

Astronomy for Astrologers

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Appraising the Gems of Declination by Leigh Westin

In western astrology we have grown accustomed to perceiving the Sun's path as circular: the years revolve and the days and months return again, the 360 degrees of the zodiac go round in a ring. But the Sun has an up and down path too. It climbs steps of declination from each equinox to solstice and descends again from solstice to equinox.

Too often, declination, one of the most powerful indicators in astrological practice is left like untapped wealth, glittering with an enormous treasure of information, literally, a storehouse of gems with a potential of yielding half of all aspects in any type of chart whether it be natal, progressed, diurnal, horary, ad infinitum - And it matters not, whether the zodiac applied is tropical or sidereal for declination remains the same in both zodiacs.

How can such a major omission occur? Why is such a vast, rich source of information overlooked to the point of neglect? The major answer is the persistence of most practitioners in applying celestial longitude as the mother tongue of astrology to the exclusion of all other celestial measurements. Yet, deep within this practice, a serious, but common misunderstanding exists because celestial longitude represents only part of the story. In fact, the issue goes much deeper than that, the story itself, is commonly misunderstood. To reach the crux of this matter, the thread of logic is traced back through the charting process, to the original intent of a chart, specifically, the beginning objective. As is true of all objectives, there are two parts 1) that which is being sought or the end result and 2) the law, principle or source of information through which the objective can be met.

When a chart is set, the objective or end result is a story - a story of life on Earth. The source of information is based on the idea or principle that life on Earth correlates to the picture found in the heavens at any specific moment. Hence, the law or principle is the picture of the heavens, sourced from celestial measurements that in turn, comprise that seemingly formidable knowledge-base called astronomy.

Before visions of complicated formulae begin straining the brain - please know that maths is not involved within these pretexts, nor does it have to be, to grasp a useable understanding of the heavens - that can be and must be applied symbolically to reach the more complete astrological picture.

In order to obtain the essential resources, however, every astrologer should recognise the overriding importance that astronomy plays in our craft. Astronomy is both the warp and the woof of astrology. In a way, astronomy functions as

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astrology's disciplinarian - its Saturn, if you will - by providing its structure and form. Literally all the substance and mechanic that astrology embraces and analyses, are found in astronomy. By the same logic, unless a basis exists in astronomy, a pretext cannot exist in astrology. Further, confusion arising from astronomy, is not from the knowledge base itself. The culprit in the woodpile with the potential to create misunderstanding is the approach from which astronomy is ordinarily written - as it appears from Earth, instead of how it exists on Earth.

Getting back to the chart objective and the story of life, the first important known fact is that Earth is one of several bodies orbiting the Sun. Therefore, the mover and shaker to which the focus is directed is Earth with its special relationship to the Sun and the peculiarities that define Earth's actions. But look- right up front, the first snag rears its ugly head, It is found that the information base, the celestial measurements, are written as if the mover and shaker is the Sun. Herein rests the first clue that astronomy is written from illusion, the illusion of a moving Sun - and leading to the logical conclusion that all celestial measurements to some degree, represent the same illusion. For example, celestial longitude and celestial latitude are related pairs in the ecliptic measurement system if the search is for a moving Sun, but not necessarily a moving Earth. By the same token, right ascension and declination are paired in the equatorial system with the Sun in apparent motion, but not from the viewpoint of a moving Earth. To get beyond the illusion, we must sift through the measurements and locate those that define Earth's orbit as it actually exists. The second dependable fact has to do with Earth's relationship to the Sun.

As Earth orbits the Sun, the anchor between the two bodies is a 180° relationship - always, no matter where Earth might be in its orbit. (Figure 1.) This is a physical fact that would be true from the perspective of any individual planet in the solar system. It is also known that Earth's orbit or path around the Sun was named eons ago as — the ecliptic -so called for the eclipse phenomenon that becomes visible when the Sun and Moon are aligned (albeit specific criteria) with Earth's location. Either the Moon falls between Earth's orbital placement and blocks the view of the Sun from Earth, or Earth itself is positioned between the Sun and Moon causing Earth's shadow to blot out the view of the Moon from Earth. In either case, it is always Earth's location, the ecliptic, with which the Sun and Moon are aligned for the phenomenon to be visible on Earth.

The next task is to determine which celestial measurement defines the ecliptic and thus, Earth's orbit around the Sun. The logical source is the ecliptic system consisting of celestial longitude and latitude. Celestial latitude can be dismissed immediately, because no relationship with the Sun is ever shown. But the other dimension, the east/west assessment, celestial longitude, measures the around the ecliptic path which is known as the Earth's orbit. This then, is the measurement being sought. By representing Earth in its orbit around the Sun, celestial longitude gains its status as an important signifier, but in no way is the representation great enough to endorse it as the sole mother tongue. It is unfortunate that many astrologers rest their case on this alter, treating celestial longitude as it were the be-all and, end-all.

Sorely missing from the above picture are the unique peculiarities of Earth's actions within its orbital boundaries. As Earth orbits the Sun, it is also spinning on its tilted, fixed north/south equatorial axis. By so doing, two extremely important factors occur greatly affecting life on this planet. First, the most obvious is day and night, resulting from Earth spinning or rotating on its axis - once in approximately 24 Earth hours. Second, and certainly just as important, is the creation of the seasons by Earth's fixed axial tilt always appearing to point to Polaris (at least in this precessional time frame) causing the Sun to appear to move north and south of Earth's equator. Without these peculiarities, Earthly life as it is known, simply would not exist.

Since celestial longitude gives the east/west motion of Earth's orbit around the Sun, its compliment would be a north/south dimension associated with the Sun. Only one

measurement fits the bill - a measurement from the equatorial system that has been referred to by some as the latitude of the Sun - that frequently untapped storehouse of gems, declination. When looking out from Earth to the apparent motion of the Sun, celestial longitude and declination are from two different measurement systems. Yet, back on Earth where life is occurring, these two measurements represent two parts (Earth's rotation around the Sun and Earth's fixed axial tilt), of one activity, Earth's relationship to the Sun. There is no rigid magic attached to the terms, celestial longitude and declination. They are simply words used to describe activity within a framework of a particular viewpoint - and as astronomy is ordinarily written, that of a moving Sun. When the activity or motion is separated from the viewpoint, the activity or motion can be applied to a different perspective; and in this case, the actual motions of Earth, the real mover and shaker of the story being sought.

To dissolve any remaining doubts the marriage between celestial longitude and declination can be proven by tracing the path of both measurements onto Earth's surface. The beginning of both dimensions is the first point of Aries on the equator (0° Aries and the Vernal Equinox); each extend in an arc upward to the Tropic of Cancer, (0° Cancer and the Summer Solstice); then down to the equator to the position opposite the first point of Aries (0° Libra and the Autumnal Equinox); onward to the limits of the Tropic of Capricorn (0° Capricorn and the Winter Solstice); then, back to 0° Aries, to begin the cycle once more. The path of celestial longitude and the path of declination when traced onto Earth's surface equate - they are one and the same because both describe one body, Earth, and its unique axial tilt in its orbit around the Sun. (Figures 2 and 3).

The idea that celestial longitude and declination can be equated is far from new thought. Anyone using antiscia is already familiar with equating celestial longitude and declination - or controversially - equating dimensions from two different celestial measurement systems. Antiscion phenomenon is the repeat or mirroring of the same declination position on two different days of the year thereby, representing different zodiacal degrees. One mirror point occurs during the Sun's ascent to the Tropics from the equator, the other during the Sun's descent from the Tropics to the equator. Furthermore, this same pattern repeats itself consistently within a matter of hours every year. For example, on or about June 9, the Sun will be again at 22°54N north declination, but this time in its descent from the Tropic of Cancer, and in celestial longitude at about 12 Cancer. Since both 18 Gemini and 12 Cancer are mirrored by 22°54N north declination, they are said to be in an antiscion relationship. Much more could be said about antiscia, but the relevant point to this discussion is that not only does antiscia equate declination to celestial degrees, their very basis are founded on declination - not on celestial longitude, where antiscia is inappropriately applied more often than not.

Actually much that is traditionally attributed to celestial longitude, finds its origin instead in the richness of declination. Antiscia is only one example. Another is the cardinal points. The cardinal points (the word, cardinal, meaning of primary importance) were so named because they mark the beginning of the seasons, a function that is firmly grounded within the confines of declination. Accordingly, even the tropical zodiac is derived from declination since it too, is based on the seasons.

When the Ecliptic and declination are traced onto Earth, they occupy the same position. Both are descriptive in different Celestial measurement systems of same action. Earth in it's orbit around the Sun, while spinning on its fixed and tilted polar axis.

It is perhaps the symbolism derived from the astronomical measurements that is the most precious gem of all. Celestial longitude representing Earth's orbit around the Sun, correlates to a year and the relationship to the rest of the solar system within that time frame mechanism. Within this analysis, a broad picture is formed setting the stage of life. Declination, on the other hand, refers to the world of contrast, from day and night, plus change, shown by the seasons, one of the most powerful actions

on Earth. Every material form, be it stone, vegetable, creature or human is subjected to the change process during its particular life cycle duration as symbolically seen in the seasons, consisting of the processes - gestation, birth, fruition and harvest. From declination, comes the contrasts and the seasons of life, related within the broader picture derived from celestial longitude. It is gems such as these that are excluded from the life story when declination is banished to the dust, unaddressed.

Now that declination has been established as an important significator in its own right, at least equal to, perhaps even rivalling the celestial longitude throne, there is more to be added concerning its power and strength, as well as aspect frequency.

The Sun's apparent motion (which is actually the Earth's) will be used as the baseline comparison in both celestial longitude and declination. In celestial longitude, the baseline motion then, is a little less than a full degree a day and at a fairly even rate throughout the year. In contrast, the baseline motion in declination is not only uneven, it moves much slower, beginning at about 12 minutes a day around 0° declination and reduces to a crawl at less than a minute a day as it reaches the Solstice Points, Cancer and Capricorn.

Although the faster moving planets will be accelerated somewhat over the base line, the slower moving bodies will move even more slowly, in particularly when they begin to enter the higher degrees (and this occurs in both north and south declination). As a rule, declination in aspect moves more in a time frame like the outer planets do in celestial longitude. Accordingly, aspects in declination are formed more slowly, remain intact longer and change less quickly. Generally, it is accepted that the longer an aspect stays intact, the more power it can generate. Thus it can be concluded that declination aspects are more powerful in most cases, than those in celestial longitude

One reason for the lengthy duration of aspect is that instead of 360° declination is concerned with only 23°26-8 N in north declination and 23°26-8 N in south declination for a total of only 46°52-6 N. Further, the aspects do not rely on any angle, or any rate attributed to an angle, thereby offering a freer potential of occurrence. In addition, all aspects have equal power in comparison to the major and minor aspects of the longitude measurement. Although it is difficult to prove, most seasoned users of declination claim that declination aspects are the most powerful possible. It also has been cited that the conjunction has the most strength in celestial longitude. If the most powerful aspect from one measurement can be equated to the most powerful from another, then the possibility exists that all aspects in declination have the power at least of the conjunction and thereby, overall, offer the greater strength.

Traditionally there are three aspects in declination - parallel in north declination (two or more bodies aligned), parallel in south declination (two or more bodies aligned), and the contra-parallel, one or more bodies in north declination aligned with one or more bodies in south declination.

From REALTA Vol. 4, No. 2

Leigh Westin has a major interest of greater integration of astronomy into the practise of astrology, she has studied since childhood, gained qualifications with AFA and D. Astrol F.S. she has a B.S.,M.S., and MA. is a reg. Dietician, writer, marketing specialist and editor, and finds time for teaching, consultations and lecturing.

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