

## **Psi, Divination and Astrology: A Brief Introduction**

LANCE STORM

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**ABSTRACT:** Since it is alleged that astrology provides a method of gaining information about the personality of an individual, that might include advice and forecasts about future actions, the possibility exists that astrology depends on an anomalous process—a process that takes place outside the human brain, but nonetheless affects the human brain in ways so far undetermined. This short article is an introduction to the idea that ESP and astrology may be related.

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The author has conducted research into a form of divination known as the *I Ching* (Storm, 2002, in press; Storm & Thalbourne, 1998-1999, 2001a,b,c; Thalbourne & Storm, in press). The chief aim of those experiments was to establish statistical evidence that an anomalous (ostensibly paranormal) process might be taking place while participants used the *I Ching* that might, by implication, reflect on the alleged efficacy of this form of divination. Initially, many significant results were found in these experiments (greater than would be explained by chance), including evidence that psi was operating during the *I Ching* process, and that certain personality types (e.g., extroverts and socially bold) were predisposed to produce stronger psi effects than others. Like the *I Ching*, astrology is a divinatory system. Given some degree of consistent evidence in the *I Ching* studies, including some replicated results (see Storm, 2002, in press; Thalbourne & Storm, in press), that the *I Ching* process may involve an anomalous factor, perhaps a similar anomalous process underlies the astrological effect.

It was believed by the ancients—and still today by modern astrologers (e.g., Geddes, 1981; Goodman, 1987; Hyde, 1992)—that the positions of the planets of our solar system have an affect on human personality and behaviour. In more recent times, astrology has been tested experimentally, yielding results that give some support to this claim (e.g., Ertel, 1988, 1992, 2003, 2007; Eysenck & Nias, 1982; Gauquelin, 1983; Sachs, 1999; West, 1992). However, Ertel (personal communication, June 30, 2004) emphasizes the fact that no firm evidence exists yet for astrology as practiced by astrologers using constellations and star signs (see, for

example, studies with inconclusive or ambiguous results by Dean & Kelly, 2003; Eysenck & Nias, 1982; Groome, 2001; Hamilton, 1995).

One of the first researchers to experiment with astrology was C. G. Jung (1960). In the 1940s, he conducted research into astrology to test his theory of an underlying meaningfulness that would connect causally unrelated events. Jung called this connection ‘synchronicity’, and he regarded ESP and PK as sub-categories of synchronicity. He found suggestive evidence that the natal charts of couples and their corresponding marriages might indicate a synchronistic effect. This effect was found in the first of three sets of data, but it waned across the sets (possibly an early example of experimenter effect).

Just as important were three smaller experiments, which also suggested synchronicity. Three experimenter/subjects were instructed to randomly select sub-samples from the larger sample of natal charts used in the main experiment. The type of conjunction, which appeared more often than any other in each sub-sample, exactly described the psychological profile of each of the relevant subjects who selected that sub-sample. Statistically, the results were not considered significant, but the variances in the data, which indicated the featured conjunctions of each sub-sample, corresponded with the psychic state of the subject. Jung claimed that he had inadvertently found exactly what he was looking for—suggestive evidence of meaningful coincidence or synchronicity. A tentative link between psi and astrology had thus been made—Jung maintained that it was a synchronistic link (having subsumed ESP and PK under the more general category of synchronicity).

More recently, Dean and Kelly (2003) claimed that “astrology might be relevant to consciousness and psi” (p. 175). They argue that parapsychologists ignore astrology because it depends on the *Principle of Correspondences* (i.e., argument by analogy—if two things are alike, then they may be causally related). This principle was abandoned after the seventeenth century. Although Dean and Kelly have found little evidence for the veracity of the astrological process, and of astrological practice, it is likely that the incomplete reports given by Dean and Kelly in their review, and the methodologies used by other researchers, mean that the claims against astrology are inconclusive. For example, Dean and Kelly report that extraversion cannot be predicted from star-signs. However, their finding depends on self-reporting, and given that extraversion can be a form of defence mechanism adopted by depressive types (after Fairbairn, see Storr, 1973), there is the likelihood that many typically introverted star-sign types are typing themselves as extraverts because they want to believe they are extraverts. They therefore complete self-reports (and even act) as if they were born-extraverts, going against their natural predisposition to

introversion. This kind of behaviour usually results in exhaustion, anxiety, and other psychological problems. No conclusions about astrology can be reached from experiments that do not have controls over self-reporting of this kind.

Likewise, results of astrological experiments may also depend on participants' ratings of generalized astrological interpretations about personality. The problem with generalized interpretations is that test participants tend to rate them quite highly because they accept them uncritically (Forer, 1949; Merrens & Richards, 1970). If an astrological interpretation of a natal chart lacks specificity (i.e., an astrological report is too generalized), any difference between it and a generalized control profile may not be drawn out statistically thus resulting in a proof against astrology that may actually be an artifact of participants' biases.

In spite of these set-backs, studies of the so-called Mars Effect (Gauquelin, 1983; Ertel, 1988, 1992), and studies of other planets (Jupiter, Saturn, the Moon, and Venus) by Gauquelin (1983) have shown that the associations between human personality and the planets of the solar system may be very real: "The Gauquelin effects are merely minimal, but consistent and replicated correlations whose existence show some overlap, in principle, with natal chart claims by astrologers" (S. Ertel, personal communication, June 30, 2004). In the case of how these effects would be explained, Ertel adds that "no Gauquelin effect and no astrological claim could be made responsible, but only psi would be left as a way of explanation."

This psi effect related to the astrological process may also be linked to physical events in the galaxy. It has been shown that ESP correlates with Local Sidereal Time (May, 2001; Spottiswoode, 1997). Local Sidereal Time (LST) refers to the relative position of the stars for a given observer. At about 13:30 LST, ESP scores were found to increase three-fold above their average value. It is observed that the central part of the galaxy is below the horizon at 13:30 LST. It has been hypothesized that some kind of radiation emanates from the galaxy, and that this radiation is strongest at the centre of the galaxy. This radiation may have an influence on ESP. At the time the central part of the galaxy is below the horizon, the earth would form a natural shield that protects the human brain, so that brain processes are less restricted, thus yielding an improved ESP effect.

These findings suggest that normal and paranormal relationships may exist between astronomical events (planetary positions and constellations) and human personality and behaviour. If there is any truth to the major astrological claim—that there is a connection between natal charts and human personality and behaviour—then we can hypothesize that astrologically derived descriptions (i.e., natal charts) of human personality

and behaviour should be rated differently from control descriptions. Evidence supporting this hypothesis would make a major contribution to parapsychology, astrology, and science in general. However, if the strengths of these relationships are shown to be very weak, as Ertel claimed above, clients who seek advice, counselling, or prognostications from astrologers and/or astrological reports should exercise some caution.

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*School of Psychology*  
*University of Adelaide*  
*Adelaide SA 5005*  
*AUSTRALIA*

E-mail: lance.storm@adelaide.edu.au