism’ (which is more linear, like beads on a string) and ‘presentational symbolism,’ an ‘all at once presentation, as a whole, as in a picture.’\(^\text{10}\) Both represent different ways of thinking, but presentational symbolism is probably closer to the gestalt of the birthchart, or to the complete pattern of the story in the divine astrological encounter. In our earlier chapters on symbol, we have discussed another term Hobson uses – ‘living symbol’ – which is important to pick it up again here in relation to the idea of meeting. We re-explore it now, in the astrological encounter, as the phenomenon of meeting as activated symbol. This phrase raises a number of questions. If, as we have already asserted, the symbol is a living entity – in other words, it already has life – how and why does it need to be ‘activated’? Who or what is activating it? We would try to describe it in the following way: it is as if something – at the moment of meeting – springs into life; something comes alive. This suggests an act of creativity: something that previously was not there now exists. Perhaps in an I-Thou encounter, the participants themselves have changed or been transformed: they are in a different state from that before the meeting; they are changed by the moment of meeting. Moreover, in an astrological encounter mediated by symbol, perhaps several things happen at once: the (already living) symbol springs to life, rather like when a computer is switched on but is in ‘sleep’ or ‘hibernation’ mode – it needs fingers on the keyboard to bring what is ‘there’ on the screen clearly into view.

Buber says meeting is life, or – put another way – the process of relationship is life. He is perhaps saying that the I-Thou meeting activates previously inert entities: people who have slipped into ‘sleep’ mode; who move around like robots in a world consisting only of I-It encounters. Can we say, then, that meeting is a symbol of life? Buber also says that to be fully receptive to the other, to truly meet the other, we meet God. If (Buber’s) God is the giver of life, creation is endlessly reactivated through

\(^{10}\) Hobson (1985), 74
meeting, and every ‘real’ meeting is the ritual repetition of the creative act. In the astrological encounter, by being open to meeting the divine, we are re-enacting that creative process. In the moment of meeting an event, something can open up: there is a sense of recognition; a sense that the cosmos is a meaningful place. In the chart set up for the moment of a significant occurrence, we have astrological symbols that, in an inexplicable and mysterious way, can be precisely the ones that reflect that event. Their presence, as mediators, thus affirms our sense of reality, of being alive – just as the chart (the symbol of symbols) is itself alive.

The space between

We have spoken of a dyad – of therapist-client or astrologer-client; and of a triad – of astrologer, client and chart, or of analyst, patient and unconscious; and of the relationship between all these occupants of the consulting room. Now we turn to a core idea of Buber, which is also taken up by Hobson: the space between them.¹¹ Maurice Friedman – whom we have previously cited as one of Buber’s principal interpreters – describes this ‘sphere of between’ (das Zwischenmenschliche) or ‘there in between’ (dazwischen) when he says that:

The participation of both partners is in principle indispensable to this sphere…the unfolding of this sphere Buber calls ‘the dialogical’…The meaning of this dialogue is found neither in one nor the other of the partners, nor in both taken together, but in their interchange.¹² [my italics]

Hobson also makes this idea part of his model: he remarks, in relation to one of his clients:

I left space between Stephen and me where we could come together in serious play…Dialogue arises and grows in the space between persons. By an act of imagination, the experiences of a lifetime are dissolved and re-created in a reciprocal language of feeling which is presented and shared now, at this moment.¹³ [my italics]

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¹¹ This is not to be confused with another core idea of Buber’s, namely the ‘narrow ridge,’ by which Buber means a ‘narrow rocky ridge’ between ‘the abysses, where there is no metaphysical certitude and only the certainty of meeting what remains undisclosed.’ Buber (1947), 184

¹² Friedman (1955), 85

¹³ Hobson (1985), 27
Both these descriptions are very close to the way in which astrologer and client interact. Their dialogue – their ‘interchange’ – is expressed through astrological symbols; and we have seen – in talking about the symbol as mediator – how this is their ‘reciprocal language of feeling;’ how it is an imaginative, creative act, as it can take clients’ life experiences and re-create their perception of them via symbols. ‘Serious play’ is an accurate way of describing what occurs in the space between astrologer and client. As we commented when comparing signs and symbols, many clients come wanting signs (a linear process, with the expectation of certainty and clear directions) and instead find themselves ‘playing’ with symbols (moving in a circular fashion) exploring interpretations, often staying ‘uncertain’ or in an open-ended place – which can be a less satisfactory outcome for the literal minded looking for a prediction about the future.

Buber’s affirmation of the need for participation is implicit in the concept of otherness (and Hobson’s version of this: aloneness-togetherness). One cannot participate with a ‘thing’ or an object, only with another fully reciprocal subject: an ‘other.’ Friedman’s point, then, about ‘the participation of both partners’ is central to the idea of space. Where (as in I-It) there is no mutuality; where the relation is asymmetric (as in many situations apart from the therapeutic context); where the partners are not fully open and receptive to each other, there is no space for real dialogue to occur. This space, as Hobson described it, is one where there can be creativity. In the astrological encounter, this creativity arises in the ‘serious playfulness’ of symbols, or rather of being with symbols. It is the triad in the consulting room that allows astrologer and client to be with the chart: to participate with it, as with another subject. The chart is the place of play, the source of creativity, the space between where dialogue occurs. It gives life to the session and can bring a client (who may have come to the session lacking a sense of meaning) ‘back to life.’

**Movement and the process of meeting**

To meet is not to be still: it is a process that involves considerable movement and change. Buber writes a great deal about going out to meet the world. His implication is that if you wish to be ‘met’ by the divine, you also have to take the initiative, and he is
clear that – as we have pointed out – I-Thou encounters can be disturbing. In the earlier chapter where we discussed his model of dialogue, we quoted his rather alarming picture of I-Thou moments ‘tearing us away to dangerous extremes’ and ‘shattering security.’ We also mentioned his description of the ‘attentive man’ meeting a situation that ‘cannot be classified’ – one that embodies his concept of ‘concretion itself,’ and is therefore considered to be a ‘new creation’ – in other words, a situation that cannot be grasped relatively, but only as it stands in that moment.

‘Man must go forth to the meeting with God’ he says, ‘for here too the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one.’ Buber’s language often has a rather biblical ring, and in writing about such a meeting, he introduces the more theological concept of grace. His point is that we cannot wait for grace to occur: Buber states clearly, that it cannot be an aim or an ‘object.’ Rather, on our side we must use our will to go out, attentively: we are then ready and receptive if a situation of grace occurs. In writing about Hasidism, Aubrey Hodes – a student and friend of Buber, whom we have cited earlier – puts it this way: ‘Everything is waiting to be hallowed by you.’ Hasidism is one of the main sources of Buber’s thought, and is relevant to this idea of movement. It affirms the here-and-now reality of the external world, but also the need to penetrate into its hidden-ness; it is rooted in the world, but also sees the world as sacrament. Donald Moore – another interpreter of Buber whom we have cited earlier – says that Buber rejects the split between sacred and profane: the profane is the ‘not-yet-hallowed.’ Thus, even though at first the world may seem closed-off to the spiritual seeker, a hidden meaning can be opened and revealed by the active process of loving:

The Hasidic message to each of us is simply that we ourselves must begin. Existence will continue to remain meaningless until we penetrate it with active love and find its meaning for ourselves. The world awaits us; it awaits hallowing; it awaits the disclosure and realization of its meaning. But we must begin.

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14 This echoes Cornelius’ work on katarche. See Cornelius (2003), Chapter 7.
15 Friedman (1955), 70
16 Hodes, A. (1975), 66-67
17 Moore (1996), 52
One aspect of movement, then, is this important process of hallowing. It requires will and initiative, and may result in meeting, if grace is present. Life – that is to say, meeting – is the business of being in the everyday; being in the concretion of the here-and-now, hallowing the everyday and from time to time being ‘graced’ by a reciprocal presence. The divine astrological encounter is precisely about this process of hallowing: in responding to the numinous quality of ‘ordinary’ events, the astrologer hallows them. In this sense, Buber asserts, we are co-creators with God: He needs us to come to the meeting, to be open to it and ready to respond to an address. Buber expresses this in his characteristically poetic way:

It will then be expected of the attentive man that he faces creation as it happens. It happens as speech…directed precisely at him…But the sounds of which the speech consists…are the events of the personal everyday life. In them…we are addressed.\(^{18}\)

This ‘speech’ is the real dialogue of meeting and it is – as we have suggested in the divine astrological encounter – ‘directed precisely’ at us. Buber also (again, in a somewhat biblical tone) writes freely about the idea of signs, and this clearly connects us with the experience of signs and omens in an astrological context. ‘These signs’ he says, ‘are simply what happens when we enter into relation with occurrences as really having meaning for us.’\(^{19}\) He goes on to point out the way in which we can refuse to engage with them:

Each of us is encased in an armour whose task is to ward off signs. Signs happen to us without respite, living means being addressed, we would only need to present ourselves and to perceive.\(^{20}\) [my italics]

This is exactly what astrologers – attentive to signs and omens – do, as they meet the world; they present themselves, and they perceive, via symbols. The question remains, though, that we have continually asked throughout this study: Who or what is the other that addresses us?

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\(^{18}\) Friedman (1955), 90
\(^{19}\) ibid
\(^{20}\) See Buber (1947), 10-13
Buber comments,

> If we name the speaker of this speech God, then it is always the God of a moment, a moment God...In such a way, out of the givers of the signs, the speakers of the words in lived life, out of the moment Gods there arises for us with a single identity the Lord of the voice, the One.²¹

Whilst his writing is always against dogma in any form, given Buber’s Jewish beliefs, it is unsurprising that his source of address will be expressed as a monotheistic image. In this study, my position is different: I am not coming from a point of view rooted in a monotheistic religion. We have been examining the world of divination, and therefore deliberately use the word divine in preference to Buber’s ‘God.’ Nevertheless, we stay connected to the classical, pagan gods who give their names to astrological planets; and Buber’s ‘moment Gods’ – in terms of the astrological moment – have relevance for our argument.

**Turning**

Taking the initiative towards being addressed brings us to another part of the process of meeting. In the flow of movement involved in this process – going forth, waiting, and perhaps receiving – there is a movement that is crucial, and that is ‘turning.’ As Buber puts it, turning is the antidote to being oppressed by the world of ‘It,’ and a belief in an immutable fate: ‘reversal is the recognition of the Centre and the act of turning again to it’.²² We are brought back – so to speak – to a ‘centre’ associated with the I-Thou attitude; we are saved from being stuck in the world of ‘It.’ It is not that being in I-It mode is negative, or even evil: it is just a part of life and – as we have pointed out—it would be impossible to be in I-Thou mode all the time:

I-Thou is not an unqualified good: its lack of measure, continuity and order threatens to be destructive of life; I-It is not simply evil; one cannot meet others in it, but only through it can one make oneself understood with others.²³

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²¹ Buber (1947), 14-15
²² Friedman (1955), 66 and 73
²³ See Friedman (1955), 60
It is the movement — the alternation — between I-Thou and I-It that is crucial:

It is the alternation between summons (the approach to the meeting with the eternal Thou) and sending (the going forth from that meeting to the world of men); the alternation between revelation in which the relational act takes place anew and flows into cultural and religious forms and the turning in which man turns from the rigidified forms of religion to the direct meeting with the Eternal Thou.24

The act of moving: of turning back from ‘It’ to the centre, and back to the ‘It’ again, is a continual process that keeps us in life, and in dialogue. Hobson’s emphasis is on what he calls ‘symbolical transformation.’ We have referred to this before, but — to be clear in this context — he elaborates:

Experience is a spontaneous activity in which elementary shapes emerge, are related, dissolved, and recombined. They are elaborated in diverse forms. I shall term that process symbolical transformation. It is essential to thought and prior to it…the mind (brain) is a kind of transformer of symbols converting the flow of raw experiencing into everchanging experienced forms.25

Maggie Hyde has written very precisely about the concept of movement, i.e. the transformation and turning in relation to astrological symbolic interpretation. She shows the way in which the astrological symbol has the power to ‘turn’ a person’s actions and intentions.26 Hobson’s description of symbolical transformation is of how dialogue — in the space between him and his client — is a feeling-language bringing them potentially into I-Thou mode which in turn, creates what he terms ‘transforming meetings’ that can have a ‘profound impact.’27 This alchemical process echoes exactly what occurs in the astrologer’s consulting room. Symbols are the feeling-language here, ‘converting the flow of raw experiencing into everchanging experienced forms.’ A similar alchemy is part of the movement of the astrological event, the divine encounter. Astrologers, like Buber’s ‘attentive man,’ go forth to meet the world, and by taking this initiative, by responding to the signs, to the revelation and to the ‘other’ who meets them, they open themselves to the movement which is set in motion: an alternation between turning back to the I-It world and returning again to the centre.

24 See Friedman (1955), 73
25 Hobson (1985), 84
26 Hyde (2005)
27 Hobson (1985), Introduction, xiv
They do, in effect, what Buber suggests: ‘We would only need to “present ourselves and to perceive” ’.

Uniqueness

Finally, we come to a crucial factor in the astrological experience, that of uniqueness. It is also central to Buber’s thinking, and he speaks of:

…our entering upon the situation…which has at this moment stepped up to us, whose appearance we did not and could not know, for its like has not yet been. Nor are we now finished with it…we subdue it into the substance of lived life. Only then, true to the moment, do we experience a life that is something other than a sum of moments. [my italics]

Buber is not only saying that the situation he meets is unique (‘its like has not yet been’) but that it then has to be incorporated into ‘lived life’ (by moving back to I-It and back again) in order to honour that moment as not merely one of a ‘sum of moments.’ Astroglogically, this is the experience of a unique event: it is interpreted through symbols; it is reflected upon from the world of I-It; and it then becomes integrated into a pattern of deeper understanding, and provides a powerful, inner ‘base’ from which one may meet further unique events.

Buber’s sense of uniqueness is closely entwined with his sense of concretion: it is ‘what cannot be classified, with concretion itself.’ It is also rooted in his lived experience, in his twenties, of Hasidism, which emphasises ‘this place, this moment.’ Donald Moore, one of Buber’s interpreters, calls Hasidism ‘a mysticism rooted in the world,’ which brings out that quality which is so basic to Buber’s thought, to his “human religiousness”; Hasidism demands of us presentness. And this presentness, this “ever anew” of each moment, is the key to Buber’s “holy insecurity.” Holy insecurity is the uncomfortable position of the ‘narrow ridge’ (the opposite of dogma) where one is continually required to see the world ‘ever-anew.’ The impact of an event on the divinatory astrologer creates a similar state of mind. It can be ‘subdued into the

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28 For a further discussion on this, see Cornelius (2007)
29 Buber (1947), 16-17
30 ibid
31 Moore (1996), 29
substance of lived life’ but will be followed by another totally new one, whose ‘like has not yet been.’

Hobson, in talking about the role of a dream in a therapeutic session, gives his version of uniqueness:

Each time it is the same and yet each time it is fresh. No associations can exhaust its meaning. It always says something new. It cannot be put into other terms. It cannot be translated. It can only be extended, enriched and amplified as new meanings body forth.\(^\text{32}\)

His description of a dream can be taken as an interesting analogy for the astrological chart. Like a dream, it is a collection of symbols, yet it is also greater than the sum of its parts. Hobson also speaks of the meeting between unique persons in his own consulting room, differentiating it from:

a psychology which only conceives of a man as a bundle of traits, or a collection of drives and complexes. A relationship with a person is very different. A meeting happens between persons. They are unique.\(^\text{33}\)

Hobson, then, sees this as distinct from an abstract, categorising approach, and similarly, my view is that one of the most affirming and profoundly healing effects of working with a person’s astrological chart is that every chart is a statement of uniqueness. In a literal sense, every chart is different (however fractionally) because it is set up for a specific time and place, and this is a non-repeatable situation. For centuries, questions have been asked about the validity of astrology if the charts of twins are so nearly identical, yet their destinies can be so different.\(^\text{34}\) But astrology, whilst being founded on an astronomical, spatial-temporal basis, is not primarily about this literal dimension, as we have seen with ‘wrong-time’ charts. The point is that the person whose birthchart is being interpreted, feels unique – the chart being interpreted at that moment, in that encounter, is what ultimately matters. It is of hypothetical

\(^{32}\) Hobson (1985), 8
\(^{33}\) Hobson (1985), 19
\(^{34}\) St. Augustine writes about twin births (1972), 183. Cornelius comments that ‘Augustine’s observation continues to be unanswered and unanswerable.’ Cornelius (2003), 175
interest that it can represent another entity born at, or near to, that time and place.\textsuperscript{35} Like the wrong-time chart, or a poem or work of art, it is \textit{assigned significance}: more importantly, it is perceived as ‘belonging’ to that person. As Hobson said, in relation to the living symbol and what the client brings to the session, it is therefore given \textit{value}. People are valued as themselves: the chart sits next to them in the meeting; they are between ‘their’ chart and the astrologer; and all three are in the here-and-now.

Perhaps, at this point, we can bring in a difficult word, but one that both Buber and Hobson do not shrink from using, and that is \textit{love}. The ‘loving man’ says Buber, ‘is one who grasps non-relatively each thing he grasps.’\textsuperscript{36} Astrologers – laden with any number of ‘relative’ ideas gained over the years of study and experience – are nevertheless able to grasp the reality of the person in front of them in a non-relative way. They perceive the person as a person; they perceive and love this person’s chart as a unique collection of symbols. Thus they sit with their client, and with their client’s unique chart and particular personal circumstances, and there can be real dialogue in the space between them. Buber feels that this kind of relation to one person is to ‘know’ everything:

This, the unique, is the bestowing shape, the self of the thing, that cannot be detained within the pure circle of world comprehensibility. What you extract and combine is always only the passivity of things. But their activity, their \textit{effective reality} reveals itself only to the loving man who knows them. And thus he knows the world. (my italics)\textsuperscript{37}

If, in Buber’s sense, the astrologer is able to be a ‘loving man’, then clients can be known in their uniqueness, just as their ‘effective reality’ is known through the symbols in their chart. The chart is not a passive ‘thing,’ and neither is the client: both are \textit{active}, and both can reveal their ‘effective reality’ in response to this unique situation of being part of the astrological encounter. They are both affirmed, as they are, in the here-and-now, in that situation. Buber talks of the situationlessness of mysticism. Far more mystical – and mysterious – is the \textit{concretion} of this time, this place, and this

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{35} The case of twins born very close together in time has always been fascinating, from an astrological perspective. It is possible to speculate that twins may be ‘living out’ or expressing very different aspects of the ‘same’ chart.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{36} Buber & Friedman (1957), 29}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} ibid}
meeting, whether it is an event ‘met’ in the world, or in the consulting room of an astrologer.
CONCLUSION

My initial aim was to explore the role of dialogue in astrological divination, and in the course of this study I have sought to show how the astrological encounter is potentially a meeting with the divine. I have discussed and defined separately the core elements of my research project, namely: astrology, divination and dialogue, and in the introduction I explained my choice of the word divine. In the final section on meeting, I drew together the different strands of each section to put forward the argument that – within the space of the astrological encounter, there is the potential to have a dialogue with another person and with the cosmos that can be termed, in Buber’s sense of the word, a real meeting, and hence, a meeting with the divine: i.e., a meeting between the human and the transpersonal dimension.

This study has opened up many questions and touches on wider issues, but I have deliberately kept my focus to the four elements of astrology, divination, dialogue and meeting. Given that this dissertation has been centred around the practice of divinatory astrology, I have, whilst acknowledging many definitions of astrology, posited that astrological interpretation is essentially poetic, and requires an imaginative mode of perception in viewing the world. In this I agree with Hobson, who is clear that ‘poetry is not an activity divorced from everyday living.’¹ He also brings both love and religion into his model: love, in a non-sentimental sense as, ‘a way of learning to be a person, through real dialogue.’

Love and imagination are closely related….Imagination and love move into religion…when we formulate techniques of a Conversational Model and engage in research projects, we are making statements about ultimate values.²

This research project has indeed expressed my own ‘ultimate values’ as a practitioner of astrology. Buber, too – with his ‘poetry of the everyday’, and his ‘loving man’ who is able to see the world in a non-relative way – brings together ideas that reach to the heart of what constitutes ultimate value:

¹ Hobson (1985), 81
² Hobson (1985), 279-280
I possess nothing but the everyday, out of which I am never taken. The mystery is no longer disclosed, it has escaped or it has made its dwelling here where everything happens as it happens...I do not know much more. If that is religion then it is just everything, simply all that is lived in its possibility of dialogue. Here is space also for religion’s highest forms.3

Divinatory astrology – as I have shown – deals with everyday encounters, both with other persons and with the world. Its poetic, imaginative, and symbolic expression may be considered to contribute towards ‘real meeting,’ and ‘religious’ dialogue, in the sense Buber means it here. To understand divinatory astrology as a ‘dialogue’ is to understand the importance of symbolism. It redefines practice by giving emphasis to certain qualities associated with the astrological moment that arise in – and are activated by – the response to the meeting with an ‘other.’ These could be summarised as a powerful emotional affect; a state of openness and receptivity generated by moving into a shared imaginal space; and the experience of a numinous dimension.

By choosing to focus on dialogue, we are able to concentrate on the space between the subjects in the astrological encounter. Thus the experience does not centre on the subjects themselves (although their mutual participation is a key element) – rather it is what arises between them that is significant. This ‘space’ becomes a place of creativity and of conception, and it enables dialogue to occur. It is ‘occupied’ by symbol, but – in the idiosyncratic nature of symbol – this space becomes a fluid, translucent, and ‘empty’ area: a receptacle for the imaginative activity shared by the participants (their ‘serious play’), and potentially a place where a sense of the numinous may arise. We are, then, validating the interpersonal as potentially a space for the transpersonal. This underlines the vital link between religion and astrological divination which has, in my view, not been acknowledged. It has either been resisted, or simply not experienced as a valid phenomenon.

Buber insists that the experience of an I-Thou meeting – what we term ‘dialogue’ in the astrological encounter – is one whose ‘like has not yet been.’4 His description of this experience is that it defies an I-It attitude of categorisation. Nor is

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3 Buber (1947), 14
4 Buber (1947), 16-17
one able to relate this meeting – that is occurring in the here-and-now – to any previous experience. In other words, it is non-relative, and therefore a unique event. This, in turn, exposes us to areas of experience outside anything familiar or definable. I have sought, in this study, to place such areas within certain contexts; to connect them with the more familiar and recognisable. Ultimately, however, we are faced with a phenomenon that is incompatible with rational analysis, but remains an imaginal ‘reality.’ In saying, as I have done, that the astrological moment – in its full participatory mode, at an ‘anagogical’ level – is potentially a meeting with the divine, I have attempted to give expression to an encounter that is unique, particular and essentially inexpressible in language. It is, perhaps, the impossibility of articulating such a meeting as a recognisable experience that demonstrates the vital role of symbolism in these encounters. For it is symbolism that has the capacity to go beyond the known, and into the unknown.
APPENDIX A

PRINCIPLES OF THE ASTROLOGICAL SYMBOL SYSTEM

In order to make the astrological references throughout this study comprehensible for the non-astrological reader, this is a brief guide to the basic symbol system of Western astrology. This type of material usually fills entire, substantial textbooks on astrology: in tightly summarised form, it may simply raise more questions than it answers. However, for the reader who wishes to take the subject further, there is a plethora of textbooks.¹ For the immediate purpose — that is, of understanding the subject upon which this study is based — all the chapters in the first section on astrology will help to fill in gaps. Chapter One (a cultural overview) is an introduction, and Chapter Four (astrological symbol) will help to clarify the whole question of levels: of universal symbolism as opposed to particular instances in a specific context. The second half of this chapter contains paragraphs headed ‘Astrology and vertical thinking,’ ‘Jung and amplification,’ ‘Astrology as allegory,’ ‘Astrological glyphs,’ and ‘Translation and interpretation’: some of these address the way in which the connections work. The principle of the medieval correspondences (also known as cosmic sympathy²) which underlies astrological thinking is part of an anachronistic mindset, and therefore somewhat opaque to a modern way of thought.

Astrological language and terminology is potentially both arcane and alienating: to demonstrate this, we shall start with a typical sentence containing four of the basic ‘building blocks’ of the system, namely: planets, signs, houses, and aspects:

*The Sun is in Cancer in the fourth house, square to the Moon in Libra in the seventh house.*

To deconstruct what lies behind this strange statement, we need to return to the second century CE. In a previous chapter, we referred to the two great works of the Alexandrian, Claudius Ptolemy that essentially remain the foundation of the astrology

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¹ A good, brief and accessible one is Harvey & Harvey (1999)
² See for example, the work of Marsilio Ficino, including *Three Books on Life*, Book III, Ch. II (transl. C. Kaske & J. Clark)
that is practised today. A novice approaching the writings of Ptolemy will be faced with the archaic language of our sentence (and indeed, he will also find it in most of the modern textbooks). A further challenge is the sight of a chart, or horoscope, which is a circle divided into twelve segments containing what might appear to be hieroglyphs. For those familiar with the mandala, it looks rather like this oriental pattern. The astrological chart is a map of the heavens for a specific time as seen from a specific place on earth: by the relatively simple step of memorising what the glyphs represent, it is quite easy to decode it or to do a translation. However, the novice, having translated the glyphs, is then faced with the far more complex task of interpretation. To judge how our sentence can become a meaningful statement, related to a particular person or situation, is a major shift from the process of straightforward decoding.

First, we need to return to the four main ‘building blocks’ of the system: planets, signs, houses, and aspects. The twelve signs of the zodiac are firmly embedded in popular awareness: for example, the majority of people know their ‘sun sign’ from the date of their birthday. In practice, however, astrologers place far more emphasis on the planets. These – in the jargon of modern psychological astrology, and in a secular age – have been diluted into the representation of ‘energies’ or ‘drives,’ whereas their original power was as divinities or gods. The signs merely indicate the way in which these energies or drives are expressed, or – if one prefers – the way in which the powers of the planetary gods were manifested in the world. Put another way, one could describe the planets as nouns or verbs (answering the question ‘What?’); whilst signs are merely adverbs (answering the question ‘How?’). To continue this analogy, the aspects also answer the question ‘How?’, whilst the houses answer the question ‘Where?’.

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3 Ptolemy’s Tetrabiblos and Almagest. For an assessment of the role played by Ptolemy in the astrological tradition, see Cornelius (2003), 81-97.
4 Early charts were square, whilst modern ones are circular. For a further discussion of glyphs, see the chapter on astrological symbol.
5 Much has been written about the significance of the mandala. Jung sees it as an image of the self; an autonomous psychic fact; Mircea Eliade, as a historian of religions, sees it as an imago mundi rather than a projection of the mind.
6 For further discussion on translation and interpretation in the context of astrology, see the chapter on astrological symbol; also, see Radermacher (2000).
7 For a historical background to this, see Whitfield (2001), 34 For an explication of the planets as psychological archetypes, see Bird (2007), 62
The **zodiac** (from the Greek, meaning ‘circle of animals’ or ‘wheel of life’) remains impressed on public consciousness – especially at a visual level – via artefacts in popular culture, whilst traces of planetary awareness tend to be embedded within language in an implicit, rather than explicit, way. For example, Saturday is Saturn’s day, and a ‘jovial’ person possesses the qualities of Jupiter. Astronomically, the zodiac is the circle or band of stars whose groups (constellations) mark the ‘ecliptic’ or annual path of the sun through the heavens. As the planets of our solar system all orbit the sun along roughly the same plane, the (‘fixed’) stars – from our point of view on the earth – provide a backdrop for the (moving) planets, the ‘wanderers.’ Thus the planets roam the sky, according to their various speeds and their cycles around the sun, against a background of zodiacal constellations; and these areas of the sky have been divided into the twelve signs (originally corresponding to the constellations of the same name). This, then, is how the planets are said to be ‘in’ a sign. For example, the ‘Moon in Libra’ simply means that the moon is seen, from our perspective on earth, against the sign (area of the sky) named for the constellation of Libra.

The twelve signs, each of thirty degrees of longitude, make up a 360 – degree circle. In creating a horoscope, the astrologer then divides the horoscope, an earthly representation of the zodiac, into another twelve segments, rather like an orange cut across the middle. These divisions of the ‘sky on earth’ are rooted in astronomical ‘reality’, but – since they are not an equal thirty degrees – it is essentially a symbolic division (and there are different methods of division). These ‘segments’ are known as the **houses**, and thus a planet in a chart can be found both ‘in’ a particular sign (as in our example: *the Sun is in Cancer*), and ‘in’ a particular house (*in the fourth house*).

Finally, we consider the **aspects**. The planets form angles or ‘aspects’ between each other in the 360 – degree circle, depending on how many degrees of longitude they are apart from each other. These angles are also divisions of the circle into two,

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8 Thus the popular expression ‘It’s in the stars’, or in ‘my’ stars, should probably be ‘It’s in the planets’.
9 Owing to a phenomenon known as the Precession of the Equinoxes, the section of the sky known as “Libra” is no longer lined up with the constellation of the same name. The symbolic, astrological relevance is unaffected by this astronomical fact.
10 There are many ways of creating house divisions and many astrologers prefer their own method. For a historical background to the development of the astrological houses, see Houlding (2006). For a comprehensive history of the zodiac, see Powell (2007).
three, four, five, six and so on, resulting in aspects of varying degrees, known respectively as the opposition, trine, square, quintile, sextile, and so on. The planets are ‘aspecting’ (or ‘looking at’) each other in a number of different types of relationships, and this also affects the way they are interpreted.

We have now described the astronomical basis of the chart, containing planets, signs, houses, and aspects, and we turn to the astrological interpretation of this pattern. All four factors, which make up the chart, are seen as representing something in human experience, thus they act as signs or symbols.\textsuperscript{11} The ten planets represent basic principles of human life: for example, expansion (Jupiter), or relationship (Venus).\textsuperscript{12} The twelve signs – subdivided into four groups of the elements, and three groups known as the ‘modes’ – represent ways in which these principles can be expressed: for example, in a nurturing way (Cancer), or in an adventurous way (Sagittarius).\textsuperscript{13} The houses represent areas of human experience, such as home (fourth house) or partners (seventh house). The aspects represent the different ways in which the planets relate to each other: for example, the opposition indicates tension, whilst the trine suggests harmony. We now return to our original sentence:

\textit{The Sun is in Cancer in the fourth house, square to the Moon in Libra in the seventh house.}

This can now begin to carry some meaning, rather than simply being an obscure statement in arcane language. Before suggesting an interpretation, we should briefly mention what the planets, signs and houses in the sentence represent, including the astrological sun and moon.\textsuperscript{14} The square aspect implies conflict between the factors ‘squaring’ each other. The different levels of association (referred to in the first paragraph of this Appendix) is a key concept, but here – without going into great detail – we shall simply note that in the medieval system of correspondences, the associations run vertically through the world; through the chain of being; and through vegetable, mineral, animal and human levels. The sun, for example, would be understood to ‘be’ in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} For further discussion on signs and symbols, see Chapters 2, 3 & 4.
\item \textsuperscript{12} For a further discussion of these ‘basic principles’, see Dethlefsen (1989), 65-71.
\item \textsuperscript{13} The four elements are Earth, Air, Fire and Water; and the ‘modes’ are called Cardinal, Fixed, and Mutable.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Although, astronomically, the sun is a star and the moon a satellite of the earth, in an astrological context they are described – for convenience – as planets.
\end{itemize}
a sunflower, in gold, in the lion, and in a man as ‘ruler’: father, husband, or king. The moon, similarly, would be understood as ‘being in’ a moonflower, silver, and – amongst a very wide range of associations – in a female as mother, wife or maiden. In a modern psychological mode, the Sun is taken as the self – usually in the Jungian sense – and the Moon as one’s capacity for instinctive response. The (watery) sign Cancer acts in a nurturing way; airy Libra with a sense of balance and partnership; the fourth house (associated with the fourth sign, Cancer) is to do with home and roots; the seventh house (associated with the seventh sign, Libra), with the ‘other’: one’s marriage or business partner, or one’s enemy. Thus (if describing a person) a psychological interpretation of our sentence might read:

You are someone who is very attached to your home environment; has strong feelings about your family and likes to look after others, and to be cared for in return. Sometimes, however, this conflicts with your instinct for fairness, and your more rational and intellectual awareness of the need for equal partnership in one-to-one relationships.

In order to illustrate our earlier point – namely that interpretation can be made at a number of levels – consider the following, which is totally unlike the previous modern psychological interpretation. It is more ‘factual,’ as in the idiom of the medieval correspondences, but remains an equally valid expression of the symbols:

The king does not live at court, but in a rural retreat in his own country. His power consists of co-rulership: an uneasy, and often tense alliance with his mother, who is his constitutional partner.

We have now given a very brief outline of the astronomical and astrological planets, signs, houses, and aspects – the basic ‘building blocks’ of the astrological system – and have noted that this structure comprises a large number of signs and symbols. Each does its symbolic job of standing for something beyond itself, and together they reflect the infinite variety of human experience. Since any one symbol carries a huge range of associations, we can begin to appreciate the sheer complexity and breadth of reference within the scope of astrological interpretation.
In order to demonstrate this, we can turn to a single astrological chart. We have ten planets – each placed in any one of twelve signs (with their subdivision of elements and ‘modes’) and in any one of twelve houses – and each of these ten planets form a number of different aspects to each other. The possibilities of interpretation, at a purely quantitative level, are evident. If we then remember further variables: that any one chart can describe many things-in-the-world – for example a person, a nation, the start of a journey, an animal, a question, an organisation, and so on – and all these in many different contexts (which will affect the way the chart is interpreted) – we may finally arrive at a significant point of understanding: that a collection of astrological factors in a horoscope has the potential for multiple interpretations. Nevertheless, as we shall see, it is the particular context in which each chart is situated that gives precision to the process of interpretation.
In December 2008, shortly before Christmas, I travelled to Scotland for a few days to stay with my sister, Lucy, who lives in Edinburgh. She has always been interested in astrology and has acquired a basic knowledge of it, developed and augmented by our discussions on the subject. Its symbolic language has become part of our shared communication: just as – between astrologers – the symbols open up other dimensions, beyond ‘ordinary’ conversation. We have a particular interest in the birth charts of mutual acquaintances and family members, both living and dead. Interpretation of their charts has enriched our relationship as siblings, and deepened our understanding of family patterns and dynamics.

Lucy and I have a close relationship. Among its astrological signatures is one that would be regarded as significant by those astrologers who have some familiarity with Jung. He has written extensively about the alchemical mysterium coniunctionis or sacred marriage: the coming together of masculine and feminine, usually depicted as king and queen, or sun and moon, in alchemical texts.¹ In exploring astrological symbolism, Jung carried out, famously, his ‘marriage experiments.’ These involved a small number of couples, whose astrological sun, moon, and Ascendant positions were connected in significant ways. For example the man’s sun might be in the same zodiacal position as the woman’s moon, or the man’s moon in the same degree as the woman’s Ascendant.² Jung’s theory suggested that this conjunction indicated not only a comfortable psychological and emotional relationship between the couple, appropriate to a marriage, but – even more than that – a sense of complete mutual understanding; of ‘belonging’ to each other, rather like two halves making up a whole.³ In the astrological relationship between Lucy and myself, both my sun and Ascendant are conjunct her moon, close to the same degree of the sign Gemini. This would therefore not only

¹ In the alchemical tradition, this is illustrated as the king and queen in close embrace – clearly understood to be copulation – but fully clothed and under water. See for example, the illustrations in Salomin Trismosin’s Splendor Solis (Trismosin and McLean (1991).  
² For a critique of Jung’s marriage experiments from an astrologer’s point of view, rather than a psychologist’s, see Hyde (1991), 130-4 .137-8, 154-5.  
³ See for example, Plato on the divine yearning of the soul for its cosmic half in Timaeus 90a-c. See also Symposium, 191d1-5 and 192c2-7
signify a strong emotional bond between us, but – given that Gemini is associated with the mind and all forms of mental communication – what might aptly be called a ‘marriage of true minds.’

On the last morning of my stay, before I returned to London on the midday train, we had set aside some time to look at charts. My daughter had a new baby, born a few weeks earlier, and we were keen to look at this chart in the context of other family ones. Normally, when Lucy and I are staying in each other’s houses, we like to have an early morning conversation, and – as the early riser – I make some tea for us both, and take it into Lucy’s room. This morning, for some reason, she decided to come into my room. I was sleeping in a wooden – framed double bed, on the left – hand side, and she climbed onto it, sitting next to me on the right hand side. We started to talk about family matters, and instead of focusing on the new baby, the conversation turned to our parents, who both died many years ago. In our father’s chart, the most noticeable feature is its dramatic shape: all the planets except two are tightly grouped together on one side; all of them opposite the remaining two on the other side. An interpretation of this, in view of the specific planets involved, would be of extreme tension in his life: a sense of being split apart, or ready to snap; that he was in danger of cracking up under pressure. In my mother’s chart was a different sort of pattern: her main group of planets lay on the west side of her chart, in the seventh and eighth ‘houses’, which (following Jungian terminology) can indicate a tendency to ‘project’ onto other people. In other words, rather than accept responsibility for her own behaviour and actions, she would load it onto others, and blame them and the external world for events in her life. Clinically – had our mother chosen to subject herself to a psychiatrist – she might have been diagnosed as a ‘borderline personality’: certainly, her mental state was fragile and unpredictable. Given that my father was her most ‘significant other,’ he had always been the one to bear the weight of her projections. It was what could be called a case of ‘projective identification’: for example, if she felt a failure in life, she would describe him as being a failure.

Just as I was making this interpretation and describing this dynamic, there was a terrific noise. The bed had collapsed on Lucy’s side and it crashed to the floor taking her with it. Shocked and startled we got off the bed to examine it. The right hand side of the bed frame had irretrievably cracked and split, and it seemed beyond repair. In the
wake of this dramatic moment, we reacted in different ways. Lucy was immediately anxious because, following my departure, she was expecting another visitor and the chance of replacing the bed before Christmas seemed remote. I was caught up in the knee-jerk astrologer’s response of trying to time the moment of the crash precisely. Ironically, the only clock in the vicinity – a digital alarm clock – showed the wrong time because it had recently become unplugged and refused to re-set properly, and my own watch was slightly fast. By the time I had started to work out what the correct time might be, several minutes had elapsed, and I felt I had lost the moment. Lucy started to make phone calls to a joiner; I started packing for my journey, and the bed remained in a state of collapse.

What is interesting about such events is that the actual time taken for the event – chronologically accurate or otherwise – is not necessarily the ‘moment of astrology’. On this occasion, it occurred about an hour later. By then I had packed, and Lucy had arranged with a friend to remove the broken bed. In the meantime, my mind had moved into a space in which to process this drama. I knew certain things at that stage: that a dramatic ‘event’ had clearly occurred; that our discussion had a powerful emotional charge for us both; that I was keen to get an astrological view of it by setting up a chart, but that I lacked a precise time for the breaking of the bed. I did not at that stage, have a sense of what the potential meaning of the event might be. Then it began to emerge: we had been discussing the dynamics of our parents’ marriage, and it was at the moment that I was talking about splitting, tension, overloading, and cracking under the strain that the bed had cracked and broken. It had been a classic psycho-physical manifestation, of which there is a famous example in Jung’s writings.

The double bed is a universal symbol for marriage, where masculine and feminine can be together and conceive the fruits of their union. On this occasion there were two people in the bed – Lucy and I – who, as siblings, share the astrological symbolism for a mysterium coniunctionis; in our case, a Geminian marriage of minds. We were speaking about our own biological parents, mother and father, who had conceived both of us in such a bed. Sitting together on two sides of the bed, we had spoken of the two

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4 See Cornelius (2003), Chapter 12, on ‘wrong time’ charts.
5 For Jung’s famous ‘scarab’ case, see Jung (1957), 525-6 (CW8, par. 982). Also see Jung (1972), 31-36 (CW8, par. 845, 439; par.843, 438).
sides of our parents’ charts: how our father’s tense opposition of planets might split him apart, and how our mother’s planetary pattern meant that she projected onto – and overloaded – the ‘other.’ At this moment, Lucy’s side of the bed collapsed. Many years earlier, our father’s life had ended suddenly when he collapsed in a public place from heart failure. Our family understood his death to be associated with the extreme pressure of our mother’s mental condition, which he had carried as a personal burden for so many years.

The coup de grace, however, which gave me the clue and finally brought about the astrological moment, was a simple physical fact, namely that the bed was made of wood. Our mother’s maiden name was Wood, and the sudden apprehension of this fact made me grab Lucy and say ‘Of course, that’s it, wood splits!’ It was that ‘realisation’ that created the moment of astrology for this event, and at that point I was able to register an exact chronological time. It was almost as if the inaccurate alarm clock had conspired to delay things until the ‘right’ moment. Lucy and I both experienced the moment of the crash as a shocking physical event, however the impact on her was as an immediate practical problem, whereas my reaction – as an astrologer – was a divinatory one: I needed to uncover the meaning of the moment, but was unable to do so until later, by which time I was beginning to come to an understanding of its significance. I had to stay in some sort of limbo or suspension until I ‘got it,’ rather as one ‘gets’ a joke. My sudden perception that wood splits brought the ‘right’ moment of astrology into being, and I gave the chart the title ‘Wood Splits.’ In fact my mother (as ‘Wood’) was not, astrologically, the one likely to split, although her mental state was undeniably fragile. It was my father’s marriage to her that eventually split him from life, through the long – term emotional and psychological strain of her presence. This was ‘re – enacted’, years later, by us – their daughters – together in a ‘marriage’ bed that collapsed under the strain.  

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6 It is always interesting to play with symbolism, and we could ‘push’ it to ask why did Lucy’s side split, rather than mine? Various possibilities emerge: she was on the right hand side of the bed, the side on which our father used to sleep, and he was the one likely to crack under strain. In the way of family myth, Lucy – the youngest – was ‘Daddy’s girl,’ and had an especially close relationship with him. Astrologically, she has the planet Uranus (associated with splits) exactly on the Descendant of her natal chart; the point representing the ‘other.’ In her life, it has manifested as two unusually sudden and dramatic marriage splits, resulting in two divorces. Our parents did not divorce, unless one sees our father’s sudden and premature death as a symbolic divorce, both from life and from the marriage partner who had exerted an excessive strain on his heart.

7 The astrological maze into which we are led by symbols goes even further. The intricate connection between planets in my chart and in Lucy’s had reached — at the time of this event in December 2008 —
It may well be asked why the eventual moment of astrology should be considered to be the ‘right’ one. Herein lies the mysterious phenomenon of symbolic ‘realisation,’ and the precision of divinatory astrology. The ‘Wood Splits’ chart – set up later, for a precise moment, after the actual event – has a single factor, immediately evident to the astrologer, that declares its radicality, and that could only occur if set up at that precise time. The ‘angles’ (the vertical and horizontal axes which form the ‘cross’ of the circle) are arguably the most important feature of this type of chart, since they directly depend on this precision timing. One of the primary signatures of the vertical axis – with the ‘Midheaven’ (MC) at the top and the immum coeli (IC) at the bottom – is the parents, both mother and father. In the ‘Wood Splits’ chart, this vertical axis has the exact zodiacal degree – 4-5 degrees of Gemini, which joins Lucy and me in a ‘marriage’ – on its lower point, the immum coeli, which signifies family, roots and origins. So, whilst the whole ‘parental’ axis is evidently relevant to the theme, the crucial lower end (family and roots) is the one that exactly coincides with the siblings’ ‘marriage’ degree.

The siblings, then, are both present in the chart, at the foot of the father-mother axis that signifies family roots; it is, so to speak, the place of conception. A striking event had been conceived between us, who had both – in turn – originally been conceived by the parents about whom we were speaking. After the initial psycho-physical manifestation of the event came the moment of realisation, when the symbol presented itself unmistakeably, and something profound and mysterious came into being.

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some particular ‘progressed’ aspects which suggested that our relationship could reach more profound depths. Whilst the details of this development (precise for the month of December) would be of considerable interest to divinatory astrologers, they go beyond the scope and remit of this piece.

8 The radicality of a chart (Lat: radix – root), is a term used in traditional astrology to indicate that its symbols are totally appropriate to the perceived meaning, and that it can therefore be considered ‘radical’ or authentic, and fit to be judged.

9 By precision timing, we mean to the nearest minute of time. A single degree of zodiacal longitude on the Ascendant changes with approximately every four minutes of clock time. In contrast, for example, a single degree of the sun only changes every twenty-four hours; whilst a single degree of the planet Neptune changes every two years.
Notes on symbolism

The primary *universal* symbol in this story – a double bed – has been discussed within the narrative, as have the more esoteric symbols: the *alchemical* symbol of the ‘sacred marriage’, and the primary *astrological* symbol of the MC/IC axis.

Notes on the astrological chart

It is convenient to give these ‘event’ charts a title, for subsequent ease of reference, and this title usually refers to the main feature of the narrative. In this case it was named ‘Wood Splits’: specifically, referring to the sudden flash of connection about the name ‘Wood’ that became the moment of astrology; and more generally, to the occurrence of the broken bed. The primary chart factor is the exactitude of the ‘marriage’ degree on the MC/IC axis. There are, however, other features of interest to astrologers, but these are too complex to be included here. What is significant, though, is how one seminal event chart can start a sequence of other related incidents, recognisable by specific planetary symbolism or repeated specific degrees of longitude reappearing in further charts. Such charts, then, tend not to be an isolated phenomenon, but to connect with other ones, often in a dramatic and striking way. Perhaps this constitutes the true mystery of such occurrences: to seek ‘explanations’ may not be appropriate, but we can observe and wonder at the intricacy of these connections.
APPENDIX C

AFRICAN EVENT

The characters involved in this story are myself and a couple called Sarah and Anthony. We are close neighbours and our children have all grown up together; we have shared many holidays and experiences over the years, and are rather like an extended family. Last Christmas I gave Anthony a wineglass as his present: he and Sarah both enjoy wine and collect antique glasses. I’ve given them both glasses before, so it wasn’t an unusual present, but this one was particularly beautiful. It had a distinctive pattern and I had been quite tempted to keep it for myself. After Christmas, I was due to go on a three-week holiday in the Gambia, West Africa, to a resort where I go every January. I’d invited Sarah and Anthony to join me for a week in my time-share villa, and I went round to see them the evening before I left. When I arrived, they were having a glass of wine and Anthony was drinking from his new glass. He was very pleased with it and commented on its unusual pattern, and Sarah said she was quite envious, and would have liked it for herself.

A few days later, out in Africa, I had a frightening experience with the microwave oven in my villa. I’d just heated up something that was ready, although there was still some cooking time left on the clock. Having heard somewhere that it was bad to run a microwave with nothing in it, I looked around quickly for something to put in for the last thirty seconds. For some reason, it didn’t occur to me that I could simply switch it off, and as the nearest thing to hand was an empty wineglass, I popped it in the oven. Within seconds, there was a terrifying mini-explosion and a flash of intensely bright light as the glass shattered, clearly visible through the microwave door. The image that immediately flashed into my mind was the story, from classical mythology, of Zeus and Semele. For the reader unfamiliar with it, Semele was one of the many lovers of philandering Zeus. In wishing to test her power over the almighty sky god, her request was for him to demonstrate that he really was the great Zeus. Eventually, he reluctantly promised, with a heavy heart, since he knew that to do so would destroy her. He then revealed himself in a blinding, lightning flash, which of course killed her. However, in a moment of quick thinking, he saved the child she was carrying and stitched it into his
own thigh, to keep it safe until it was ready to be born. This child was to be the god Dionysus.

After I’d cleared up the mess and calmed down, my immediate sense was one of annoyance. The resort where I stayed exerted a punitive regime over breakages and to replace a wineglass would cost five pounds. My villa was issued with six traditional globe-shaped wineglasses: now I had only five. This set in motion a sequence of events. I tried to find a replacement in the local shops, and bought one which was cheap but not the right shape. So I had six glasses again, but they didn’t match. Then, one evening after Sarah and Anthony had arrived, we were eating in the restaurant on the resort, and I noticed that our wineglasses looked the same shape as those in the villa. As a joke, I decided to remove one from the table and slip it in my bag, to transfer back to the villa. It was a rebellious gesture, on my part, to make a stand against the management’s heavy-handed policy: an amoral, Hermes-like action (Hermes being, amongst other things, the god of thieves). This provoked a lively discussion between Sarah, Anthony and the other couple we were with, about the morality of what I was doing. Back in the villa, I discovered that although it was the same globe shape, it was actually a size smaller than the others. By now I was both amused and frustrated. I had made two attempts – one legitimate, the other morally dubious – to replace the broken glass, and I now had seven glasses, two of which didn’t match.

The next morning, I was doing some background reading about divination, and my mind was buzzing with it. So when Sarah, Anthony and I were having a late lunch on the verandah, I talked to them about this subject, and all three of us became involved in an animated discussion. In the book I had been reading, there had been a mention of Teiresias, the blind seer from Greek mythology. All three of us have an ongoing joke about him: we have been to several productions of Greek drama in which Teiresias appeared, often wearing sunglasses and played as a farcical figure, and we laughed about this now, as we discussed the subject of divination. We were drinking wine with our lunch, and as Anthony got up to clear the table, he knocked over my half-full glass, breaking it dramatically. I couldn’t believe that yet another glass had broken, and felt really shocked and upset. Then, Sarah observed that we were being told the gods disapproved of my action the night before in removing the glass from the restaurant. In
a sudden flash, I took this as an omen, and noted the time to set up a chart later, when I was back in England. When I left the resort, no fine was exacted for the broken glass.

**Notes on symbolism**

The symbols that are an intrinsic part of this narrative are *universal* ones: namely, wine, glass and wineglass. The references to Zeus, Semele, Dionysus and Teiresias draw on Greek mythology. There are no explicit references to *astrological* symbols in the story, but the implicit connection between figures from Greek mythology and their astrological counterparts is relevant: Dionysus, god of wine, is linked to the astrological Neptune; Zeus, the chief sky god, is linked to the astrological Jupiter. Thus the mythological connections would automatically – for the astrologer – also be perceived as astrological ones.

**Universal symbols**

**Wine:** associations with blood, sacrifice, libations to the gods. The Sufi wine goddess Saki personifies ‘reality revealed,’ and another line on this might be *in vino veritas:* in other words, that through wine we hear or speak ‘true’ things.

Regarding this story, Dionysus, god of wine, first ‘appeared’ with the microwave incident. As the offspring of a god and a human, he might be perceived as relevant to the subject of divination: the coming together of human and divine. Similarly, in the Christian tradition, the blood of Christ (the divine as human) was shed in sacrifice, and this is celebrated in the drinking of wine at the sacrament of Holy Communion. Dionysus, Orpheus, Osiris and Christ are all figures associated with sacrifice and dismemberment. In the narrative, the role of wine could be seen as linking the story to a divinatory context, and the breaking of glass as a form of libation or sacrifice in order to connect with the divine.

**Glass:** associations here tend to be to do with *sight.* Glass is a transparent substance: one ‘sees through it’ to something beyond, and the spectacles we wear – ‘glasses’ –
enable us to see more clearly. On the other hand, ‘through a glass darkly’ implies some difficulty in seeing. Perhaps – in a divinatory context – glass, which can be clear or opaque, both protects and prevents us from seeing too clearly those things that it is not appropriate for mere humans to see? The breaking or smashing of glass might therefore suggest the smashing of an illusion.

Teiresias, the blind seer, has a part in the narrative. Physically he could see nothing, but his ‘inward’ vision was powerful, and his connection with oracles and prophecy is obviously relevant to this story. Interestingly, his glasses (in the theatrical portrayals recalled by the three people in the narrative) were dark, which often denotes a sight-impaired person. One might argue that sunglasses make it possible to see better, rather than being dazzled.

Wineglass: similar to the general associations already given for both wine and glass, but more specifically a chalice: a sacrificial vessel, as used for libations to the gods. In Christian tradition, the shape is associated with the quest for the Holy Grail, a legend about the spiritual search for illumination and truth. This reflects the way in which the responsible diviner seeks the truth about a present situation, rather than an idle wish to be shown the ‘future’.

Mythological symbolism
This has already been discussed, both in the narrative and in these notes. Some further comments can be made, however, before moving on to the chart. In the microwave incident, the story of Zeus and Semele is evoked. Dionysus (astrological Neptune) was the offspring of the union of Zeus and Semele, and his human-divine parentage has been noted, as a correlation with the subject of divination. He is, moreover, not only the god of wine, but also of divine frenzy: this, in antiquity, is one of the categories in which divination may occur. In this narrative, one might see each incident involving a wineglass as a ‘showing’ of Dionysus. We might also reflect that in the case of the unfortunate Semele, her terrifying death in ‘seeing’ the dazzling sky god Zeus in all his

1 See also the Chapters Two and Three on symbol, for the symbol as being transparent rather than opaque: looking ‘through’ it for meaning.
2 On the Platonic notion of (poetic frenzy) enthouisiaamos as one of the four madnesses of inspired utterance (the others being prophetic, hieratic and amatory), see Phaedrus 244d-45a.
true splendour could be taken in a moral sense. She – a mere human – exceeded her human limits by trying to make a direct connection with the god, and was punished with instant annihilation. Should this be a worrying lesson for human, would-be diviners in daring to come too close to the divine, and recalling Prometheus or Icarus? Alternatively, one might see the figure of Dionysus – with all his associations – as offering a mediating presence, and enabling the process of divination.

Notes on chart

This chart was named ‘Wineglass breaks’. As with the ‘Wood Splits’ chart in the Edinburgh event case, the most striking features relate to the angles, the vertical axis and the horizontal axis that provide the four points of the chart known as the Ascendant, Descendant, Midheaven (MC) and Immum Coeli (IC). 3 In Appendix B, we saw how the siblings’ ‘marriage’ degree was exactly on the vertical ‘parental’ axis, but in that case, the horizontal axis was not highlighted. 4 With this ‘Wineglass breaks’ chart, the Ascendant degree on the horizontal axis and a conjunction of planets exactly on the MC degree both constitute main radical features.

First, the Ascendant degree: as we saw with the previous case, an important feature from the natal charts of any of the participants in the divinatory event can appear in a prominent or appropriate position in the event chart, and this is seen as a radical feature: it is as if it ‘situates’ the participants in that particular event. In the ‘Wood Splits’ chart, it was the Sun and Ascendant degree of the diviner and the Moon degree of her sibling (all at 4-5 degrees of Gemini) that appeared with such precision. In this ‘Wineglass breaks’ chart, it is the natal Ascendant degree of both Sarah and Anthony that appears on the Ascendant degree of the event chart. 5

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3 For more information on the angles, see Appendix A and Appendix B.
4 In fact, the planet Jupiter was exactly on the Ascendant. This is a striking feature, but leads the interpretation of the symbolism into a different area from the main story, so it was not included. It is, however, extremely relevant to one of the main points about divinatory astrology (discussed in the concluding analysis of the case material), namely that these ‘event’ charts are not a one-off phenomenon, but part of a wider and more complex connecting structure.
5 It is not unusual for a married couple to share the same ascending sign, but very unusual for them to share the same ascending degree. With Sarah and Anthony, their natal ascending degrees were very close to each other at the end of the sign Taurus, and to find this mirrored in the event chart Ascendant was a clear indication both of its radicality, and of their presence and involvement in this divinatory event.
What would be even more arresting to the eye of any astrologer (that is, one who was not familiar with the birthcharts of Sarah and Anthony) is the conjunction of two planets, Venus and Neptune, exactly on the Midheaven degree. Neptune, as we have seen, symbolises Dionysus (god of wine and oracular frenzy, and the primary mythological player in the narrative) and for his symbol to appear in this position is breathtaking. Venus has a primary role in the chart, since she is ‘ruler’ of the chart and thus this conjunction brings together both the planetary chart ruler with the planet that is the main signifier of the story.6

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6 The astrological convention is that each planet ‘rules’ (has an affinity with) a particular sign, and that the ruler of the ascending sign becomes the ruler of the entire chart. Venus rules the sign of Taurus, and since Taurus is the ‘rising’ or ascending sign of this event chart, she has a prime role as the ‘chart ruler’. 
APPENDIX D

Poseidon’s Gold

For this third example, I have deliberately chosen a case history that relies heavily on astrological symbolism for its impact. This requires considerable deconstruction for the lay reader, and as a result it is less easy to read as a straight narrative. For this reason, I am giving some notes on the key symbolism of certain planets at the beginning, hoping to help towards the understanding of the narrative. The reader is also advised to read the narrative first, and to pick up the explanatory footnotes on a second reading.

Here are a few of the large number of associations with the following planets, selected for their relevance to the text:

The (astrological) sun: male, husband, father, gold.
The (astrological) moon: female, wife, mother.

Jupiter: expansion, great size, philandering, uncles, adventure.

Neptune: the sea, wine, deception, fraud, the artistic temperament, escape from the world, an almost indefinable quality of slipping and sliding, loss, illusion, mystery.

In January 1997 I was on holiday with my family in West Africa, and was feeling curious and somewhat apprehensive about an imminent new moon on January 9th. The positions of the planets for that day were closely interwoven with planets in my natal chart, with some very challenging aspects, and I was unsure what this might mean in my own life. On the day of the new moon, there was to be a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Neptune – a notable and infrequent event – only a few degrees away from

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1 These seem a curiously mismatched collection – what, for instance, do uncles have to do with great size? For more on the theory of correspondences, see Appendix A, and Chapters One and Four.  
2 In working with the birthcharts of people, the natal chart may be seen as describing the basic character and personality. The astrological method for assessing the development and unfolding of a person’s life, is to consider the ‘progressions’ (symbolic movement of the person’s natal planets over the years) and also the ‘transits’ (movements of planets in the heavens in relation to the natal chart). Most practising astrologers are usually aware, on a daily basis, of what is ‘happening’ in the heavens, as a guide to the developments in their own lives.
the sun-moon conjunction (at a new moon, the moon is ‘conjunct’ the sun, as seen from the earth). Four planets, therefore, would be closely grouped together in the sky.\footnote{The conjunction of planets (two or more planets being in, or close to, the same degree of longitude) is judged to be a merging or combining of the principles associated with each planet. See Edinburgh Event (Appendix B) for further discussion of the sun-moon pairing. The sun and moon are conjunct every month, at the time of the new moon. Jupiter and Neptune, however, being much further away astronomically, have longer cycles. A Jupiter-Neptune conjunction occurs at least twelve years apart: for instance, the present example took place in January 1997; the previous one was in January 1984. To have a conjunction of these ‘slower moving’ planets – a rare event – so close to the new moon, would be a notable event for astrologers.}

Amongst my holiday reading that week was a book called ‘Poseidon’s Gold’. It had been a present from my sister, and carefully chosen for me because she felt I had striking connections with the author: we shared a Christian name; she was born in Birmingham, the city where I grew up; and, like me, she had read English at Oxford. So the book had a particular significance for me, and although it had been given to me quite a long time ago, it was only now – for some reason – that I had decided to put it in my suitcase. It is a thriller set in ancient Rome, and the hero is Marcus, a private eye. The plot is complex, but centres around a valuable marble statue of a Greek god, thought to be Poseidon, which has been lost at sea in a shipwreck. Marcus is investigating the affairs of his dead brother who had imported and exported art on a vast scale, and Marcus spends a lot of time chasing up elusive artists, who are able to produce perfect artistic forgeries. There was a great air of mystery and excitement in the story; I was near the end of the book, and keen to finish it before we left for home on Friday the 10\textsuperscript{th} of January.

On Wednesday the 8\textsuperscript{th} – the evening before the new moon – I was sitting on our verandah reading, and watching the sun sinking into the sea, in a blaze of golden sky. I was reflecting that the moon must be very close to the sun and remembering that Jupiter and Neptune must also be close to them in the sky.\footnote{Neptune is too astronomically distant to be seen with the naked eye; the moon is invisible for several days around the time of a new moon because of its proximity to the sun; Jupiter, too – although normally visible and brilliant in the sky – would be outshone by its nearness to the setting sun.} All I could physically see (with my naked eye) was the golden sun, turning orange and red, but I was extremely aware, mentally, of this group of planets setting with the sun. As I read ‘Poseidon’s Gold,’ the sun was sinking extremely fast, as it does near to the equator, and the book was racing towards its climax. Then, simultaneously, came the book’s final revelation of a massive deception: what had been thought to be an original statue was only a fake,
and rather than only one statue, there were two. The one that had sunk at sea was indeed that of Poseidon, but there was a second one that had just been discovered, and that one was of Zeus.\(^5\)

At that moment something clicked in my mind, and I made a sudden connection. Zeus and Poseidon (known, of course to the Romans – and to astrologers – as Jupiter and Neptune) were there in front of me. They were invisible to the eye, but were in actuality about to slide below the horizon with the setting sun. My reaching the climax of the book, when these two gods were revealed as a pair of statues had occurred just at the time when they were together as a pair in the sky; that literally, as I watched, they were sinking at sea, just as the statue of Poseidon had done in the book. In a way, that synchronicity was stunning enough, but this story is concerned with astrological symbolism, and there is more Jupiter-Neptune symbolism in the book itself. Marcus was involved in the affairs of his dead brother; their father had gone missing when they were young, and they had an uncle who was their guardian.\(^6\) In Greek mythology, Zeus and Poseidon are brothers and Jupiter/Zeus is astrologically associated with uncles. In the book there are escaped artists who operate fraudulently; the Romans drink wine continually, and the ship carrying the Poseidon statue was lost at sea: Neptune is astrologically associated with escape, artists, fraud, the sea, and wine. The final denouement is that there was a massive deception. Thus one can see how, from an astrologer’s point of view, the revelation of Zeus and Poseidon as a pair of statues would quickly be apprehended as echoing the pairing of Jupiter-Neptune, conjoined in the heavens at that same moment. The combining of their qualities (Jupiter=massive, Neptune=deception) is the perfect astrological expression of the solution of the mystery in the book.\(^7\)

\(^5\) Classical statues tend to be identifiable by their ‘attributes’: for example Poseidon/Neptune would be recognised by the trident he holds, and Zeus/Jupiter by the thunderbolt he is hurling. Since the physical representations of Zeus/Jupiter and Poseidon/Neptune could look remarkably similar — a muscular, bearded figure with flowing locks — confusion of identity is not surprising, given that the attributes could easily be broken off the main statue.

\(^6\) Symbolism associated with the astrological Jupiter and Neptune would be noticed and seamlessly absorbed by the trained astrologer, who is continually accustomed to de-coding the world. However, it is only after the divinatory moment has occurred that the full extent of it would become evident.

\(^7\) The impact of this is akin to ‘getting’ a joke. There is great difficulty, as previously discussed, in conveying the impact of the symbolism in these accounts to a ‘lay’ reader. It requires a particular symbolic mindset; also, the whole process is a laborious one, requiring detailed explanation at every step. Moreover, the range of symbolic associations with each planet can appear to be strangely unrelated to each other (for example, Saturn’s associations include: boundaries, cold, bones, old age, authority figures
In this case, setting up a chart for the moment meant that later, I could see on the page all the positions of the planets that — in the sky — had been invisible. It was a helpful way to ‘anchor’ my perceptions; to give that extraordinary experience of synchronicity a form and a shape. This narrative has demonstrated the curious interweaving of astrological symbols not only with their physical counterparts in the heavens, but also with myth and the art of fiction. It also has a final, real-life, psychological twist, that connects it with myself as the astrologer-diviner. Moreover, this twist only occurred to me years later, when I was writing up the case material as an example for the present study. This demonstrates a point made elsewhere, how these event charts — far from being one-off events — can generate effects and further connections for years to come, rather like spreading ripples on a lake. When I mentioned, at the beginning that I was ‘apprehensive’ about the imminent new moon, it would be true to say that I had an implicit question about my own critical situation. At that time, in January 1997, my husband was extremely ill, in the terminal stages of cancer. He died only a few weeks later, after our return to England. Just as the psycho-physical, planetary enactment of the setting sun precisely mirrored the details of the book I was reading, so this visual spectacle mirrored events in my life.

Sun and moon (as already explored in the Edinburgh event) are symbols of king and queen, male and female, man and wife, and constitute the ‘sacred marriage.’ My real-life marriage, as my husband was dying, was about to end, mirroring the end of the day in this narrative; the king and queen of the *mysterium coniunctio* were slipping into the water, as in the alchemical pictures. They were slipping invisibly away in the manner of Poseidon/Neptune, and the massive loss, symbolised by Jupiter -Neptune, echoed the great loss of the husband and father (sun) that was about to happen. The gold symbolised by the sun was articulated in the book’s title, ‘Poseidon’s Gold’: at the moment of astrology, all I could see was the ‘real’ golden sun, moving into Poseidon’s ocean. Sunset is frequently used as a metaphor for death, and it was as if this event was a precursor of the human death that was soon to happen: the dying sun-husband.

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and skin). The reader is again referred to the medieval concept of intelligences and (hidden) connections discussed in Appendix A, and in Chapters One and Four.
Notes on symbolism

The main symbols in the narrative – sun, moon, Jupiter and Neptune – are all astrological ones. As stated at the start of the narrative, this is a particularly difficult case for the lay-reader, because a familiarity with astrological symbolism is a prerequisite for ‘getting’ the point of the story. Preliminary notes on the astrological sun, moon, Jupiter, and Neptune give basic information, but this cannot convey the rich appropriateness of the clustering of these symbols. However, it seemed important to include example material where this was the situation, because it demonstrates the depth of esotericism that comes with an intimate experience of ‘knowing’ – in the sense of ‘gnosis’ – of the astrological symbols. Even if a reader is given technical knowledge of what the relevant symbols represent, it is on a different level from that of gnosis.

Notes on chart

This chart was named ‘Poseidon’s Gold,’ and the situation regarding its content is interesting. It is different from the other two charts in that its radicality is not the main issue. What it serves to do – as mentioned in the narrative – is to give a visual anchor for a powerful moment; to make the invisible visible through symbols inscribed on paper, and to give a permanent record of the event. There was, in addition, a strange follow-up: some years later I was working on this study of astrological divination, and writing up the narrative for the ‘Wineglass breaks’ chart. For this purpose, I had tracked down copies of some of the earlier event charts (which were on acetate, having been used for lectures in the meantime) and they were sitting in a pile near my desk. During that precise week, it happened that the book ‘Poseidon’s Gold’ was being serialised on the radio and I had listened to some of the episodes; now, looking again at the 1997 chart, I suddenly realised that Jupiter and Neptune were again together in the heavens: Jupiter’s cycle is twelve years, and it had come full circle to join Neptune at the time when this story was being broadcast.

This was not the end of it. Looking through my pile of charts, I decided to check one called ‘Smashed Glass,’ which had dramatically illustrated an event that had occurred in the year 1987. In view of the recent ‘Wineglass breaks’ chart, I looked to see if there were any similar features that might illuminate the meaning behind the
charts, not least the business of smashing glass, common to both incidents. This was a cue for the ‘divinatory shiver.’\textsuperscript{8} Not only were the planets Jupiter and Uranus in an exact square aspect to each other in both charts, but also an exact conjunction of Venus and Neptune was on an angle in both charts: on the precise degree of the Midheaven in the wineglass chart, and on the precise degree of the Descendant in the smashed glass chart. This raises many questions about the implications of such material in a wider context than that of the practising astrologer-diviner, and some of these questions are touched on in the conclusion of the chapter on divinatory astrology.

\textsuperscript{8} See the discussion of the astrological divinatory continuum in Chapter Six, under the heading ‘The moment of divination’. 
Astrology


**Methodology**


Symbolism and Divination


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