
**The Horoscopic Place:
The Encounter between Astrologer and Client***

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Abstract

This article investigates whether astrology is an alternative spiritual practice associated with divination, an occurrence beyond normal human experience. Between July 2015 and July 2016 I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven astrologers who had each been practicing, writing, and teaching astrology for twenty-five years or more. The interviews concentrated on understanding the space set aside by the astrologers to focus on the horoscope. The results revealed that the astrologers considered the repetitive behaviour of preparation for the consultation a ritual, reflecting Emile Durkheim's views that a special place set aside and reinforced by ritual became sacralised. As the astrologers discussed the storied landscape of the horoscope, a moment of recognition by the client allowed the astrologer to see more deeply into what Henri Lefebvre called the lived space of the imagination. The ensuing conversation opened the way to a much greater depth of understanding between both astrologer and client and generated insights that did not require a connection with the supernatural.

Keywords

Astrology, horoscope, cosmology, sacred space, storied landscape, Emile Durkheim, Henri Lefebvre.

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Introduction

Astrology has often been viewed as an alternative spiritual practice, with scholars fitting it in to the surge of the New Age development that occurred in the 1960s. Susan Greenwood associated astrology with divination and equated it with 'predictions from thunder and eclipses and the flight and cries of birds to the directions of sacrificial smoke' (2009: 113). For her, it was another oracular tool that offered a route into magical consciousness or a universal process of mind, achieved through 'empathising deeply with another creature in the imagination, so much so that bodily boundaries and distinct notions of self are temporarily abandoned' (Greenwood 2009: 5-6). In considering the beliefs and practices of Americans who had moved away from the bounds of organized religion, Robert C. Fuller described astrology as an interest in the supernatural by those turned off by religion, and equated it with 'ouija boards, tarot cards, the I Ching, and even fantasy worlds of science fiction' (2001: 10, 99). Stephen J. Hunt even defined astrology as 'popular religion' (2003: 173, 234). Nevertheless, as Nicholas Campion (2012: 126) has pointed out, debates amongst sociologists and practising Christians make an assumption of agreement regarding their definition of religion and how it is used in connection with astrology, which was not borne out in his survey of practicing astrologers conducted between 1999 and 2003 with regards to their religious interests. Indeed, Campion concluded that 'many astrologers talk in terms identified by academics as both religious and New Age, while simultaneously and unequivocally rejecting any identification with either' (Campion 2012: 201).

In contrast to Greenwood, Fuller, and Hunt, Patrick Curry defined astrology as 'the practice of relating the heavenly bodies to lives and events on earth, and the traditions that have thus been generated' (1999: 55). He further described astrology as a culture which uses the horoscope as a map, the material document central to the practice of astrology, to ascertain a person's symbolic connection with the sky (Curry 2005: 273). He also stated that

astrology too is a form of life, a way of being in the world. It is not a flawed or failed version of something else, but fully itself to the same extent, and ultimately in the same way, as being a historian, or scientist, or anything else: fully, in a word, human. (2005: 273)

Curry advocated the idea that, in the same way that historians and scientists found meaning in life through the culture they created, so too did astrologers. To see astrology as a culture was to open a door into the human world from which it emerged. This door into astrology was via the horoscope and the way it was interpreted by the astrologer for the

client. Clifford Geertz defined culture as ‘an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge of and attitudes toward life’ (Geertz 1973: 89). While Geertz was not referring to astrology, historically transmitted patterns have formed the basis of the study of astrology in its varying forms since the Mesopotamians (Parpola 1970; Hunger and Pingree 1989; Hunger 1992), along with the recognition that it took years of study and practice to turn that knowledge into expertise. For example, Gerolamo Cardano (1501–1576), in his commentary to *Tetrabiblos* IV, 10 (*de morte*), disapproved of ill-informed astrologers who showed no acquaintance with the Ptolemaic method of how to synthesise the symbols of a horoscope known as the *ratio commixtionis*:

Those who attempt to make predictions following general lines, as do the Arabs, Firmicus, Pontanus and others in more recent times, proceed in a way similar to the man who, wanting to build a house, arranges in order all the beams in one place, all the planks in another, in yet another all the limestone, in another, all the sand, in another the stones, in another the iron braces, and in another the tiles. This man thinks he has done well, having observed the right ordering. He has however, done nothing in order to build a house. Not unlike him, are those who say: Saturn in such and such a place signifies such and such a thing, Jupiter, something else. For this is useless and does not help prediction. Rather, it is necessary, for each thing, to know the principle of conjunction and the time, mode, order and place. It is necessary, in short, to know how to join together the individual significations. (Bezza 2014: 80)

This lost skill to which Cardano referred has a long tradition and, through study over many years, was what each astrologer brought to every chart reading.

In addition, Bernadette Brady has noted that the way the horoscope is constructed is evidence that the horoscope was never intended to be ‘a simplified piece of celestial cartography’ but rather that the astrologer was ‘seeking to create or reveal a symbolic ideal form of the individual’s relationship to the sky’ (2011: 53). Thus, Brady argued, the horoscope was more akin to a medieval *mappamundi*, a spiritual or sacred map that could be used as a guide through an individual’s life journey, an alternative way of connecting an individual to the sky where the symbols of the horoscope were meaningful for the individual (2011: 56). Through her research, Brady concluded that ‘contemporary western astrologers used the horoscope as a symbolic map which, for them, contained information about their times of joy and their times of sadness’, endeavouring to constitute itself as a non-judgemental lifelong personal guide (2011: 59).

Therefore, if astrology is to be considered an alternative spirituality, then the actual spiritual practice must include the action of reading the horoscope, a document or artefact that arguably contains the potential for personal enrichment based on celestial cartography. In a context separate to astrology, Edward S. Casey named meaningful places where personal enrichment could flourish as 'thick places' (2001: 408). These were places where a person felt connected and assured, where a densely enmeshed infrastructure offered value and relationship. Indeed, Casey defined 'place' as 'the immediate ambience of my lived body and its history, including the whole sedimented history of cultural and social influences and personal interests that compose my life history' (2001: 404). The most effective reading of a horoscope, I argue, occurs in such a thick place. For at the beginning of a reading, the astrologer only knows the astrologically symbolic representation of the client's life and its potential, not necessarily how it was lived. The client, on the other hand, brings their own knowledge of the life they are living but little, if any, knowledge of the symbols of astrology that could be linked to their life. In this way astrologer and client meet in the chart reading place for an exchange of information.

Astrologers understand, however, that the exchange that occurs in the place of the chart reading is more than just a conversation. As Cardano argued, it is something beyond the description of components. Yet this place is a powerful encounter to such an extent that some astrologers, for example Lindsay Radermacher, contend that it is an encounter with the divine, where divine was defined as 'a form of transpersonal intelligence' (2011: i). This divine encounter 'when the astrologer has a strong sense of being in touch with something outside the parameters of normal human experience', claimed authority by speaking to the astrologer and therefore such knowledge was not 'within the control of the astrologer' (Radermacher 2011: 126-27). Unlike Greenwood and Fuller, Radermacher is an astrological practitioner, teacher, and consultant as well as an English author of astrological texts, who has been practicing since the 1980s. Her argument, however, suggested that she, too, believed she was handing control to an outside source separate from her or the client when she entered the horoscopic place, the thickened place where the astrologer and client meet and speak about the horoscope.

At the heart of this struggle to define the experience was a sense of mystery. This idea of mystery is one that is connected often with craft and the production of crafts. When talking of medieval crafts, for example, Spike Bucklow identified mystery as the space between technique and practice. A craftsperson, he noted, could write books and share knowledge but until the craft was practiced, the knowledge of 'how to

combine ingredients, how to control processes and how to use products to make art' (Bucklow 2014: 19), in the case of painters, remained inert, hidden in technical manuals. Just as these medieval craftspeople had done, practicing astrologers have also written astrological texts, methodically introducing the parts—the algorithm of a planet in a sign and a house and its geometrical relationship with other planets—to give meaning to the whole and considering what the combination of parts entailed, as advised by Cardano.

The Interviewees and the Interviews

To explore the mystery of this horoscopic place and to see whether it might reveal an alternative spirituality within astrology, between July 2015 and July 2016 I interviewed seven astrologers who had each been practicing, writing, and teaching astrology for twenty-five years or more and were all active within the community of Western astrologers. Their demographics covered the UK, France, Australia, and the US, with five of the seven astrologers having been born in country different to where they then lived and practiced at the time of the interviews. Five of the seven astrologers were female. All were white and over the age of forty-seven. All interviewees defined themselves as professional astrologers in some way, as astrological consultants, teachers of astrology, authors of astrological texts, translators of astrological texts, publishers of astrological texts, publishers of astrological software, entrepreneurs, and astrological business consultants. I have known and been an astrological colleague with all seven interviewees for nearly thirty years. Thus, alongside my scholarly work, I brought insider knowledge (Pike 1967: 28) to this research as a practicing professional astrologer working in the global astrological community. This situated me in a position of trust when it came to my interlocutors sharing with me their thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

Lynn Bell, an American astrologer living in Paris and a practicing psychological astrologer who began studying astrology in 1972, described the feeling of awe when reading a horoscope:

I was interested in quite a few things but, you know, becoming an astrologer was a weird choice. (*Laughs*) It's not exactly first on your grown-up list. Maybe now it's a bit different. I had a conversation with a friend who said, 'What is it that you really love?' and I said, 'Well when I do astrology something happens'—there it is again—'something happens that doesn't happen anywhere else'. (*She pauses, then repeats it slowly*) 'Something happens that doesn't happen anywhere else. There's a kind of—...there's

an energy—...there's a, as you would say, a flow of energy and a heightened perception, a heightened awareness, an exchange with another person that is of a very different nature than anything I do in my life'. That's when I was in my twenties that I came to it. So that's how I chose.

Although Bell recognised that this was an uncommon choice as a career, not first on the list of a mature adult, nevertheless, she experienced what occurred in this space of reading a horoscope as unique. This same sense of wonder and mystery, possibly Bucklow's craft mystery, that also occurred when reading a horoscope was reflected by all seven of my interviewed astrologers, even though the other six embraced astrology as a profession after encountering a personal crisis.

Barbara Dunn, for example, is an English astrologer specialising in horary and electional astrology who began studying astrology in 1978. She came to astrology at the end of her first academic year of study after her fiancé died in an accident, as she sought answers to the emotional avalanche into which she had plunged. She told me, 'It was a terrible, terrible time and I was just struggling to know what—...make sense of what—... But I *did* make sense of it. And that's probably why I do the sort of astrology I do.' Brian Clark, a Canadian-born psychological astrologer living in Australia, who began studying astrology in 1975, also came to astrology after the death of his best friend when he was nineteen. Like Dunn, he looked for subject matter that could offer reasons for the loss. Distrustful of his heightened sense of intuition 'because I could never differentiate it from fantasy or wish fulfilment', at the age of twenty-three he found astrology, which he said offered him a way of gaining objectivity for his intuition. Meira Epstein, an Israeli born traditional-classical astrologer now living in the USA, who began studying astrology in the late 1980s, came to astrology through a personal relationship crisis in her late thirties. When Epstein visited an astrologer for a reading, she saw the astrologer turn to a book. For Epstein, this was a revelation. For her, astrology became a subject she could study. These astrologers had come to astrology through the human desire to find answers to relationships or grief. They were not seeking an alternative religion or an interest in the supernatural.

The Making of the Horoscopic Place

In his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) differentiated between sacred and profane space. He saw sacred space as socially constructed, a special place set aside and reinforced by ritual (Durkheim 1995 [1912]: 44). This was reflected in how the astrologers I

interviewed prepared for their chart reading. All of them felt the necessity to clean the physical space of the room before the client arrived. Clark referred to it as 'creating space for the client to enter it' and added:

I call it a sacred space, but I don't mean 'sacred' in terms that you're, you know, dressing up and bowing down and doing the right thing. I just mean 'sacred' in that you've created a space that's —...a temenos. You've invited somebody into this space and in this space this is what we're going to do in this space. There's nothing else we're going to do in this space.

The word 'temenos' originally referred to a temple enclosure surrounding a sanctuary, a piece of land marked off from common uses and dedicated to a god, a sanctuary, holy grove, or garden (Ball 2000: 373). Clark likened the physical area in which he read the horoscope to a temenos because it was dedicated to only one piece of behaviour, suggestive of Durkheim's position of a special place set aside and reinforced by ritual. In this case the ritual was the reading of the chart, always the same in terms of utilising the learned technique of astrological symbolism, but always different in terms of the orientation of the horoscope symbols and the lived experience brought to the reading by the client. Clark qualified this by noting that when he first started seeing clients he would offer them a cup of tea but later recognised that this action conveyed a social layer, suggesting a leisure activity, and thus blurred the boundaries of how the space was being used. For Melanie Reinhart, a psychological astrologer, born in Zimbabwe and based in London, who was drawn to astrology at the age of ten in 1959 and then began practising as an astrologer in 1975, the physical cleaning occurred in parallel with mental preparation. Her intention in cleaning the space was 'to make myself ready, willing and able to make myself of service to this person or process, whatever that might mean'. She stated, 'I get to spend minimum one hour, sometimes way longer depending on what their issues are focusing in on that individual's life. And I take that very seriously', adding that by keeping this space free from external images, she could stay focused on the person. For these seven astrologers, the cleaning ritual shaped their chart-reading space. It was a comforting and habituated pattern of behaviour that was undertaken as a preparation, not only of the physical space but also as a way of readying themselves. In this regard they were reflecting what Kim Knott was describing when she stated that '*ritual takes place and makes place*' (Knott 2005: 43).

Knott's research focused on the ways that social, cultural, and physical space could be understood relationally through human bodies. Knott argued that 'spaces are both material and metaphorical, physical and

imagined' and that it was 'the body and its spatial logic [that was key] for the production of culture—language, space, and religion' (Knott 2005: 13, 235). For Knott, sacred space, via bodies, events, and objects, whether public or private, was not the impetus for ritual but rather that 'ritual, as sacred-making behaviour, brings about "sacred" space' (2005: 43). In agreement with Durkheim's idea of a socially created sacrality, Knott argued that it was the actions with which a person engaged, such as preparatory cleaning, that sacralised spaces, and those embodied spaces could be ordinary, such as the homes and offices in which these astrologers saw their clients. Ian B. Straughn added that sacred space 'is itself ritual practice and not simply where it happens' (2014: 167). For Straughn, sacredness was found in the practice rather than the physical surroundings and it was in the 'learning, doing, repeating, and improving' of the practice that the places in which this practice occurred became 'ongoing vehicles for practicing place-making' (2014: 166, 167). This accorded with what the astrologers whom I interviewed described as being skilful in their trade. Dunn likened it to 'being a painter or any other trade really', and she continued, 'It's like anything else. When you see it again and again you just know.'

Although Clark had referred to the chart-reading space as a *temenos*, he was adamant that he was the one who was active in creating the space, first by physically cleaning it, then by holding the space, which he defined as 'watching my own thoughts that come through' as well as by 'trying to hold the client so that they don't go all over the place because a lot of time they'll jump from story to story. I try to keep them on track [by] listening.' This responsibility for creating and holding the space was a common response from the astrologers that I interviewed, not in order to be manipulative but rather, by keeping the client focused, explanation and meaning could be gleaned from the experience.

For Bell, the space opened the moment she opened the door for the client: 'Remember, somebody's coming with an intention to be seen in a non-normal way. They are coming with an intention to be seen. They're coming with that intention for someone to give them information about themselves. So as soon as I open that door that space is opened.' Bell identified that the chart-reading space was specifically for information exchange but the information being exchanged was of a non-normal type. It was information that was predicated on her ability, as the astrologer, to reveal something new to the client and the client allowing that to happen. Bell described the shared space between her and the client as a *vesica pisces*, a space of overlap, and she noted how 'with some people you have a very small overlap and with other people you have a much

bigger overlap of...presence, let's say'. In exploring the word 'presence', I asked Bell whether, for her, the space was where the gods visited or whether it was a space for the divine. She responded:

I think it is something more than me in the small definition of 'me', and whatever you call that or name that, it's something that steps out of the boundary of an ego identity, and within that unbounded space, the whole astrological consultation steps out of the normally identified 'I' space.

As she worked her way through what it was she was experiencing, Bell felt she had found what best described the kernel of her experience:

The space that opens between me and the other person allows this larger self to be present and within the presence of the larger self is something larger than 'you and I' or 'us and them' and that larger space, whatever we call it, is *definitely* present in the reading. And it isn't 'me'. Yes! That's a better response, do you see? 'Divine' just isn't the right word for that. It's...it's...again it's like channelling. It has the wrong connotations for the actual experience.

Although Bell struggled to articulate the experience of doing the chart reading, nevertheless she understood that it was a combination of the two people—astrologer and client—and their willingness to engage in and comprehend the questions posed by the client. When these questions were understood by the astrologer through the symbols of the horoscope, the overlap of space between astrologer and client was greatly enlarged and felt like the presence of something bigger than both of them. Bell recognised that it was a process that could only occur by putting aside her ego identity. While what she described was of a qualitatively different experience to the energy she felt in her daily life, nevertheless it was an energy constituted between herself and the client. Wendy Stacey, a psychological astrologer born in New Zealand and based in London, who began studying astrology in 1987, responded in a similar way. When asked whether she thought reading a horoscope invited a divine process, she answered immediately with, 'No! No way!! Definitely not. It disavows the astrologer', and she qualified this by adding, 'It's knowing people'. This understanding that life experience was also part of the process in handling the clients' questions was corroborated by all of the astrologers that I interviewed.

Another View of Space

There is another way of considering this question of sacred space which makes sense of what these astrologers were re-counting. In his 1974 book *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), a neo-Marxist, existential philosopher, and sociologist, argued that the creation and

meaning of urban space was a result of social processes that engaged with geography, landscape, and property and could be tracked through a history of change. Lefebvre's views were shaped by the modernisation, industrialisation, and suburbanisation of the twentieth-century France in which he lived and, in regarding history, he observed that, as Western Europe became transformed through Christianisation and the countryside became urbanised, space was its shaping factor. The growth of towns in late medieval Europe became linked with the capitalism that followed, which used urban space as a tool of power (Lefebvre 1991: 38-39). Thus he saw space as a triad of physical, mental, and social attributes (1991: 38-39). Perceived space (*le perçu*) consisted of the physical web of routes, systems, and networks of one's daily routines located within an urban setting. Conceived space (*le conçu*) was the space conceptualised by urban planners, cartographers, and social engineers. Representational space or the lived space of the imagination (*le vécu*) was fed and nourished by the arts and literature, and used the physical world of objects as its symbolic language. He proposed that the lived space of the imagination, nourished by the language of story, engaged with perceived and conceived spaces to make sense of it. This third space had the ability to give new meaning to perceived and conceived space (1991: 38-42):

Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic.

For Lefebvre, the lived space of the imagination was animated. If, as Brady (2011: 56) argued, the horoscope for astrologers was a symbolic map of a person's known environment, which flourished through action and hence through time, then one could consider the horoscope as a map of the representational space of the client, which had the capacity to weave together the elements of both physical and social space and hence was alive. I am arguing here that Lefebvre's spatial models can inform the consultation process: Lefebvre's conceived space was evident to the astrologer drawing up and constructing the horoscope, Lefebvre's perceived space equated to the lived life of the client, their physical web of routes, systems, and networks of daily routines, and Lefebvre's representational space was the meeting of astrologer and client, where horoscopic symbolism merged with client experience to produce, for both the astrologer and the client, a flourishing dynamic.

For Stacey, that aliveness defined by Lefebvre as part of representational space was catalysed by the conversation she had with her clients. Until that conversation took place, Stacey considered the horoscope as simply a photo of the person, and no matter how much she described it, it always remained a still photograph. It was the conversation with the client, 'sticking it in the darkroom and seeing it emerge', that allowed the photograph to come alive. Stacey was referring to the pre-digital procedure of processing a photograph in a chemical bath, which allowed it to become visible. She added: 'Then it starts to move and it becomes *life*. Because it's a moment that turns into life... It's like an Instagram.' Here, Stacey was referring to the social networking app made for sharing photos and videos from a smartphone. Bell also talked of how the chart became animated. When I asked her whether the chart changed when she connected with the client she replied, 'No, the chart doesn't change. The chart is the chart. But the way the chart comes alive within my ability to use it—the chart is animated.' Clark expressed it this way: 'It depends on the engagement I have with the client. If there's no engagement with the client, nothing happens. It's like a dead sheet of paper. It's two-dimensional. When the client's alive with me, it's four or five dimensional.' Roy Gillett, a London-based astrologer with a background as a Buddhist, who began studying astrology in 1977, described it as being 'in the presence of an understanding which we're sharing together'. His process was to remove himself as 'an ego-attached human being with opinions and judgements out of the story' so that the client's life patterns, reflected within the astrology, could emerge. Gillett observed that if he did his job well, then within the space of the chart reading, the client felt completely comfortable expressing their most profound secrets or anxieties or worries. For these seven astrologers, a moment of recognition occurred when a piece of information they had offered about the client from the symbols of the horoscope was understood by client through their lived experience in a way that previously had simply been information exchange. From that moment onwards, the space became a vibrant living scenario and the whole tenor of the chart-reading space changed. It was, as far as the astrologers I interviewed were concerned, still conversation, but it moved from being superficial to one that was far more meaningful.

Stacey differentiated between chat versus connection and engagement, and noted how 'a much deeper conversation happens'. Clark called it participation. Gillett described it as being 'in the presence of an understanding which we're sharing together'. What they all recognised and conveyed was the point at which the client responded and acknowledged something that previously they had not valued, appreciated, or

understood about themselves, and where, from their perspective, the client's horoscopic landscape not only matched their inner landscape, it also illuminated it. For in that matching came new insight, where fresh light was cast on the situation. At that point, these astrologers all felt that they became much more effective in their ability to offer meaningful information to the client and, as a consequence, the quality of the space of the chart reading changed.

In talking about actual landscapes, Belden Lane has written of this experience as being 'strangely welcomed by seemingly unreceptive terrain' (1998: 57) and of the huge physical reaction of recognition that followed when the external landscape matched one's internal landscape. He was writing of an actual physical landscape. Yet his response was similar to one that had been described in an earlier work by Meinrad Craighead when she found herself among the sandstone flats and underground kivas of the Pueblo Indians: 'When I came to New Mexico in 1960, I found the land which matched my interior landscape. The door separating inside and outside opened. What my eyes saw meshed with images I carried inside my body. Pictures painted on the walls of my womb began to emerge' (1986: 67). Craighead felt the separation between physical and internal landscapes meld together. As Edwin Bernbaum suggested in connection with walking amongst mountains, 'The sacred does not simply present itself to our gaze: it reaches out to seize us in its searing grasp' (1992: xvi). All seven interviewed astrologers expressed a similar recognition response, when what was meaningful to them symbolically became meaningfully translated and understood by the client and thus they felt seized by this recognition. This moment, however, was one embedded with meaning between astrologer and client, a profound cognitive connection, not through divine intervention or an interest in the supernatural.

Differentiated and Undifferentiated Spaces

There is an additional way of considering the space created by astrologers when they read horoscopes. Thomas Tweed maintained that no spaces are entirely profane or solely sacred, but rather that space is formed by a continuum from differentiated sites to undifferentiated. Differentiated sites were those that were imaginatively fleshed out or encountered through the senses in a way that made them distinct, remarkable, and separate. This encounter was multisensorial and deeply emotional. Undifferentiated sites were areas that the person could not reach via the senses and which were also far from the community's 'cognitive map' (Tweed 2015: 225). In this way sites such as the movie

theatre and the sports stadium could be included along the continuum. Tweed further argued that since spaces were processes, rather than objects, they were both affected by history and changed by it over time, echoing Lefebvre's spatial turn discussed above. Devotional spaces, continued Tweed, were generated by personal insight, metaphorical imagination, and ritual practice, but they were also generative and exerted agency, shaping the people who shaped them (2015: 227).

When trying to articulate the experience of reading a chart for someone, Bell did not reach for the easy option of relinquished responsibility by suggesting she was talking with the gods or the divine. Instead she reached for something inside herself which was best articulated as a dream:

I dreamt that I was Mozart's niece and I was giving a concert, but I didn't know how to play the piano. However, when someone else sat down with me, I played beautifully in my dream. Now I can't play the piano. I've never learned any music but in my dream I had this experience of playing but only *à quatre mains*—four hands. Only when another person played with me. And I think that my gift is a fourhanded gift [and] playing that particular music is something that only happens with the other person. So my gift is in the interaction with the other... It is an other-related art form.

For Bell, when a client came for an astrological chart reading, Bell was herself at first in an undifferentiated space. Her skill was in being able to create differentiated or devotional space with the client through what she termed this 'other-related' art form, and therefore that space became meaningful. It was, however, an engagement between Bell and her client that made it so, thus reflecting the Durkheimian perspective of participation, where non-physical reality was 'available to the individual mind only as it participates in mind both inside and outside itself' (Fields 1995: xlv). For, according to Durkheim, sacredness was inherently impermanent and had to be created and recreated anew each time through participation.

Although he did not use these terms, Clark acknowledged how difficult it was at times to step from undifferentiated space to differentiated space when the client was trying to think through issues rationally. Clark pointed out that he was 'trying to break down the rational constructs for them so that they can—...so that the symbol then can work on them'. He described it as endowing the symbols of the horoscope by allowing the client to have a relationship with the meanings the symbols implied, which evoked the client's memory of how it may have engaged them in the past, thus drawing in their lived experience. This was how Clark saw the client participating with the symbols of the horoscope. 'Once you participate with the symbol, something reveals itself that you

didn't know. Because that's what symbols do. They take you beyond where you are. So you've got to participate with it, though, in order for that to happen.' This idea of participation was the experience of all my interviewed astrologers.

Raymond Tallis used the term 'the visible invisible' and described how 'the visual field...has visible limits that indirectly reveal the invisible: things whose surfaces conceal their depths, their interiors, or which are folded over themselves' (2017: 21). Tallis was re-articulating Lefebvre's representational space. Epstein's experience mirrored this when she said that she saw the whole chart complete and alive in front of her in the same way as Michelangelo saw the complete statue in the raw material. Although Epstein still had to find ways to articulate that to the client, by relying on the technique of reading horoscopes learned over many years of hard work and study, she was able to cut away the visible and reveal the invisible to the client.

Three of the astrologers that I interviewed—Gillett, Bell, and Clark—mentioned the word 'intimacy' in connection with chart reading. Although they described the space itself as impersonal, it became deeply personal through what was being explored with the client and their issues. Yet as Bell clarified: 'It's not intimacy in the sense of "I am sharing with you something very intimate about myself". I as the astrologer am not sharing about me. I might share something about an experience of mine if I feel it's important, but I might say nothing about myself.' In thinking through this idea further Bell added:

I do think that people allow you into a place, which is reserved only for intimate relationships. And yet it's not about intimacy with you, as the reader. It's a deeply respectful place. It's access to something that's deeply respectful... I think that intimate space is a gift offered by that other person to enable the chart reading to happen and that without that the amount of concentric circle will be very small and it will therefore be more structured or technical.

What Bell was saying, and which correlated with what the other astrologers that I interviewed also said, was how the learned understanding over many years of practice of how to detach from one's own engagement with mundane issues, and set aside personal problems in order to focus on the client, created space, literally and symbolically. In that space, the clients' issues could then be carefully listened to, attended to, focused on and heard, and mapped to the patterns of the horoscope. Rather than an alternative spiritual practice, or an interest in the supernatural or a popular religion, instead the phenomenon of chart reading was described as a space that was deeply respectful, generating personal insight, metaphorical imagination, and ritual practice, as well as exerting

agency and shaping the people who shaped them. If this is considered to be a definition of sacred space, then the bonding and reverence astrologers felt in this space was constructed by them, suggesting that the sacredness of the place followed a Durkheimian perspective.

Conclusion

This research set out to understand whether astrology was an alternative spirituality by looking at the central material item of astrology—the horoscope—and acknowledging the act that made it meaningful—the reading of the horoscope by a professional astrologer with a client in a place specifically set aside for it. To explore this horoscopic place, I interviewed professional astrologers. Initially the space was prepared in readiness for the client. This occurred both physically and mentally. The astrologers termed this repetitive behaviour a ritual, reflecting Durkheim's views that a special place set aside and reinforced by ritual became sacralised. Yet all of them held the view that the initial encounter with the client occurred in the space of the ordinary. The paradox of the work was that at the beginning of every chart reading, each of them brought their knowledge and expertise from years of study and astrological practice of how to read the horoscope. They knew only the astrologically symbolic representation of the client's life and its potential, not necessarily how it was lived. The client, on the other hand, came to the reading with their own knowledge of the life they were living but with little, if any, knowledge of the symbols of astrology linked to their life. The two met in the chart-reading space—the horoscopic place—to exchange this knowledge.

Yet this knowledge exchange was more than just pieces of information. As the astrologers discussed the storied landscape of the horoscope and its implications for the client, a moment of recognition by the client allowed the astrologer to see more deeply into what Lefebvre called the lived space of the imagination, and this opened the way to a much greater depth of understanding between both astrologer and client. This was the point where life and symbols met, where the inner landscape of the life of the client met the symbolic landscape of the horoscope and created a change in understanding, uncovering what Tallis had named 'the visible invisible', and mirroring Tweed's argument that spaces were processes and changed over time. The astrologers recognised that they and their clients had moved from what Tweed identified as undifferentiated space to differentiated space and that both astrologer and client were enriched and resourced by the process as a result. They now inhabited the horoscopic place, this storied landscape

of the horoscope which had become valued, sacred, created by trust, and revealed and deepened in confidence. This clarity of understanding enabled the astrologers in this space to explore ideas at a much deeper level and with greater insight. In the case of these seven professional astrologers, then, the arguments of Greenwood, Fuller, Hunt, and Radermacher were apparently not supported. Instead my research revealed that, rather than requiring a connection with the supernatural that was not within the control of the astrologer, it was the combination of the two people—astrologer and client—that constituted the energy of the horoscopic place. Using the symbols of the horoscope, it became a thickened place, deeply respectful, generated by personal insight, metaphorical imagination, and ritual practice. From these astrologers' perspectives, it was when their client's horoscopic landscape matched their clients' inner landscape that a deeper conversation followed that generated insights that had no need for external intervention, but rather, gave insightful feedback to the client on how they had shaped their lives and thus how they might be able to change it for the better as they moved forward in time.

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