

Deepening the Astrology Reading The Oracle Archetype

by Corrie Cooperman, R.N., B.S.

Rarely do astrologers talk about the inner experience of giving an astrology reading. It is practically taboo to speak about the alchemical process that can occur when knowledge, wisdom, and intuition fuse and produce information far greater than the sum of the parts. Yet, after the dust settles from the flurry of preparation for a reading — analyzing charts, tracking transits, plotting progressions, and running relocations — what remains is the hour we will spend with our clients in the hope of making a difference in their lives.

This article is about that hour and the ingredients that deepen the experience and increase its value for the client. Ultimately, as astrologers, what we really desire is that our reading create positive change in the client's life, through a shift in attitude or the mobilization of needed action.

Much can be done within the reading to create a state where our information becomes more accurate, where the pictures we paint become more vivid, and where the client becomes more emotionally and intellectually receptive to our words. A field is generated, if you will, that builds as the client resonates with the information being given and grows more receptive at a deeper level. I do believe that this more penetrating level reached during the reading initiates the shifts the client desires and makes the reading significant, well beyond the day and year it takes place.

The environment we create for the reading and the demeanor we display with our client set the stage for a rich session. But at the crux of our ability to produce a potent and useful event for our client lies a very ancient tradition, one that has long been part of the astrologer's heritage. Just as writers have their muse, astrologers have an archetype guiding them and

bestowing upon them the courage and willingness to do something so gutsy yet so delicate: to interject their opinions and insight into the life of a total stranger. This archetypal energy is the Oracle.

The concept of the Oracle archetype presented itself to me when I came upon a newly published book, titled *Listening to the Oracle*, by Dianne Skafte, a Jungian analyst and professor.¹ This book was published in early 1997 on the heels of the Jupiter-Neptune conjunction. *Listening to the Oracle* relates our history, as human beings, in seeking Oracular guidance. Not until I was nearly two-thirds of the way through the book did I suddenly realize why this book was totally captivating: This is what we do as astrologers — we are Oracles in the most ancient sense of the word!

That profound realization shifted my emphasis in giving a reading. Instead of dwelling on all the astrological knowledge I had at my disposal, my attention focused on the delivery system. As I gradually and more purposefully cultivated this linkage with the Oracle during readings, the depth of connection with my clients increased, and the movement they experienced in their lives, as a result of the reading, accelerated.

I share with you here the insights that I have gained over the last few years through engaging the Oracle archetype, plus some specific suggestions for astrologers who would like to make this archetype more alive in their readings. This article mainly addresses the astrologer, but the client/querent can also facilitate the ability of the astrologer to reach those desired heights of understanding. Physicists are now certain that the observer influences the outcome of an experiment, even with particles as small and inanimate as quarks. In

that light, the intention and demeanor of the querent, as the person seeking guidance, can truly affect the outcome of the reading. I will offer some "tips" for those of you who may be getting a reading or two in the future.

The World of the Oracle

First, let me entice you into the world of the Oracle: The Oracle of Delphi retains its allure, even though the tradition emerged a very long time ago and was well established by 1500 B.C.E. This most famous of all Oracles was a woman initially chosen for her refinement, knowledge, and maturity. Her life was devoted to meditation and spiritual development.

The site at Delphi, from which her title was bestowed, was considered sacred and was thought to contribute to the Oracle's ability to reach heightened states of awareness. She held a laurel leaf in her hand as she went into trance in preparation for giving counsel. When the laurel leaf shook, that was a sign that she was ready to utter words that would transform people and mold the future of cities and countries. Her role was handed down to equally qualified women for almost two thousand years. The advent of Christianity and a concurrent change in philosophy eroded her perceived value, however. The Oracle of Delphi gave her last prophecy in 362 C.E.²

A few centuries after this Oracle's demise, a new Oracular tradition was being established far away in the magnificent and mysterious high plateaus of Tibet. More than 1,300 years ago, Padmasambhava, a great Indian Buddhist monk, brought Buddhism to Tibet. To convince the Tibetans to convert to this new philosophy, he needed to subdue the powerful gods of the animistic Bon religion then in existence. Much to his credit, he created a means for the people to contact the greatest of the now subservient Bon gods and receive their counsel: He designated a highly placed monk to serve as an Oracle for the ferocious gods of the past. This Oracular position was then handed down from one carefully chosen monk to another through reincarnation, and it is still in existence today. A most compelling description of this Oracle's history and practice can be found in John Avedon's book, *In Exile from the Land of Snows*.³

As with the Oracle of Delphi, the State Oracle of Tibet spends years preparing for his role and lives a highly disciplined and spiritual life. He, too, goes into trance and receives assistance from the physical world through sacred objects. During his trance, he dons a magnificent, traditional hat that is so heavy and strapped on so tightly that it would strangle an ordinary person. The State Oracle has been instrumental in preserving the life of the current Dalai Lama by means of advice and warnings in critical times of danger — particularly in 1958, when the Oracle foresaw the Dalai Lama's escape to India in 1959.

Although these two examples of Oracular traditions are quite dramatic, I am not suggesting that astrologers should emulate any one specific tradition. But the Oracle archetype lies at the heart of *any* tradition that gives advice and guidance. It makes sense to tap into this vast wealth of wisdom accrued through the ages by the efforts of many embodied Oracles. It adds the missing ingredient that was a part of our work before the worlds of the astronomer and astrologer became separate. It is the spiritual or inspirational aspect of being an astrologer.

Archetypal Forces

Preeminent 20th-century psychiatrist Carl Jung brought to our awareness the archetypal influences on our psyche. Archetypes are primal energies, replete with symbols, that underlie many of the roles we take on in our lives. They either positively or negatively influence aspects of our lives, from our emotions to our important decisions. Dr. Jung recognized that archetypal forces, if acted upon unconsciously, can take over a person's life. One example would be a woman so dominated by the "Mother archetype" that, after her children are grown, she is unable to create a fulfilling life and becomes a meddling parent to her adult children.

The focus of this article, however, is the more positive and conscious use of an archetype. Carolyn Myss, a fabulous psychological/spiritual teacher of our times, believes that we

The whole purpose of invoking the Oracle archetype is to get archetypal assistance to maintain an expanded state of awareness during the reading.

come into this lifetime with a preexisting plan about the specific archetypes we will emphasize and learn from throughout our life. These may be the Hero archetype, the Healer archetype, the Magician archetype, or more troublesome ones, such as the Victim archetype. She sees these archetypal presences as teachers that further our transformative growth when used consciously and wisely (perhaps like Pluto in function).

It seems more than coincidental that both Carl Jung and Carolyn Myss, with their strong emphasis on archetypes, also highly esteem astrology. Carl Jung studied and wrote about astrology, leaving as his legacy an appreciation of astrology in the Jungian community. Carolyn Myss is quite knowledgeable about astrology and has been developing a system that involves using the birth chart to reveal which archetypes guide us in this lifetime.⁴

"Larger-than-life" archetypes are timeless and can provide guidance, inspiration, passion, and energy. Each career has a primary archetype: A doctor has the Physician archetype; a minister, the High Priest or Priestess archetype; a chemist, the Alchemist archetype. We can choose to let these archetypal pools of knowledge penetrate our work, or we can go it alone. Both Carl Jung and Carolyn Myss would say that we don't actually have this choice — that any career with which we closely identify draws in archetypal energy. The more we consciously collaborate with that presence, the more it can influence our career in a positive way.

The Oracle in Astrology

The archetype most connected to the field of astrology is that of the Oracle. This archetype is a fusion of Neptunian and Jupiterian skills. Neptune's domain includes the ability to reach expanded states of awareness, to see relationships that are not easily noticed with just the five senses. A well-functioning Neptune can remove the veils of illusion, so that confusion is transformed into knowing. The Oracle embraces these mystical Neptunian forms of gathering information. The Oracle is not afraid of being in an altered state for the purpose of going beyond the limited understanding of the querent, beyond the "data," outside the normal grid of perception.

The whole purpose of invoking the Oracle archetype is to get archetypal assistance to maintain an expanded state of awareness during the reading. This is what Oracles do best! Entering an expanded state of awareness during a reading can usefully direct the interpretation of the transits toward what the client needs to hear in his or her current levels of maturity, complexity, and predicament.

The expanded state is valuable for deciding which astrological aspects, out of the many in the chart, should be emphasized. Granted, the rule of thumb is to pick those closest in orb and most primary in geometric pattern, but these aspects do not always represent what is alive at this moment in the client's life. Yes, we have also been trained to select the aspects that are being activated by transit; these usually prove to be a fruitful focus, but many times during a reading I have been "guided" to address an aspect I had no plans to discuss — and it turned out to be the most significant piece of the reading for the client. That sort of guidance can come only if the astrologer opens up to "listening." To listen and hear clearly requires being in an expanded state of consciousness.

Then there is the Jupiterian side to the Oracle. This is the showman who is often taboo to talk about. We astrologers don't like to expose our efforts to get our client's attention, but without it, the reading is a loss. This is where Jupiter comes in — the king of entertainment — willing to take up room; to set a good stage; to be dramatic, funny, and engaging. Jupiter is also eager to teach; a client often needs to hear the same information several times, in several different ways, to really "get it." Jupiter excels at getting noticed, keeping the energy moving, and educating — all elements of a good reading.

We can deepen the astrology reading by using the Jupiter and Neptune abilities embedded in the Oracle archetype. This archetype can become a gateway to higher states of knowledge. When entering such a state, I find that my vocabulary improves significantly — something very desirable, since words are our tools of delivery. Those of you who have entered hypnotic states, perhaps in therapy, know that your memory is sharpened, intelligence

boosted, and sensory perception magnified while in trance.

Even beyond enhancing the *quality* of the reading, cultivating the Oracle archetype can also bring significantly more depth to the reading. The client can tell when something bigger than simple technical astrology is happening. The client is touched by the astrologer's ability to move into the inner recesses of his or her life and is thus more likely to take the information and guidance seriously. It is not enough for us to sound erudite and knowledgeable: Producing positive results in our client's life is our primary goal.

Cultivating the Oracle Archetype

At one time, before many astrologers aligned themselves, out of survival, with the emerging modern scientific motif, our profession was Oracular in function and performance. To become accepted by mainstream thinking, we may have "thrown out the baby with the bathwater" by abandoning this potent dimension of our work. Yes, the eyebrows of some of our colleagues will be raised, and others may accuse us of setting astrology back, but that is a small price to pay for reincorporating the Oracle and its accompanying gifts into our work and sharing the results out loud.

Many of you are already working actively with this archetype, allowing intuition and guidance to enter your readings. Others of you are probably doing this without quite recognizing it. Still more of you, as you read this article, may want to experiment with this approach.

To explore the nuts and bolts of cultivating the Oracle archetype, we can first take some hints from the great Oracles of the past. Purity was certainly a part of their lifestyle. A modern-day version of this could include coming to the reading well prepared, well rested, lightly fed, and emotionally calm, thus making it easier to reach those expanded states of awareness where the Oracle can be activated. Before the client's arrival, allow yourself time to get centered and, if this is in keeping with your spiritual path, pray for guidance and for the needed information to be delivered to the client. I have found it helpful to use the client's name in making this request.

During the reading, it is important that all distractions be minimized — phones, dogs, deliveries, etc. There is a momentum that builds as the altered state is reached, and interruptions are a huge liability in maintaining that state.

Stay flexible and open to shifting your prearranged design for the session if, in your heightened state, you notice a new focus. Pay attention to input that is knocking on the door of your thoughts. This may come either in the form of words or pictures. All of a sudden, you may see a transit calling out to you to be addressed. *Do it! It is important to honor the gift of receiving "higher" information by using it appropriately and timely within the reading. This practice causes the gateways of reception to expand and become more dependable in future readings.* Risks are involved here, but since I have taken this tack, my only regrets are the times I didn't speak up (because it seemed silly or inappropriate), only to find out later that the information would have been invaluable to the client.

I want to make it clear that I am not talking about abandoning the astrology chart to give guidance. Expanded states of awareness will enlarge your understanding of aspects and transits, t-squares and yods, houses and angles. Your astrological knowledge will become more personalized and less rote or book-like. You will definitely, first and foremost, still be an astrologer!

Another trait that helps to preserve the astrologer's role as a guide is to maintain a certain anonymity with your clients. If active friendship develops with a client, it will be much more difficult to go into the Oracular space when giving that person a reading. The more ordinary style of relating that has developed must be transcended, and that is not always easy. Unfortunately, you might have to choose between having a friend and serving a client.

There is another, even more significant downside that can develop through unconscious alignment with an archetype: One can become overly identified with the archetype. It is possible to get too caught up in the role and forget to leave it behind when you are off duty.

The person who comes for the astrology session can also help to create a potent and beneficial reading.

Just as the State Oracle of Tibet's impressive hat comes off when he is finished with his pronouncements, it is wise to leave your "Oracle hat" in the session room.

Getting too egoistically attached to the role of an Oracle is problematic for relationships outside of the astrologer-client one. Somehow, friends and loved ones don't react well to frequent unsolicited advice and prophecy. In this vein, I try to keep casual talk about astrology at a minimum, reserving it for more sacred or educational use. Likewise, it is useful to have a room set aside specifically for astrology. The room can then function like a container that helps to induce the Oracular capacity when it is occupied but, just as importantly, helps to shed the Oracular state upon leaving.

It is common to use objects that become associated with entering the role of the Oracle. The Oracle of Delphi had her laurel leaf. The State Oracle of Tibet has a sacred vessel handed down from Padmasambhava. Choosing objects that have significance for you and having them present during your readings will help to guide you faster into that desired state of awareness.

Even the furnishings in this room can be an asset in setting the stage for a deeper and more productive reading. Besides having the room clean and organized, the decorations and furniture, if chosen consciously, can give an unspoken message to the client that something quite extraordinary can happen here. If decoration is not a talent of yours, getting a Feng Shui consultation could be very worthwhile.

The Client's Contribution

The person who comes for the astrology session can also help to create a potent and beneficial reading. Of course, there is the obviously important task of choosing the astrologer carefully. Getting a personal referral from a respected source is ideal, but when that is not possible, I recommend interviewing prospective astrologers about their professional background, their years of experience, and their approach to the reading. It can be very useful to choose an astrologer whose approach and goals resonate with your needs.

Arriving on time for the reading gets it off to a good start and avoids having to deal with a pressured astrologer. Remaining open to receiving guidance, even if it's not the hoped-for advice, is critical. That old Rolling Stones' song lyric, "You can't always get what you want, but ... you get what you need," applies here. Then, there is an attitude — though it's not too popular in our Western culture — that when brought to the reading can, nonetheless, prove fruitful: This is the attitude of respect and honor. It keeps a supportive linkage with the astrologer alive during the reading and facilitates the astrologer's access to an expanded state of consciousness.

The importance of this attitude was especially brought home to me in a reading I did for a woman who practiced Native American ways. Before the day of the reading, which was conducted by phone, she sent a lovely card and enclosed a carefully wrapped, red cloth bundle. It contained some tobacco presented as an offering to me, as the person giving counsel. I was touched by this gesture but did not realize the contribution it would make to the reading.

During our reading, I started talking about the strong marker she had in her chart to be an important teacher for her community (Chiron conjunct an Aquarius Ascendant, within less than two degrees of orb, and a Sagittarius Midheaven with four placements, including her Sagittarius Sun, in the 9th house!). Transiting Chiron and Pluto were now conjuncting her Midheaven. In my heightened state of awareness, I was feeling an unusual sense of urgency for her to step into that role soon. Just as I was delivering this information, a huge wind came up, so strong that it blew throughout my house, opening and then loudly slamming doors. It came from the east, a very rare direction where I was living. Within seconds, the wind became so powerful that the phone was temporarily disconnected. When my client and I reconnected, she said, "Corrie, a really big wind came up here just as you said the word 'teacher.'" She was in Oklahoma and I was in Montana! In Native American tradition, the wind is a force that is alive — and makes comments.

I believe that both this client's comfort with expanded states of awareness and also her offering to me gave me permission to go deeply into her chart. The connection that was created between us before the reading through an "honoring" ritual fostered a potent and important reading for her. There are more mainstream ways to establish that alliance, which convey respect and yet remain nonintrusive. The client can send the birth information in a nice note card, along with an affirming message. Some clients have written a statement of intention for the reading and mailed it to the astrologer before the reading. Let your imagination guide you in this respect, but I do believe that this effort is of great value.

Conclusion

Life gets interesting when the Oracle archetype is allowed to enter the reading. Warning: This is not for the weak-kneed. The reading can become intense. Sensitive issues can quickly emerge, even before the social niceties say it's okay. This is also probably not for beginners

in astrology. One must be nimble with aspect analysis and quite familiar with the subtleties of combining planetary signs, house placements, and aspects — much like the musician who learns the classical style before improvising. A willingness to enter the unknown and tolerate a change in direction during the reading is also essential. All that said, engaging the Oracle archetype is highly fulfilling for the astrologer and extremely beneficial for the client. Good luck, and may the Oracle archetype grace your readings with wit, wonder, and awe.

References and Notes

1. Dianne Skafte, Ph.D., *Listening to the Oracle*, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1997.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-82.
3. John F. Avedon, *In Exile from the Land of Snows*, New York: Random House, 1986, pp. 191-217.
4. Carolyn Myss, "Archetypes & Sacred Contracts," The Seminar Tapes; Great Lakes Training Seminars, September 1998.

© 2000 Corrie Cooperman - all rights reserved

*Corrie Cooperman, R.N., B.S., has been a practicing astrologer since 1991. She lives with her husband in Klamath Falls, Oregon, having just relocated there from Red Lodge, Montana. She maintains a full-time astrology practice and has previously published articles in The Mountain Astrologer. She has also published extensively in newspapers throughout Montana, and she is certified in Astro*Carto*Graphy. Her approach to astrology has been enriched by her earlier career in psychiatric nursing and her work as a Jin Shin practitioner. She can be reached at corrie@magick.net, or at (541) 273-9133.*

