

Excerpt from Chapter 1 of The Astrology of Awakening Volume 1

Astrology describes the way that energy flows through each of us and our world. It offers an objective map to chart this energy. It can serve as a profound invitation for people to question their assumptions about reality. This book invites the field of astrology itself to do such a review of its assumptions and paradigms. It strengthens any field to do an internal inventory in order to clarify and make adjustments to its fundamental philosophy.

This book puts forth many ideas of how astrology can further modernize. Purists may ask, "If it isn't broken, why try to fix it?" My view is not that astrology is broken, but rather that it's incomplete. There are two ways to approach this claim. The first would be to see astrology as unalterable truth, just as many religious people view the Bible. The second is to see astrology as similar to every other field of knowledge which grows over time, and this is the approach I'm advocating.

Astrology reflects the human consciousness that is participating in its development. As evolution unfolds and consciousness expands, it's not only appropriate, but necessary to put forth sensible adaptations that reflect this growth. The failure to modernize would increasingly make astrology irrelevant to the consciousness which surpasses it. It would be seen as a relic of days passed, and this is a view of it.

There is a growing divide between those on a path of spiritual awakening and those interested in astrology. I'm still surprised by the extent to which astrology is seen as quaint, irrelevant, or even a joke to many individuals who find greater spiritual nourishment in other teachings and paths. This dismissal seems in part a result of their ignorance of astrology's true capacities, but it's also due to the approaches and guiding assumptions of astrologers, and more broadly, the field itself.

Though there are certainly forms of astrology that are of great interest to those interested in spiritual evolution, the *dominant paradigm* that guides astrology is my focus here. A quick glance at the top-selling astrology books illustrates my point. With a few notable exceptions, these books are geared toward basic egoic questions and self-gain: How can I get ahead in life? What does my future hold in store? Will it be "good" or "bad?" What kind of person is right for me? These questions are understandable, but they place heavy demands on astrology. They assume that astrology is focused solely on *personal* information, that it reveals specifics, and that the universe rewards or punishes. This orientation limits astrology and keeps us orbiting around the ego. I want to support us in moving beyond it.

The Relative and the Transpersonal

In order to understand (and enjoy!) this book, it's important to see that there are two main levels of reality. The relative level of reality consists of separation consciousness. When we look through its lens, we see life as a multitude of separate things all moving through time and space. The transpersonal level, in contrast, is "beyond the personal," beyond the common orientation of the ego-self. (Please see the Glossary for more information on these terms and others.)

Part of the role of Saturn, an earth planet, is to provide structure to the physical world. Saturn circles the Sun within the larger orbit of the air planet Uranus, which is responsible for

nonphysical organization. This arrangement portrays how the physical world is a subset of what is possible at the transpersonal level. However, the orientation within Saturn's level of reality (separation consciousness) is more immediate in our experience and therefore can marginalize the transpersonal altogether. The ancient mythological story of Saturn and Uranus frames our situation well. The Greeks wrote that Chronos (Saturn) castrated his father (Ouranos/Uranus)—the realm of the personal cut off access to the potency (and reality) of the transpersonal. The issue I'm focusing on is whether we will continue this severance or take measures to heal it.

The relative and transpersonal perspectives are vastly different from each other, though we can develop the ability to see life through both lenses and know when and how to employ them. Most are able to understand that there is only the present moment (transpersonal), yet there is the passage of time (relative). It may take some getting used to holding the paradox of these two perspectives, but it will be increasingly easier as we go. At the relative view, there are clearly defined boundaries and order. As separate individuals, we identify with a unique body, mind, and life history. The term "ego" is used to describe our identification in this realm.

At the interconnected transpersonal level, everything is understood as simply being energy. There are no personal interpretations about the energy and no attachment to what the energy does. From the transpersonal level, the separate self is seen as energy just like any other form in the manifest world. Personal identification, feelings and thoughts, everything that defines us as humans, exists at the relative level.

It's difficult to discuss the transpersonal view because it transcends language and logic (Mercury); it's only understood through experience. It has to do with our soul connection to life when we move beyond the familiar egoic boundaries. This may sound "airy fairy," but all of us have had tastes and glimpses of its timeless quality—in dreams or other "enhanced" states of consciousness, deep intimate exchanges, the absorption in a hobby or activity, out in nature, or in our hearts. Our mind quiets down enough to allow us to notice the background field of awareness that is always present. The temporary "losing" of the separate self somehow allows us to gain access to so much more.

Almost all of the time, our more immediate and familiar relative viewpoint is necessarily our preferred lens in perceiving and meeting life. We are autonomous individuals who must attend to the everyday. It's quite natural to see things in a dualistic way, as it's so incredibly obvious in our experience. However, the pitfall is deducing that the relative realm is all there is. There is formidable pressure to stay in the "real world," the Saturnian realm. The result is living in what has been termed the "soul cage," imprisoned in our separateness.

Although the relative perspective can and often does negate the transpersonal, *a proper use of the transpersonal would never negate the validity of the relative*. I'm advocating complementing the relative by incorporating the transpersonal, not somehow transcending the relative and seeing it as illusory. From on high, the transpersonal might see everyone as caught in illusion, but this isn't true for the person living in the Saturnian world! In the relative world, dualities are for real. Criminals are certainly "wrong" at the relative level, and Marilyn Monroe was a female. The transpersonal *gives perspective to what occurs at the relative level*. Ultimately we can learn to bridge these two worlds.

Why must we bother with integrating this other perspective into our lives and into our astrology? Incorporating the transpersonal not only honors the greater complexity of life, but it's

also necessary for us to continue our collective evolution. When we sever our link to the transpersonal, we may become convinced that our separation defines our reality. From this position, the ego is in control and tries to make the best of it. Saturn is a contracting energy. If we do not move beyond it, we as a species will eventually contract into extinction. We see this outcome with companies that are unable to modernize—they eventually fail. Moving beyond the personal to the transpersonal is an evolutionary step which is *necessary for our survival*.

The application of the transpersonal may seem controversial to conventional thinking. However, the outer planets represent 30% of the major planets in our system. Since they are transpersonal, we must use that lens in order to understand them appropriately. The transpersonal lens is at the beginning stages of being developed and promoted within the astrological context. As a result, the transpersonal facets in the system are sometimes looked at through the relative lens. I use the term “egoic takeover” to describe the situation where we interpret the transpersonal at the personal (relative) level. This mistake is most obvious with Sun sign simplifications, which is perhaps the most widespread and popular use of astrology. We will discuss how the Sun may actually have a central role in our spiritual growth—the awakening from ego.

We’ll be exploring the ego and how it’s functioned in history. It’s obviously had a very important role in our evolution, which deserves to be honored. Some believe that the ego is antithetical to spiritual growth, but that is not the view I endorse. Like the body, mind, or emotions, the ego is a necessary part of being human. Transpersonal philosopher Ken Wilber said, “the ego is not an obstruction to Spirit, but a radiant manifestation of Spirit.” Ultimately, it enables us to bridge the nonphysical with the physical, to bring “heaven” to “earth.”

It’s been said, “You gotta be somebody before you’re nobody,” which is a clever way to suggest that securing a viable ego is part of the developmental program before it can be authentically transcended. Historically, we have been very good at seeing to our viability, but less adept at transcendence. Perhaps we are at the time in history when we more clearly see the workings of the ego, when our collective evolution brings the transpersonal fully into our awareness. Central to this shift is to understand our reliance on dualities, and so Mercury gets our attention next.

Mercury’s Great Heist

As mentioned earlier, Saturn structures the manifest world in the realm of separation consciousness. Within Saturn’s orbit is the planet Mercury, which is associated with intelligence and communication. It enables us to personally understand existence but, like everything else, Mercury is susceptible to being misused by egoic agendas. In mythology, Mercury (Hermes) is a trickster and a thief. The mind has great reasoning capacities, but we may not always use it with clarity or ethics. Since the mind is such a big part of our inner experience, we tend to identify with it and therefore trust it, even when its knowledge is off base. We can slip into believing that we know the absolute truth, blind to the possibility that there is more that we’re not seeing.

The two signs connected with Mercury, Gemini and Virgo, are associated with the formative years of being a student, basic education, learning skills, research, and apprenticeship. They deal with maturation rather than the pinnacle of wisdom. Since left-brain accomplishment

is highly valued in society, there is little incentive or awareness to move beyond it, but astrology tells us otherwise. Many astrologers consider Uranus the “higher octave” of Mercury, suggesting that there is another intellectual level to grasp and implement. Much of the movement towards Uranus involves going beyond dualistic thinking and seeing things as inseparable parts of the whole.

Due to its proximity to the Sun, the planet Mercury has one side which is blazingly hot and another that is freezing—a swing of about a thousand degrees! This contrast echoes the polarities of dualistic thinking: hot/cold, good/bad, up/down, male/female, day/night, and every other possible pairing. Mercury tends to separate phenomena for analysis. This ability is incredibly useful in understanding life within the realm of separation, but not very helpful if we’d like to move beyond.

Since astrology developed when Saturn was understood as the farthest orbiting planet, it is no surprise that Mercury has been employed for our astrological understanding. Consequently, the astrology we’ve inherited is blatantly dualistic: benefics/maefics, good/bad aspects, exaltations/falls, etc. There are male/female designations for all of the various components too. If we hold astrology in an evolutionary framework that reflects our consciousness as it develops, this emphasis on duality is completely understandable. However, I believe that we’re at a pivotal moment of *fully* including Uranus and the transpersonal realm.

Albert Einstein said, “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.” The goal to refresh and renew astrology includes Mercury serving as a faithful servant to Uranus rather than to the ego. This would be quite a change for this sneaky thief and trickster who committed the ultimate heist—stealing astrology from Uranus, who sits castrated, watching from afar. Now that this crime has been spotted, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to be willing accomplices to Mercury’s ruse? Or are we going to use the personal mind (Mercury) in association with the broader intelligence of reality (Uranus) to honor both the relative and the transpersonal perspectives?

The Egoic Mindset

In *The Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle writes, “Emotions, being part of the dualistic mind, are subject to the laws of opposites. This simply means that you cannot have good without bad.”ⁱ As we’ll explore further in the chapters on the planets, Mercury and the Moon have a strong relationship. They’re part of forming our basic orientation to life, which rests on our thoughts and emotions. Mercury assesses life with an eye on our survival and happiness—the two primary desires of the ego. Survival involves moving away from perceived negative experiences, while happiness involves the movement towards what is perceived as positive. The ego is continually evaluating experiences along these lines. If we didn’t have this function our species would likely perish, so the ego has a hugely important role.

Most of us have lives filled with expectations, responsibilities, and endless demands. We need enough resources to feel stable and secure. The ego sees failure as unacceptable, so it’s vigilant about its success, and it’s often never quite satisfied. As soon as a pinnacle is reached, there is anxiety about maintaining it!

For many, this self-preoccupation settles down enough to accept the rules and ways of the everyday world. However, those in the grips of unquenchable ego needs tend to scream the loudest and therefore exert control in how society is shaped—its norms, accepted paradigms, channels of information and power.

The dominant values of a culture tend to support and perpetuate what is rewarded by that culture. And in a society where success and status is measured by material wealth, not social contribution, it is easy to see why the state of the world is what it is today. We are dealing with a value system disorder, completely de-natured; where the priority of personal and social health has become secondary to the detrimental notions of artificial wealth and limitless growth. And like a virus, this disorder now permeates every facet of government, news media, entertainment, and even academia. And built into its structure are mechanisms for protection from anything that might interfere. Disciples of the monetary market religion, the self-appointed guardians of the status quo, constantly seek out ways to avoid any form of thought which might interfere with their beliefs. The most common of which are projected dualities.ⁱⁱ —*Zeitgeist: Moving Forward*.

The ways in which astrology is approached and understood have been consistent with this value system disorder, which can be found throughout Western thought. I don't mean to point the finger at astrology, for it has simply been one of many canvases upon which the broader issue has been projected. The situation is far more widespread—the ego's domination has been apparent throughout history in practically every realm of life.

It's simply a matter of historical fact that the dominant intellectual culture of any particular society reflects the interests of the dominant group in that society. If you look across the board, the ideas that pervade psychology, sociology, history, and political science fundamentally reflect certain elite interests. And the academics who question that too much tend to get shunned to the side or to be seen as radicals.ⁱⁱⁱ --
Dr. Gábor Máté

Like every other field, astrology has been influenced by the ego's urgency for self-gain. However, it can also help us unravel the problem too. We know that Mercury relates to dualistic thinking, which turns out to not be the most mature use of our minds. We can retract projected dualities and learn to see things differently. For instance, we can understand that social strategizing and accumulating material wealth as part of Venus, but also that Venus has more conscious expressions. We will explore how everything in astrology has a range—from the darkness of unconscious ego, to the brightness of more awakened uses. Ultimately a more conscious use of astrology can be of great assistance in our collective movement beyond our current global situation.

ⁱ Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*, p.29

ⁱⁱ From *Zeitgeist: Moving Forward* (2011) by Peter Joseph

ⁱⁱⁱ Dr. Gabor Mate quote from *Zeitgeist: Moving Forward*