

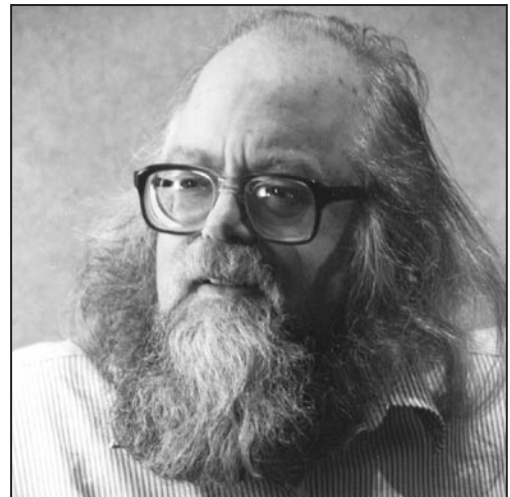
# A Conversation with Robert Hand

## The Modern Astrologer with a Medieval Heritage

by Tore Lomsdalen

Robert Hand is a professional astrologer with more than 40 years of experience in this field. He is best known for his pioneering work using new astrological techniques, including research into composite charts and the field of harmonics. He is an author of a number of books and has also completed several translations from ancient and medieval texts. Hand is the chairman of the National Council for Geocosmic Research (NCGR). He lectures at conferences, seminars, and workshops worldwide. He has practised in New York, Boston, and Cape Cod, and he now lives in Reston, Virginia, where he is working on a Ph.D. at the Catholic University of America. At UAC this spring, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award. His Web site is: [www.robhand.com](http://www.robhand.com)

After a heavy week of lecturing at the Faculty of Astrological Studies' 2007 Summer School in Oxford, England, of which Robert Hand is actually a Patron, he sat down with me in the midst of the magnificent atmosphere at Brasenose College, where astrology was studied 700 years ago. This was a perfect setting for a talk with Hand, who is well known for trying to reconnect modern astrology to its medieval roots.



**Tore Lomsdalen:** Robert, how did you actually get into astrology?

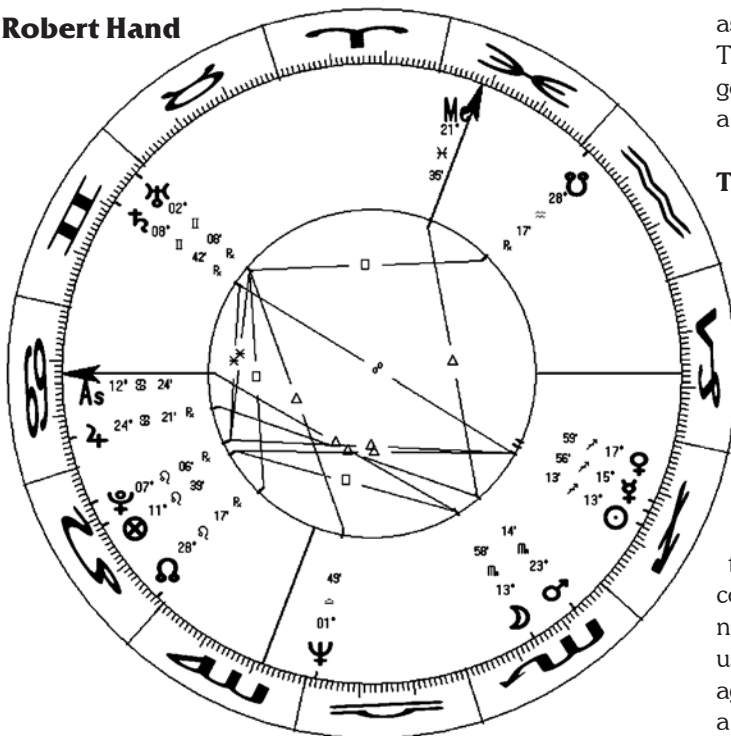
**Robert Hand:** It was through my father. He started to use astrology as a supplementary tool for stock market analysis. That caught my interest. I was then 17 years old. Now I'm going on 65. That makes it nearly 50 years of astrology — a long time ...

**TL:** Did you start to study astrology formally at age 17?

**RH:** No, though we had some ephemerides and tables of houses. Since neither my father nor I had a regular teacher, the astrology we practised was very, very different from what other people usually did back then. Over the years, we became more familiar with common techniques. However, I also became extremely critical of a lot of those techniques. By the time I began doing astrology, I was a follower of the Ebertin School — Cosmobiology.

In the beginning, I used the modern sign-rulership system which uses Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. I couldn't get it to work satisfactorily. I found that sign rulership was the most common cause of my mistakes in forecasting. Actually, I did not get any good results from sign rulerships until I started to use the medieval system of rulerships, which was not that long ago — in the 1990s. Before that, I got very good results using a modified Cosmobiology model.

### Robert Hand



**TL: But you are a traditional astrologer, in the sense that you use orthodox techniques.**

**RH:** I use them now, though I still use midpoints to some extent, but not in the rigorously Cosmobiological manner. When it comes to the sign rulerships, I believe strongly in the medieval system. The main differences are these: *First*, the transpersonal planets Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto do not rule any signs, which is the biggest difference from the modern system. *Second*, in the medieval system, there are up to five rulerships in a sign — domicile, exaltation, triplicity, term, and face. If one planet rules according to two or more of these, it will frequently take over disposition from the sign ruler.

To give you an example, in a Libra daytime chart, Venus is the sign ruler — or the domicile ruler, as we call it — and Saturn is the exaltation ruler. All air signs in a daytime chart are also ruled by Saturn as the first and primary triplicity ruler. Therefore, according to the Greek reckoning, Saturn has two points of rulership to Venus's one point. According to the medieval reckoning, Saturn has seven points of rulership while Venus has only five. The medieval system is weighted according to the mode of rulership. For this reason, Saturn rules Libra in a daytime chart.

**TL: What's the advantage of this system?**

**RH:** In natal astrology, there is a great advantage. I will give you another example. We did a chart this morning of a young man who has Libra rising. He was born at night, and the nocturnal ruler of air signs is Mercury. So, Saturn is not the ruler of the Ascendant. Venus in Scorpio is peregrine, meaning that it has no dignity whatsoever and is in detriment. This gives Venus a medieval dignity score of minus 10, which is as low as Venus can get. Saturn, on the other hand, which is Libra's exaltation ruler, is in Aquarius. Venus does not aspect Libra, because it is in Scorpio, but Saturn in Aquarius does. Therefore, we would use Saturn as this man's Ascendant ruler even though, in theory, Venus has more rulership. Practically speaking, the individual has a choice. That is the important clue to it all! Venus is strongly the Ascendant ruler. The native can try to manifest Venus as his 1st-house ruler; however, he will probably fail. If he uses Saturn as his 1st-house ruler, he will probably succeed. His mother informed me later that he was actually a Saturnian type. He spontaneously lived that way. If you have two lords that are equally powerful, you can use either one of them — or even both.

**TL: Is this the medieval system you teach?**

**RH:** Yes, I do. Actually, the only teaching I do is at Kepler College in the United States, which is a liberal arts school of astrology. Otherwise, I personally do not teach at this time. I

am too busy getting my Ph.D. in Medieval History. My special field is, of course, the history of astrology.

**TL: What does astrology mean to you?**

**RH:** Astrology is a system of ideas which attempts to discern, analyse, and use correlations between human and celestial affairs. There are two things that are equally important for me in astrology: First of all, it is the day-to-day observational experience that the Universe is not dead, and life on Earth is not meaningless. Second, closely related to that is the day-to-day experience that I and the Universe are *one*.

So, for me, the spiritual and metaphysical implications of astrology, and also the scientific implications of astrology, are the most important. Astrology is not a belief system, simply because it is based on experience. I am willing to believe — or willing to agree, rather — that other people might have other experiences. However, my view of reality is largely

informed, and formed, by *my* experience.

When people ask me, "Do you believe in astrology?" My answer is, "No, I don't believe in astrology. I experience it!" Astrology teaches me that the laws of physics might be true, but they are not the most important of all principles. The most important principle is that the Universe behaves as if it were a Living Being. *It talks to us!* As in all communication between conscious beings, the language is negotiated by both speakers.

**TL: The Universe talks to us through the planets?**

**RH:** It talks to us in all kinds of ways, but the planets are one of the means. There are a number of languages that the Universe uses to speak to us. When I say this, I do not mean the physical universe. What I am really talking about is the World Soul.

**TL: So, how do you define "World Soul"?**

**RH:** This is a Neoplatonic term. The Neoplatonists believed that at the core of everything was simply something they referred to as the One. As Plotinus said, *even that* is to say too much. It is beyond comprehension. The One, in turn, generated out of itself what can probably best be described as the Universal Consciousness. That is what is called *Nous* in Greek. It consists of the union of the knower and the known. In the Neoplatonic idea of *Nous*, there isn't any time frame at this level. There is only eternity! Everything that is, could be, or ever will be is already present, simultaneously. *Simultaneously* doesn't actually mean anything, in *Nous's* own terms, because *Nous* transcends time.

*Nous*, in turn, generates an image of itself. There is time and motion. This is the World Soul, which is the principle

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of being. It is *the* living thing, and the physical universe is its body.

**TL: You are known for bringing the Whole Sign house system into Western astrology.**

**RH:** I am probably the loudest publicist for the Whole Sign house system. I might be the most prominent astrologer to use it, but I am not the first one to bring it into Western astrology. All of us who have studied Hellenistic astrology have worked on the issue, and most of us have been converted to the Whole Sign system. We did this not because the Greeks did it (the ancients are perfectly capable of being wrong and have been wrong in many areas of astrology). Honestly, when I tried it, despite the fact that I was unwilling to accept it, I was compelled to believe in it. The results were so much better than with later house systems. I could give you many examples where the modern or quadrant type of houses failed to give me the correct interpretation, whereas the Whole Sign house system gave me the clear and straightforward answers I was looking for.

**TL: The Whole Sign house system doesn't seem to be very popular today.**

**RH:** That's because there aren't too many people in this movement, but it is spreading rapidly. I am going to revise the little book I wrote about it. That might inspire more people to get interested and start to use this excellent house system. Several seminars and conferences on this subject are coming up as well. Wait and see!

**TL: For what do you want to be remembered in your astrological work?**

**RH:** I think when it comes time to write my obituary, the Whole Sign house system will be a footnote. I want to be remembered as a person who played an instrumental role in reconnecting the future of astrology with its past. The 18th and 19th centuries constituted a radical change in the tradition. It was a break that occurred through destruction, not through evolution. I would like the astrology of the future to be what it would have been if the deterioration of the 18th and 19th centuries had never happened. It would not be pure traditional astrology, but it would be a kind of renewed astrology based on traditional principles and techniques — moving forward in new directions, taking the best of both systems and combining them.

**TL: Do you relate this to a postmodern astrology?**

**RH:** It is something like that. However, the term “postmodern” has to be used carefully. If you use it in the literal meaning of the word, yes, it is postmodern astrology. If you call 20th-century astrology modern, yes, it follows that period. If you relate the term to the modern French philosophers, such as Jacques Derrida and others, and their use of the term, it is not postmodern. Their definition of postmodern does not even apply to astrology.

**TL: Is postmodern astrology a kind of “Back to the Future”?**

**RH:** I don't know if you can say it like that, but it is a “healing of the break.” If you read Raphael, whose name was not really Raphael (he was, with all due respect, a hack, nevertheless a very influential hack through his almanac, and he started the revival of astrology back in 19th-century England) ... you can see that his astrology was a very crude subset

of traditional astrology.

A lot of that subset came from one person, John Partridge, who systematically examined traditional astrology. Unfortunately, Partridge misunderstood most of it and threw out every idea he couldn't understand. He was the least talented of all the 17th- and 18th-century astrologers, but he was probably the most influential. He was also the one who made the Placidus house system well known. The worst traditional astrologer in Britain is the one who started the Placidus house system — all his predecessors used Regiomontanus. Partridge died at the beginning of the 17th century. Then, the tradition of astrology was nearly broken, and this break was very bad for Western astrology.

Partridge did a lot of damage. Raphael continued the damage. Alan Leo, who was a very nice man and had the best of intentions, carried on and distorted things even further. So, modern astrology, by which I mean 20th-century astrology, is the end result of Partridge, Raphael, and Leo.

What began happening at that point was that 20th-century astrologers, confronted with a tradition that was extremely poverty-stricken, began adding new material to it. Some of it will be of lasting value. I do not know whether the 90° dial of the Hamburg School and Cosmobiology, for example, will continue to be a standard component of the astrological toolkit, but it is a highly valuable set of techniques. The investigation of sidereal astrology was useful, because it provoked a re-examination of the history of astrology which has led to where we are now. The single greatest revolutionary achievement of modern astrology is that it became a great tool for self-development!

**TL: With the help of Carl Jung?**

*I want to be remembered as someone who helped to reconnect the future of astrology with its past.*



**RH:** Psychology is one way of approaching it, yes. But it is more than psychology; it has an esoteric dimension to it as well. Dane Rudhyar is the best exemplar, and Thomas Ring in Germany is another example. They were followed by their disciples. This emphasis on self-development, I believe, is the most lasting accomplishment of 20th-century astrology.

**TL: Are symbolism and archetypes the same thing?**

**RH:** Symbolism is very important in astrology. It goes all the way back to the Egyptians. The word *archetype* has two distinctly different meanings. Originally, it was virtually synonymous with the Platonic idea of "form," and it is super-conscious in nature. Under the influence of Carl Jung, the archetype came to be regarded as *subconscious* in nature and, therefore, very different from the Platonic idea. Having an enormous respect for Jung, I must say that he got the location of the archetypes in the wrong place. He placed archetypes in a realm below the conscious mind. Plato had placed them above it.

To return to the difference between an archetype and a symbol: I believe that the latter is basically a nonphysical principle by which reality is organised. On the other hand, symbols are a way of representing reality so that the symbol not only labels aspects of reality, but also leads you to it. In Greek, *symbol* means, "to throw together," not in the negative sense, but to make things come together.

**TL: Is the natal chart a symbolic description of the human being?**

**RH:** Of the human Soul, yes. According to Aristotle, the Soul is the form of the fully realised body. It is the formal principle that makes each human being what they are and who they are. More precisely, we do not have souls, *we are Souls!* I do believe that the chart is a symbolic representation of the archetypal structure of the Soul. However, it does not completely describe how this is going to manifest in the practical, operational reality we live in. The chart expresses, instead, what this *would* be if it happened to be perfectly manifested.

**TL: You once said, "Planets are natures reflecting the moment of the soul within us." Is that why astrology works?**

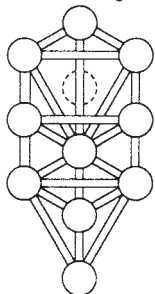
**RH:** Yes, again using the Neoplatonic model, which is not necessarily the only model one can use. The Neoplatonists believe, like most Platonists, that all levels of reality are reflected in and run as parallel levels of reality. There are four levels: the One, Nous, Soul, and Cosmos.

There are also, within the Cosmos, these four levels, as there are four levels within each of the levels: the One, Nous, Soul, and Cosmos. At the level of manifestation in this world, there is the apparent rotation of the Universe every 24 hours. This we know is an artefact, because we know it is the Earth's rotation that we are actually seeing. But that doesn't matter,

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since we are speaking symbolically. This rotation of the Universe represents the One within Cosmos; the fixed stars represent Nous within Cosmos; the planets represent Soul within Cosmos; and the sublunar sphere is Cosmos within Cosmos. The whole doctrine of macro- and microcosm is Neoplatonic, although it has deep roots in Hermetic philosophy. Each of us is a microcosm, and we each contain Oneness, Nous, Soul, and Cosmos. Cosmos is the body; Soul is what it sounds like, the human soul; Nous is the awareness of the soul; and the One is our individual consciousness as well as our individuality.

The Oneness is like this: If you divide up an individual, the individual ceases to exist. Individual means “indivisible.” The term implies that it cannot be divided. Literally, it means the same thing as “atom” (*atomos* in Greek) — incapable of being cut.

The point is that we each have our own soul, and the Cosmos has a Soul, and the Soul of the Cosmos is manifested in the movements of the planets. They are aspects of Soul, and their movements are a manifestation of Soul. The planets without, in the Cosmos, and the planets within the self are running in parallel. That is why astrology works!

The changes of the individual soul and the changes in Cosmic Soul are reflected in each other. This is not a causal mechanism in the ordinary sense of the word. As a matter of fact, astrology is more like a language than a mechanism.

### **TL: Do you think astrology, in itself, has progressed or declined from the time of its origins?**

**RH:** It has had its ups and downs. With the Hellenistic period, it is hard to tell, because the material is fragmentary. The evidence is that Hellenistic astrology was quite highly developed — somewhat more simplified than later astrologies in some respects and more complex in others. Medieval Arabic astrology and the Latin astrology which was derived from it were highly developed. Hindu astrology is also highly developed. But I would say, from 1700 until recently, Western astrology has declined. It has lost track of its own roots. It might, eventually, recover ...

### **TL: Through psychological astrology?**

**RH:** Psychology is just an implementation of astrological technique. For example, I do psychological astrology with medieval methods. It is not a problem. I do non-psychological astrology also.

We have to stop thinking of astrology as being like a scientific technology in which there is one and only one way of doing things. Instead, we must think of it as being a linguistic system, a language. The difference between a good and a bad language is not whether the language is English, German, Spanish, Chinese, or Hindu. These are all good languages.

The difference in usefulness of one language over another stems from whether a language can say something. Insofar as a language cannot say something, it is deficient.

The language of modern or 20th-century astrology is so impoverished that it cannot say things clearly. It is fuzzy, unfocused, and simplistic. I can illustrate this with an example: Several decades ago, the astrological community of the New York NCGR obtained possession of a fairly large number of timed birth data for suicide victims. These were gathered from public records; they were official birth data. Rather than the astrologers doing what one would expect them to do, to subject samples to statistical analysis to see if a pattern would show up, they created the New York Suicide Study Project. This project tested the ability of astrologers to distinguish between suicides and non-suicides. The charts of suicides were paired with those of non-suicides. Astrologers were then asked to compare the charts and say which one of each pair was the suicide and which one was not.

I did not participate. Do you know why? Because I realised that I didn't know what to look for in a chart to indicate a suicide. In fact, modern astrology has no way of theoretically predicting indications of a suicide. Whether the traditional method of predicting suicides is correct is not the issue here. The point is that traditional astrology *has* a way of predicting suicide. The language contains that information. It might be right or wrong, but from the perspective of astrology being a language, the language of traditional astrology is more articulate, more precise, and clearer. The proof of the pudding is that, in modern astrology as it is done by many people, one cannot even tell if it is working or not. It might say something, but not clearly. In medieval astrology, you can be precise.

If you cannot tell whether a language is saying something clearly or not, that means that it isn't. On the basis of its linguistic articulation, medieval astrology — and, for that matter, Hellenistic or Hindu astrology — is superior to modern or 20th-century astrology.

Our “postmodern” astrology has to develop a new oracular language comparable to medieval, Hellenistic, and Hindu astrology. That is actually what astrologers are doing. We are taking the true original language and reformulating it with modern wording. I am not an antiquarian. I might study ancient material for its own sake, but when it comes to the practice of astrology, I am not a medieval astrologer. I am a modern astrologer. I use the medieval language for modern purposes, and it works very well.

### **TL: Doing astrology this way, don't you fall into the trap of becoming deterministic?**

**RH:** No! Hierarchy of language is not deterministic. When you make a statement in clear language, people know you made the statement. What actually turns out to be the case, practically speaking, is that choices are very articulately described in medieval methods. It doesn't just present foggy masses of possibilities. You can say this or that strategy should work very well, while this or that strategy probably won't. But you never say that this will work and that will not. Modern astrology will say, “*We-e-ell, let's see ...*”

I work with an old language, but with modern intentions. That makes all the difference.

**TL: The Babylonian astrologer started out as a priest. Do you think there is a priest in us today?**

**RH:** Guru or mentor might be appropriate, but not a priest. I'd rather it didn't change in that respect, either.

**TL: Is astrology a religion?**

**RH:** Astrology has religious implications, but it is not a religion. It is not a religion in the usual sense of the word. It is not a theological system.

**TL: Is astrology compatible with religion?**

**RH:** Only those religions which say that astrology is evil are incompatible with astrology.

**TL: You know, there are many astrologers who are highly Christian or religious or have a strong faith ...**

**RH:** I have no problem with that.

**TL: Why, then, doesn't the Church accept astrology? The late Pope John Paul II stated in a Vatican encyclical that astrology was a grievous sin!**

**RH:** That is very simple to answer. These individuals are not the Church, even though they claim that they are. The Catholic Church is publicly reluctant to acknowledge astrology. It was actually the present pope who wrote the current catechism that condemns astrology, when he was a cardinal. Nevertheless, throughout history, there have been popes who have also been in favor of astrology.

**TL: Is astrology a particular system of faith, worship, and belief?**

**RH:** It could certainly be part of such a system but doesn't inherently have to be. It is not a belief system. Neither is it a particular system of faith and worship. Nobody has decreed that there is any special ritual you must do to be an astrologer, though there are astrological rituals in both the East and the West. Still, there is no one thing you must believe to practice astrology. In fact, we have two systems of astrology which are not completely different but have fairly significant differences; one is from the subcontinent of India, and the other is from the Middle East. Our form of astrology is a branch of the latter. (We must keep in mind that we do not practice Western astrology; we practice Middle Eastern astrology. There is no Western astrology, except possibly 20th-century and New Age astrology.)

You asked the question why is the Church so hostile to astrology. The best answer I can give is fairly simple. According to Franz Cumont, the official state religion of the Roman Empire in the period before Christianity (and please bear in mind, it was a *state religion*) was not the worship of the Olympians. That is a myth. It was the worship of the Unconquered Sun, or Sol Invictus. It was a highly Neoplatonic religion, so much so that the later Neoplatonists were consciously Sun worshippers.

Astrology was part of their cultic apparatus, and the religion was a form of monotheism. The Sun was not just like Zeus. The Sun was the only true supreme deity, or more accurately, it *represented* the only true supreme deity. All other "deities" were merely local, temporal manifestations. It was an ethical monotheism, and Christianity displaced it. I think the Christian attitude towards astrology came from the simple fact that astrology was part of the apparatus of a rival religion.

Astrology has *never* recovered completely from that! There have been moments when Christianity could and did

coexist with astrology. In the high Middle Ages, most intellectuals had no serious problem with astrology, as long as it wasn't deterministic. That, they had a problem with. I can agree with that point.

**TL: As an astrologer, can you be an atheist?**

**RH:** I do not think so, not intelligently. I am sure somebody has tried it. Atheism implies that there is absolutely no living principle fundamental to the Universe. You can be an atheist in astrology, in the way that many people define an atheist, which is to say that I might not believe in *your* God. You might consider me an atheist, in your terms, for this reason, but to deny the existence of any kind of living principle at the center of being, that is true atheism — a position that I don't think an astrologer can take. But an astrologer can disbelieve in any particular religion. That is not a problem. Astrology does not necessarily point to any one religion, but it points to some kind of belief other than atheism.

**TL: Does astrology imply morality?**

**RH:** Not necessarily. Historically, it hasn't, but properly understood, I think it does. Astrology does not necessarily enforce a moral discipline, although it implies one. If you understand the Soul as being the form of the perfected person, then the morality of astrology is as follows:

That which causes the Soul to become most nearly perfectly manifested is the Good. Evil impedes that process. In other words, morality is based on a perfect self-manifestation or self-realisation. I think most people who do harm do so because they have been maimed by their interaction with the environment. They are alienated from who they are supposed to be. I cannot prove this, but I think it is part of the foundation

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of astrological morality. Self-realisation is morality — or at least the striving for it.

### TL: Is astrology mysticism?

**RH:** Not directly, but it implies the truth of mysticism. It can be described as a practical application of mysticism. Mysticism is ultimately the belief that we and the Universe are one. Astrology is a practical experience of that on a daily basis.

Think about this for a moment. The chart would not work, if we were not some embodied aspect of the entire Universe. Each one of us is an aspect of the whole Universe. This is a direct consequence of astrological thinking. This is a practical and mystical doctrine. We might screw things up; we might not be very good at what we do, but we are all an integral part of the Universe. Each of us is not a child of the Universe, but an aspect of it!

Both individually and separately, we are manifold manifestations of the Universe. That is a mystical idea. Each of us is the Universe perceived from a particular point of view. Actually, that point of view is, at least somewhat, expressed in our chart.

### TL: You are, among other things, a well-known electoral astrologer. Isn't that a form of divination?

**RH:** Horary is definitely divination; it is reading what one receives from the Universe. Electoral astrology is technically not divination, because one is not reading. Electoral astrology involves the individual transmitting back to the Universe by his or her intentional selection of a time. We use the language of astrology to construct a statement of what we intend to do. If we do it correctly, the intention will be realised.

But there is a puzzle about electoral astrology. If you elect a chart correctly and you execute the intention at the proper time, is the chart, then, an indication that your activity is blessed, because you are able to do it? Or is the chart actually the *cause* of your activity being blessed? There is no way of telling this. I have done many elections, and I have found that, very often, people don't seem to be able to take the action on the prescribed day. Something just comes up. When that happens more than a few times, I say that you are not intended to do this; you are not intended to keep the election.

Electoral astrology is, basically, whatever you want to do being blessed by the stars. But at the same time, we are not trying to please the planets; we are trying to get the planets to please us! Electoral astrology, not horary, is the most magical aspect of astrology. You are using the planetary influences to realise your own intention. On the other hand, horary is divi-

*Electoral astrology is, basically, whatever you want to do being blessed by the stars.*

nation, as Geoffrey Cornelius says. You are trying to find out what the Divine is telling you. Horary is, curiously enough, religious, according to anthropological definition: One is trying to conform to the energy of a Higher Power. Electoral astrology is magical: One is trying to alter an outcome by using the energy of a Higher Power. Nevertheless, it is all astrology.

### TL: Magic has, in a way, a bad connotation.

**RH:** The word has been destroyed. In almost any language but English, the word is not "magic," but *Magia*. I think we should bring that word back into English. What you see, if you study Cornelius Agrippa on magic (who, after all, wrote a book on it), is that one of the forms called magic was something he called *praestigium*, from which we have the word "prestige." It means trickery and illusion, but so skillfully done that it qualifies as magic.

What most people mean by magic is *praestigium*. Other forms of magic include *theurgy*, which means establishing contact

with the spiritual nature of divinities and bringing these energies into incarnation. The most outstanding example of this, in practise, is the Catholic Mass.

Traditionally, there are also techniques of bringing down spirits to have communication. I do not know if that works or not. I have never done it. It is certainly not something that's easy to do. But again, the definition given by Dion Fortune has true merit: "Magic is the art of bringing about changes in consciousness in conformity with the will." That is a yogic definition. That makes magic definitely a yoga. Astrology, used for similar purposes, would also be a yoga. High magic properly conceived, what we call White Magic, is a yoga — much more so than astrology, actually.

### TL: You mean astrology is a yoga?

**RH:** A yogic technique is designed to bring the practitioner into union with the Divine, and it's a means for obtaining self-realisation. Insofar as astrology can be used as a tool for self-realisation, astrology is by definition a yoga.

### TL: Will astrology and science ever unite?

**RH:** Science, as a set of techniques for inquiring into the nature of physical reality, is not a problem for astrology. And astrology is not a problem for science. The problem for astrology are the people who practice science. They have, in many cases, adopted a philosophical viewpoint that has nothing whatsoever to do with the success of what they do on a day-to-day level, that is, ordinary science.

This philosophy is called scientism by those who object to it. It postulates that the world is dead, pointless, and mechanical, that life is a meaningless phenomenon that has to be explained in terms of a Universe that is fundamentally

dead. *That* is not compatible with astrology. As long as science conceives this as a requirement, it will be incompatible with astrology. I don't see scientists or many kinds of intellectuals accepting astrology for a long time to come. Oddly enough, ordinary people and humanity in general are becoming more and more accepting of astrology. In most cases, they do not know what it is they are dealing with or they might not "believe" in it. The good thing is, when you talk about astrology, most people no longer throw you out of the room — or out of the university, for that matter.

In the modern sense of the word "science," I think it will be hard to unite the two. In the original sense of the word, it is no problem. Aristotle was the first one to define science. He defined it in Greek, of course: *episteme*. Aristotle said that science requires three things: first, a self-evident first principle which is obtained by observation; second, a means of logically manipulating that first principle; and third, a conclusion which results from the second principle operating upon the first. So, if you have a first principle and a method of manipulating that first principle and you can generate a conclusion from those principles, then you have a science.

Astrology does this all the time! In the Aristotelian sense, astrology is an *episteme*. It is not a science in the modern sense of the word, but the modern sense is totally different from its original meaning. It got changed along the way. The word "science" comes from *scientia*, which simply means "knowledge."

**TL: Is astrology losing popularity?**

**RH:** That's a hard question to answer. It became very faddish in the 1970s. The astrologers who show up at conferences are getting older, no doubt about it. Eventually, there won't be that many of us left.

If you go on the Internet, however, you will discover a great interest in astrology, although it will be more primitive

and popular. There are huge chat room groups. But there is a sociological problem here. Those of us who come from the '70s have problems connecting with younger astrologers. We tend to move in different circles. At Kepler College, the age-group of the students is much younger than the norm for astrology groups.

It is clear that the astrological community, as *we have known it*, is shrinking. But I don't think astrology, itself, is. Astrology came close to dying out in the 18th century, but it did not. Although, if astrology hadn't continued to survive in this very country — England — it probably would not have survived at all. Patrick Curry describes very well why astrology survived in Great Britain — in his two books, *Prophecy and Power* and *A Confusion of Prophets*.

**TL: What do you think we have to do to attract the younger generation into astrology?**

**RH:** They are already here, and they are attracted. But they mostly do not seem to be particularly interested in doing it with the level of intensity that many of us have done it.

On the other hand, last April I went to an astrology conference in Sedona, Arizona. It was organised by a 31-year-old, Moses Siregar III. While he invited some of us "old guys" to be involved, most of the people who lectured were under 40, and several were under 30. They were brilliant! I think the future is in good hands.

**TL: Who do you think is the greatest astrologer — alive or deceased?**

**RH:** I would rather not state an opinion about living astrologers, if you don't mind. I think two of the greats in the medieval and early modern tradition are Bonatti and Cardano. Among the Arabs, the most influential was clearly Abu Mashar. I don't know if he was the greatest, because he actually did

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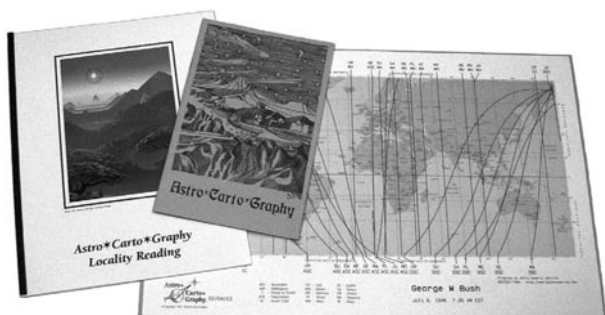
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## A Conversation with Robert Hand

some serious damage to astrology. Also, Lilly was a great astrologer.

Among the dead moderns, in the great or near-great category, I would probably put Reinhold Ebertin and Dane Rudhyar. There are others, but they do not come to mind at the moment.

**TL: You are a Sagittarian. Do you think you are living out your Sun sign?**

**RH:** I am actually doing a much better job of living out Jupiter. Jupiter is rising in my chart. (See **Chart**, p. 40.) It rules and disposes more than any other planet. I am not a classic Jupiter person, however, having a Sun-Saturn opposition. That makes me more disciplined than the average Jupiter type. Sagittarius is a fairly light sign, and I am not particularly a light person, neither mentally nor physically. Saturn has a strong influence in my chart. So, no, I do not describe myself as a classic Sagittarian. How could I be, with Cancer rising and a Scorpio Moon? On top of that, I have this Sun-Saturn configuration.

What I say about Sagittarius with Scorpio is "jack of all trades, master of several!"



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