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# SEMIOTIC AND COGNITIVE PECULIARITIES OF ASTROLOGICAL DISCOURSE ORGANIZATION

Elena Nikolayevna Aznacheeva\* and Iuliia Vakhtangovna Mamonova

*Chelyabinsk State University, br. Kashirinykh 129, Chelyabinsk, 454001, Russia*

(Received 19 September 2014, revised 7 October 2014)

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## Abstract

In the article we look at the semiotics of astrological texts as the meta-language of the person's inner world. Comparing analogous and digital types of knowledge, we state that the analogous one is dominant in the astrological discourse. The analogy, holism and synchronicity principles in astrological discourse are discussed. Besides, the cognitive mechanisms of astrological text functioning are identified.

*Keywords:* astrology, analogy, conceptualization, digital, analogous cognition

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## 1. Introduction

The present day epistemology and other Social sciences are highly interested in the study of different types of knowledge and their interaction. Along with studying knowledge as the instrument of intersubjective reality cognition, much attention is paid to the knowledge formed in the process of individual reality cognition. The objective to study the structure of such knowledge, which is not fully expressible in social communication and absolutely inexpressible in the scientific communication, was first formulated by M. Polanyi, who named it tacit knowing characterized by internalized character [1].

The model of the Knowledge Spiral in the frame of knowledge management theory, worked out by the Japanese scientists Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi on the example of Japanese business companies, explains interaction and intermutation of tacit and explicit knowledge in team work [2]. This interaction includes four processes: socialization (transformation of tacit knowledge into tacit), externalization (transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit), combination (transformation of explicit knowledge into explicit), internalization (transformation of explicit knowledge into tacit). The theory emphasizes the idea that formalized knowledge differs from non-formalized, the latter being underestimated in contemporary society.

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\*E-mail: [aznacheeva.elena@yandex.ru](mailto:aznacheeva.elena@yandex.ru)

The Knowledge Spiral seems to be effective not only for management organization, but applicable to some types of social and humanitarian knowledge. For instance, many socio-semiotics systems arise as a result of externalization of tacit knowledge into explicit and further combination of the latter with each other.

Correlation and combined functioning of analogous and digital types of cognition is another acute problem in modern Philosophy and Cognitive science. It was Gregory Bateson who firstly identified and opposed these types. According to the scientist, analogous cognition is continuous and refers to more archaic aspects of a person's activity that is connected with person's subconscious, his instincts and autonomic physical phenomena [3]. The problem of correlation between analogous and digital types of cognition was later developed in the works of A. Kezin, V. Pivoyev and L. Pugacheva [A. Kezin, *Idealy nauchnosti i paranauka*, 1996, filosof.historic.ru/books/item/f00/s00/z0000056/index.shtml, accessed on 12.08.2013; 4; 5]. L. Pugacheva tried to work out the analogous and digital approach to mind evolution, comprising conceptual and physical aspects in the suggested theory. As she states any objective phenomenon described by consciousness is understood as a result of constructive mind activity which includes not only a sign and digital, that is discrete component but also analogous, continuous one. The study of the mechanisms of continuous analogous irrational cognition is particularly relevant to humanitarian knowledge. Such knowledge is believed to primarily use the analogy method – the basic and ancient way of the phenomena study, as it is often the only way to look into these spheres, among which is astrology.

## **2. Characteristics of the astrological world view**

We believe that astrology as a way of inner world cognition can illustrate the functioning of the discussed above two ways of cognition and ways of thinking. It should be noted that analogous mechanisms of astrological analysis are of cognitive nature, while rational digital aspects are of both semiotic and cognitive one. However, this distinction doesn't have an absolute character, and both types are intermixed on different stages of humanitarian knowledge.

Astrology dates back to approximately 2-5 thousand years ago. As a parascience, based on the natural philosophy paradigm of the world view, astrology relies on analogous way of thinking, on the principles of holism, synchronicity [6] and probabilistic determination.

The holism principle is realized as participation [7], which is the identity of natural and spiritual events under the influence of common energies and cosmic rhythms. We believe that it is holistic world view under whose influence, the person considered himself part of the Universe, made people attempt at corresponding definite characteristics of a person with this or that cosmic object. Some ancient spiritual practices, such as Qigong, state that those practicing were able not only to monitor the planet movements in the sky, but to feel their energy

influence on their body, that is they could transfer ‘autopoetic’ [8] tacit knowledge into explicit one.

The leading cognitive mechanism accounting for the astrological language is the mechanism of analogy between microcosm and macrocosm, outer and inner reality, time and space characteristics in the natal chart, as well as among the three level elements in the horoscope: the zodiac sign, the house in the horoscope and the planet, for instance: Sagittarius – Jupiter – 9<sup>th</sup> House, which refer to the direction (sign), the energy type (planet) and the sphere of application (house).

### **3. The astrological semiotic system**

The semiotic way of knowledge presentation in astrology is based on the analogy principle, which is the identification of the elements of the natural sign system, the sky, and their iconic reflection representing a person’s qualities and life events in the natal chart. The process of externalization includes coding and decoding of a person’s characteristics and states with the help of the astrological semiotic system which incorporates several subsystems.

These subsystems are: the natural sign system (the sky); its iconic image in the form of a natal chart; the semiotic system of conventional signs reflecting the relations between the sky constellations, astrological chart and events here on Earth; notation systems, metalanguage theories, algorithms, computer programmes, educational material necessary for reading the chart.

The syntactics of the astrological system proves it being highly semiotic, and allows us to refer to it as a complicated multi-level system. In this article we look at the level of astrological language which comprises signs, decanats, terms and degrees; elements, crosses, hemispheres, zones and quadrants; planets, their aspects and configurations; houses and their signifiers. It should be noted that each of these subsystems has its own semantics.

The elements’ meanings are of a combined character. As a result of the primary categorization there appear basic elements which coincide with Aristotelian metaphysical categories. They are – warmth, cold, dryness and wet. As the result of their combination there appear astrological elements – Fire, Earth, Air and Water.

Another parameter of significance is connected with four turning points of the Earth’s year (equinox and solstice), reflecting three-measure character of the process evolution: impulse – stability – transformation in cardinal, fixed and mutable crosses in the natal chart. The zodiac sign meaning is derived from meanings of element, cross and quadrant, which influence energy density and quality.

On the level of syntactics the duality is the fundamental cognitive principle of the astrological language and is realized in the abundance of astrological oppositions. For instance, the elements and planets oppose each other according to such characteristics as *dry/wet, cold/hot, male/female, east/west, upper/lower*. Semiotic oppositions *spirit/material, good/evil,*

*cosmos/chaos*, etc., key symbols *life, death, fate*, as the reflection of cosmic origin are implemented in the person's destiny in the form of universal archetypes, while their specification depends on individuality.

The combination of limited number of elements (12 signs, 12 houses, 10 planets) in astrology results in the infinite set of a person's inner and outer reality interpretations. This fact makes it possible for us to state the similarity between the semiotic systems of astrology and the natural language. The difference can be seen in the absence of subsign level in astrology similar to phoneme level in the natural language.

#### **4. Semantics in astrology**

The semantics of the astrological system is found in the natal chart interpretation as a result of its verbalization. It comprises several levels: the archaic one where archetypes and mythologemes are, the functional one where signs and planets are given roles and characteristics, the axiological level where the weakness and power, malevolence and beneficence of the planets is defined; the characteristics one where we find psychological characteristics of the natives; the conceptual level where the base units of which are verbalized ideas and metaphorical models.

The principles of analogy and synchronicity explain the ambiguity of the elements on the semantic level in astrological discourse. Each symbol's content can be applied to many different objects and be externalized in various ways. The symbolic content is expressed through graphic forms, iconic images, mythological archetypes, mythologemes and other signs referring to any object in reality and linking different planes of existence, such as physical characteristics, a person's appearance, health, temper, qualities, various situations and fate, natural disasters, historical events, animals, plants, minerals, metals and precious stones, senses, illnesses, weather. All scope of symbol content is called the principle of planet, sign, etc. Principles, ruling cosmic rhythms, are found in prototype conceptualizations of zodiac signs, sky bodies, fixed stars, horoscope degrees.

Generally speaking, Zodiac is the symbol of interrelations in the Universe, as well as of cyclic and season changes. Astrologers believe that each Zodiac sign actualizes one of the archetypes, which are deeply rooted in the person's psyche and reflected in all nations' mythology. Many traditional mythological characters, such as the Blacksmith, the Thunderer, a Dying-and-rising god fully correspond to some zodiac mythologeme. The main quality of an archetype as a prototype of culture is its recurrence in similar situations [9].

The interrelations between cosmic energies and a person's life can be represented as result of the mental spaces blending process [10] – Cosmos and microcosm (person), as well as outer and inner (psychological) reality. In this process such metaphors are involved as: Sky–Clockwork, Time–Space, Planet–Person, Planet–Mechanism influencing the person, Horoscope–Life Map, Natal Chart–Theatre.

A peculiar feature of the personality's presentation in astrology is typology of not only a person's temper but definite characteristics personified by planets as well. These characteristics are specified according to the planet position in the natal chart. For instance, Mars personifies will, Venus – feelings, Mercury – intellect, etc. Personification of the sky bodies can be traced both in texts and in astrological language, where there can be identified, for example, planets – beneficent (Venus, Jupiter) and malevolent (Mars, Saturn, Pluto, Uranus); exile (confinement, captivity), exaltation (planet's pride) or fall (debilitation) of the planet.

One more type of semantic ambiguity is presented by metonymic transfer from the time dimension to the space dimension in the natal chart, as well as metonymy on the basis of correlation between the person and the planet symbolizing him in the natal or horary chart.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study of semiotic and cognitive peculiarities of astrological texts allows us to stress the importance of the synthesis of empirical rational approach to define Astronomy and astrology characteristics in the natal chart with paralogical world view and intuitive methods to interpret it. The combination of rational approach and subjective experience or tacit knowledge gives basis for the holistic research of such a complicated multi-dimensional matter as the person's inner reality. The combination is possible only in the frame of different from the conventional approach but the one which has been for thousands of years used in parascience, though practically not studied by the contemporary Epistemology and Philosophy of science. Revealing semiotic and cognitive characteristics in parascience may help understand the nature of the person's cognition as the synthesis of formalized, discursive and analogous, continual processes.

## **Acknowledgement**

The work is supported by the grant # 12-04-00045 from RGNF.

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