

examining before the consultation starts. (*The book on Mercury inter-aspects* is Lois Rodden's *The Mercury Method of Chart Comparison, AFA, 1973.*)

Let me introduce this area of inter-aspects by recalling a consultation I had in 2015 with a male Indian client. He got in touch after he had been greatly upset by a Vedic consultation in which the astrologer had told him to go back to a 9 to 5 job and give up his dreams of self-employment in the alternative health and exercise fields. The Western/Tropical chart I calculated gave him Aquarius rising with a mutable T-square of Sun at 0° Pisces opposite the Moon at 1° Virgo, both square to Uranus at 0° Sagittarius on a Scorpio MC – perfectly descriptive of a freedom-loving character who needed to go freelance or work for himself in such an area. (Mercury in late Aquarius was part of the T-square, too.) A Vedic astrologer would not have used Uranus and a Sidereal chart would place Capricorn on the Ascendant (and the mutable T-square in fixed signs, instead), but it was not the method I found problematic. I took issue with the limited, Saturn-style approach of the astrologer and how it had affected the client. Every person should leave a consultation feeling empowered to 'follow their bliss', as Joseph Campbell put it. Being told to quit his dream and stick to a steady job for his family (and any future family of his own) had disturbed my client tremendously; the last thing he wanted was to return to the 'rat race' and give up his search for meaningful work.

The Uranian quality of his chart, along with Mercury, Venus and the Ascendant in Aquarius, suggests that my client is someone who needs to march to a different drummer, to set his own agenda and stand out by offering something different to his community. Yet it is ironic that Uranian individuals often attract Saturnian people into their lives – the type of conservative 'authorities' who dispense over-cautious advice. In a roundabout way, though, it's a gift – Uranian people encounter Saturn to see the stark difference between *who they are* and *what they're not*. They need to face restriction (Saturn) in order to break free (Uranus)! In *The Midheaven: Spotlight on Success* (Flare, 2016), I wrote about Uranus-MC: 'There is usually some subjugation or pressure to conform that acts as the trigger of our rebellion and break for freedom.' Ironically, it was the Saturn-type voice of the Vedic astrologer that had prompted my client to seek a Uranian astrologer. After I listened to his experiences with the Saturn astrologer, I described his T-square in detail. He broke down and wept with relief – it expressed so much of what he wanted in his life and of what he knew was deep inside of him.

It's no surprise that there were strong synastry inter-aspects between my chart and my client's. His Venus-Ascendant was conjunct my Aquarius Midheaven, and my Virgo Moon tied in to his T-square. There were a few Mercury contacts, too. My natal Mercury in Pisces squared his natal Neptune in Sagittarius in the 11th, so I was careful to encourage him to express his dreams rather than to play a part in helping him weave unrealistic aims or construct pipe dreams. I 'heard' Neptune during the session in his expression of hope that he would be of genuine service to his community. In addition, his Mercury trined my Ascendant and my Mercury trined his MC, both supporting the easy flow of exchange between us.

One final point before we look at further examples. In any consultation, we should employ Mercury to listen out for words that reveal a client's true needs or point to a part of their chart that requires attention – simple phrases that we immediately 'hear' with an astrological ear, such as: 'I'm feeling trapped, it's time for change' (Uranus); 'I'm unable to think clearly about this' (Neptune); 'I need to address my bad temper' (Mars). In *Horoscope Snapshots* (Flare, 2014), I wrote, 'Without knowing it, clients have a way of emphasizing which part of their chart they want to talk about. Words spoken

during a consultation are the client's way of letting us know which area of their life and chart has assumed particular importance at the time of their appointment. In other words, clients lead us directly to the most important areas of their horoscope.' The client's own perception of themselves may change over time, but what they share in the session is valuable and pertinent to our inquiry at that particular moment. We must listen to their clues!

The Mercury Assessment

Mercury in the horoscope shows how we and our clients:

- Work with left brain functions (language, science, the organization of data/ speech/writing)
- Use our logical, analytical mind and rational voice
- Name, connect, analyse, communicate and negotiate with the world around us
- Reason, assimilate, sort and sift through information
- Question (Mercury) past/early 'scripts' (the Moon) and look somewhat objectively at alternatives to our current life situation – or, at the very least, consider current and future options
- Form opinions (and whether or not we stick to them) and the types of academic interests that stimulate our 'little grey cells'

Mercury rules both the Air sign of Gemini and the Earth sign of Virgo. Its Gemini side is concerned with connecting with people, linking ideas and seeing patterns; getting out and about, engaging with others, playing the go-between and salesperson. The Gemini part of Mercury sees duality and conflicting choices everywhere, and it looks for alternatives to avoid boredom, stagnation or long-term commitment. The Virgo side of Mercury aims to do something practical with the information collected by its airy counterpart. It selects or restores what's necessary and puts it in a sequence; it studies, dissects, researches and then files away the patterns that have proven useful, and in doing so Virgo becomes a specialist in that area.

If our Mercury is the primary key to knowing how we communicate the language of astrology to clients, then studying our client's Mercury placement will tell us:

- How to start an engaging, effective and ethical dialogue with them
- How they'll receive, absorb and integrate the information we convey
- How best to illuminate options ('On the other hand, have you considered this ...?') and help them to become aware of their choices and perception of reality
- How to look out for their tone, tempo and subject matter

Mercury by Element and Mode

Consider the element and mode of your own Mercury placement (this, of course, can be coloured – even overshadowed – by aspects from other planets). The element reveals motivation and the mode is the style of approach (see my other essay in this volume). Whether we engage and deliver with enthusiasm, warmth and confidence (Fire: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) or with grounded, constructive and practical counsel (Earth: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn), and whether we give clients a different perspective and make them aware of alternatives (Air: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) or focus on