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THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ASTROLOGICAL RESEARCH



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Cover: Tomb of Nakht, Egypt. Dynasty XVIII 1450 B.C. Music was a source of pleasure and relaxation for rich Egyptians. A painting in the tomb of Nakht (an astronomer of the God Amun during the kingdom of Amenhotep III) shows three women: a flute player, a harp player, and one playing the norva (middle) -- close to a banjo and made out of a turtle shell. The three musicians are lightly dressed with transparent clothes and veils. They have incense cakes on their heads to perfume the body and hair.

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Mercury in Sagittarius

M. Kelley Hunter

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN BORUP

A well-known lecturer, a television celebrity in his native land, and ISAR's Vice President for Denmark for many years, Christian Borup is one of the most interesting thinkers in the astrology world. He travels extensively and now lives in Belgrade with his Serbian partner, traditional astrologer, Branka Stamenkovic. At almost any conference, Christian can generally be found in deep conversation in the smokers' "lounge," enjoying excellent European cigarettes.

This interview was conducted at the annual conference of the Astrological Association of Great Britain in Cambridge last September. Amidst all the activity, we finally found a time to sit down. It is always interesting to find out how people got into astrology, and Christian's story is one of the most unusual I've heard. Fueled by fine chocolate truffles gifted by the conference organizers, our conversation ranged from light to dark, as we discussed life and death, his original work on the birth myth, his current interest in "counting," his years on a Danish TV game show, Sun sign columns and various thoughts on the glory of psychological astrology as a healing modality.

Kelley Hunter: We've found our moment.

Christian Borup: We've found our moment and our place in space. Do we need a chart? (laughs)

KH: I'm very glad to be talking with you, Christian. I know this is going to be interesting, because you are such an original thinker. How did you get into astrology?

CB: The long version or the short version?

KH: Do you have a mid-range? You were a medical student, you once told me, and found you preferred astrology.

CB: Yes, but that was much later. I was brought up in a Christian family. In Denmark we are Viking Christians, which means that nobody actually goes to church or anything. There is just this vague concept of some God floating around. When you turn thirteen, you reconfirm your birth, meaning that you get off school one hour earlier for about half a year, and you go to a priest who tells you everything about Christianity. It

all ends up with you going to church, having communion, thereby reconfirming your Christian birth and knowledge of the Bible. Then there is a big Viking party with friends and family and loads of gifts, an almost pagan celebration of adulthood. I guess it's a bit like a Danish bar-mitzvah. I had this priest that I really liked. He was a great guy, but he kept saying that Paradise is nothing that's beyond death, but Paradise is here on Earth, which I, with my Scorpio Ascendant and Moon-Mars-Pluto couldn't fathom. What is this?! So at thirteen, my belief in Christianity died out, really. At the same time I came upon a very strange word in a book, the word "yoga." So I went to the library, where I spent most of my time anyway, to look up what yoga was.

I went to the section with the books on yoga. There was only one book, *Yoga for Pregnant Women*, with a cover showing an eight-months-pregnant woman doing body-contorting asanas. That was obviously not for me, so I took the book next to it home with me instead. The book was called "Spiritism/Spiritualism" and was written by a Danish priest in the 1930s. He was a priest of the most prestigious church we have, where most of the Danish royalty gets married, called "Holmens Church," so he really was a church authority. But to my surprise the book contained photos from séances with mediums, where ectoplasm was coming out of the ears and the eyes of the mediums, forming the souls of the deceased, and positive descriptions of contacts with the dead. Yet he was a priest just like the priest I was going to. So like some kind of doubting Thomas, I said, "This is much more real, there is much more here." I started reading the occult section in the library and astrology was one of the things that was there. I went totally into it, along with witchcraft, yoga, meditation, magic and everything else. This is when I was thirteen years old. I still have the very first chart that I did when I was thirteen.

KH: You had to do it by hand calculation.

CB: Yes, I had to do it by hand calculation. I could only find one book that showed how to do it. I did it all wrong, of course, like the usual mistake of measuring from the wrong end of the sign. So that's actually when it all started. Since then I read everything I could lay my hands on. I thought I

was the only one in the world interested in this. It was not until years later that I realized there was actually a school in Copenhagen where you could go and be taught astrology. We had this incredibly big astrology celebrity in Denmark called Irene Christensen, and she had started the school. She died in 1976. I started in the school in 1977 and finished the whole curriculum very quickly because I had studied by myself. From 1978 I started teaching rectification at that school. These were the times before computers. There were all these calculations, which suited me fine, being a Virgo. Then I took the AFA (American Federation of Astrologers) professional examination, in 1980.

The institute I started with is called the Irene Christensen Institute, I.C. Institute for short. The school was founded in 1958. So it's the oldest school in Scandinavia. In 1956 the school started publishing the monthly, "Stjernerne," which sold in all the kiosks in Denmark. My teacher was another renowned astrologer Birthe Kirk, who was a student of Irene's and by that time owner of the school. Four years later I was teaching just about everything in that school. In 1987 Birthe asked me if I would take over both the school and the very popular monthly magazine, "Stjernerne." So in 1987 I took over everything, magazine and school, and ran them from 1987 to 1997. Then I sold it off to some of the teachers I had employed. Today the I.C. Institute and the magazine is still a defining factor of Danish astrology. I still write for the magazine almost every month.

KH: I've been on your website, to look up asteroid ephemerides and other things that you can't find just everywhere.

CB: I've got weird Virgo things on my website, but most of it is there is because at some point I have written an article about it and therefore put up the data so that people can check into it for themselves. When the first computers came on the market, there was no doubt about their potential for calculating charts, so I got into computers way before the IBM PC's. I taught myself programming and ended up translating a lot of hardcore computer books about programming for different publishers. So that explains the rather specialized stuff on my website.

And then there was the medicine. I started studying medicine when I was eighteen and studied for six years, so I got about half way through medical school. I ended up spending a lot of time working as an underling. I enjoyed the work. I worked a lot with sick kids, psychiatric patients and old people. My Moon-Mars-Pluto learned a lot, I think, from watching many people die. I only killed two of them myself. [There was an instant of silence while I was figuring out how to take that statement, then Christian burst out laughing, and so did I.]

KH: It must have been their time.

CB: Yes, it probably was. The job was usually to take care of people when they were dying. I enjoyed the work. It motivated me to start thinking about what life means and why it stops. It made a big impact. Of course [with Scorpio rising] I enjoyed dissecting people, so I took two courses of that. The body is a miracle, so maybe my confirmation priest was right after all, about Paradise on Earth? It's just so weird that most people know a lot more about what's inside their computer or car, than what's inside their own body.

KH: How did that experience influence your astrology? By giving you a greater sense of life and death and the big picture, I can imagine, but in any other way you can think of?

CB: I think because when I look at a person I see two things: I see a chart, an imaginary chart, like inside the person, but I also see all the organs. You ask most people, "Where are the kidneys? Where is the thymus? Where is the liver?" Most people don't actually know. That's part of how fragile the human condition really is. But, on the other hand, people can be incredibly strong under very hard circumstances and great sicknesses....I think my bottom line respect for the seriousness of life and the power inside people came with that. Also because, well, my father died very, very early, earlier than most people's fathers die, because he died three months before I was born. This whole thing about the ever present death, it's all Scorpio, like a Norse mythological raven sitting on your shoulder, that keeps whispering in your ear how important it is to remember to live while you do it.

That's maybe why I got into this whole thing about the birth myth. I've been collecting stories from clients for years, about the conditions surrounding their births, their stories, anything. Not necessarily what actually happened in the birth situation, which is more Tad Mann's thing that he does with the LifeTime Astrology: that factor is the doctor who was present, this is the granny who was present, this is what happened and so on. My interest is the myth, the fantasy the family has, the story the child is told, the first mythological explanation of existence. Most kids love to hear their story over and over, and it somehow programs your life script. It is a myth, not reality. That is what makes it so powerful.

I'm actually saying that the natal chart is always also the horary for the mother giving birth. I simply use the Moon, the separating aspect from the Moon and the applying aspect. It usually ties in with the story. I had one guy, as an example, with a Moon-Uranus connection coming, i.e. the Moon moving into Uranus in his natal chart. And the story was that he was so sick, when he was a kid, that they thought he was going to die. He had so much asthma, all his bronchi and his lungs were simply closing up. The doctors said, "We can't do anything, except take him up to higher ground and he might be OK." So the whole family moved to a place with

fresh air and as high up as you can get in Denmark, which is not that high, and it helped. Today this guy is a steward, flying airplanes all the time—the Uranus principle. Very often these birth myths really mean something and end up being paramount in your life story. They explain subconscious value systems and gut reactions you will have as a grownup.

KH: That's fascinating.

CB: I think so. You hear totally weird stories, fantasy stories, because some of them didn't actually happen. Like person says, "I was born in the biggest snow storm that ever happened!" And I go back, because I'm a Virgo, to check what the weather was like on that day, and it says it was warm and sunny. But it doesn't matter, this is the story, this is the myth the person stores in the psyche, the child's *raison d'être*. I think that's interesting.

KH: The whole chart is a story, which is epitomized by the birth in some way and the circumstances surrounding it.

CB: I love these stories. Very often it's a good starting point for a discussion, because people recognize it. You can enter their "world" and talk their "language." You just unpack and extrapolate on the story. I had one client a couple of weeks ago who was born in the Arab Emirates. He was received as a prince. The doctor, very prestigious doctor, said to the mother, "You are going to give birth to a prince. This is going to be a princely birth." This guy carries himself like a nobleman, with an aristocratic way of behaving and being, because he still carries that myth that he was somebody special. Sometimes it works for him, and sometimes it doesn't....

KH: Did his chart reflected that? Can you give me a part of the chart?

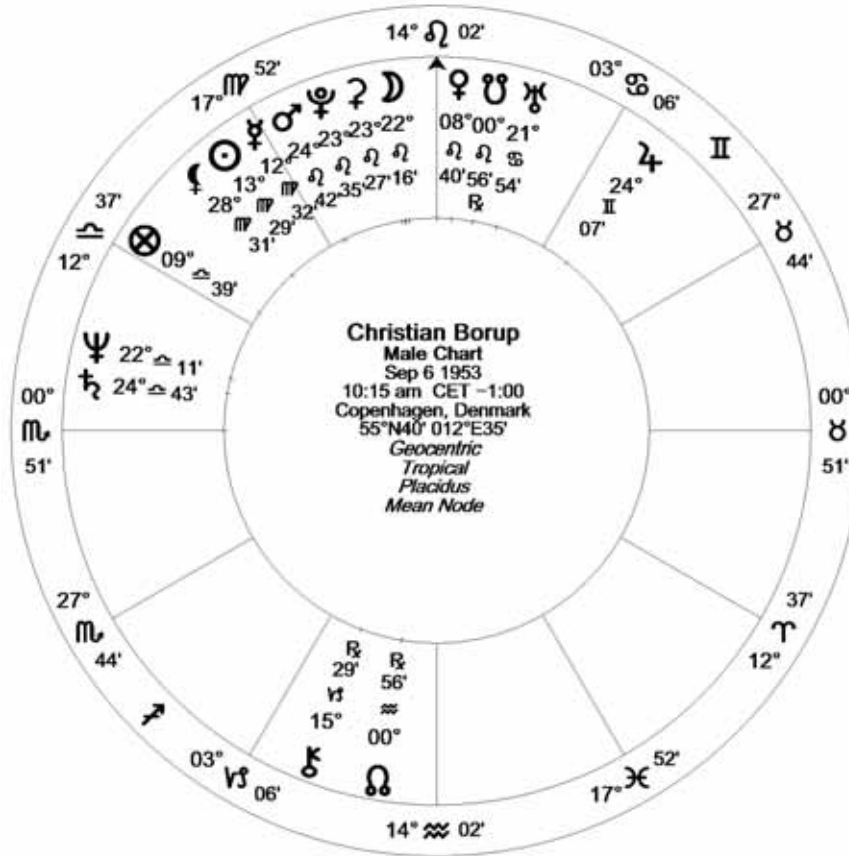
CB: It had a very strong Moon applying to a trine to the Sun. The myth is all about what aspects the Moon makes.

KH: The Moon would be the family...

CB: ...and the myth, and the whole energy of the chart. It's about living up to the family myth and continuing the "astrological bloodline," living out family expectations, like: "Your younger brother died at birth, and you were born to replace him," "We wanted a girl, but got a boy," "You almost killed your mother when she was giving birth to you," etc.

KH: Do you progress the Moon backwards?

CB: Yes, the aspect it just left and the aspect it is going into, just like you would do in horary. The natal chart is the horary of the mother giving birth. Sometimes it even fits with the horary rules for timing, four degrees = four years/months/weeks/hours. So this, I think, is my specialty and my main starting point for discussing the chart in my consultations.



It's like entering the inner mythological landscape of the client and speaking in a language that is well known to the client on a deep level. Once a client sees the symbolic connections, something usually clicks inside of them.

KH: I heard a lecture you gave on that. You give lectures on so many different things, and tend to give an interesting take on them.

CB: I love lecturing and I've done it for a lot of years now, in many places.

KH: What would you say is your newest, most compelling interest at this time in astrology?

CB: I almost dare not say it because it is very, very boring. This is counting. I'm just counting things. I haven't published any findings yet. But I will. I sometimes mention it in my recent lectures, but my main interest at the moment is simply counting.

I have this law, which is the law of rarity. If something is rare in the chart, it's special; it makes that person be outside the norm. But actually, we as astrologers, we don't even know what is rare. Most people, for instance, don't know that a simple thing like Mercury in Gemini is a rare position, the rarest of Mercury's sign positions in the whole chart.

So I've calculated all these things, figuring them out. I write computer programs that calculate different positions and do statistics on them. Trying to answer questions like: How often is the Sun in one sign and how often is Mercury in the same sign and when is it in the Sun's neighboring signs, one ahead or one back? And what about Sun/Mercury/Venus? How often are planets unaspected? Is the Moon more often unaspected than Venus? What is most common: one, two or three planets retrograde? And which combination of retrogrades is most rare? Which aspects are common and which ones are rare? and so on. Basic questions that logically should have a big impact on the way we interpret charts. And I'm often finding surprising answers to these questions.

Over the years I have tested almost everything I could think of. As I told you, it's very, very boring, and people usually tend to fall asleep when I go on and on about it. Until they realize the interpretative implications. But counting really satisfies my Virgo. A bit autistic, really... I intend to publish my results in the coming years, but my Leo planets make me lazy, so we'll see...

KH: You gave a talk on that here today.

CB: Yes, unaspected planets. I call it my knitting. Other people knit or collect stamps—I count.

KH: And yesterday you gave a talk on the opposition. Oppositions are the rarest aspect, you said?

CB: Yes, and especially the Sun-Mars opposition is very rare.

KH: It's going retrograde then.

CB: Yes, swissshhhh! It just swishes past. So it becomes rare. Look through your client files, and few will have it. Those who do are special.

KH: That's also when Mars is closest to us and brighter, so it's a rare and special moment.

CB: Yes, it's pretty explosive. The astronomers don't calculate these things, because they don't care, they don't use the signs anyway, and the solar system is old hat to them. So we astrologers have to do it ourselves.

KH: That's our job, isn't it, translating the meaning of all of that data into human life.

CB: Right! Knowing what is rare and why it is rare. Like the Sun-Venus semi-square. With a 5 degree orb this aspect is within orb 30% of the time! It's definitely not rare. I think it's John Addey who in *Harmonics in Astrology* briefly mentions the kind of error you can make if you don't know these things. He tells of some guy who thought he had proven the scientific validity of astrology, because he found that 30% of children with learning disabilities had the Sun semi-square Venus. But what he found was just the norm.

There was a Frenchman called Croisnard who also did research and found out that many of the big actresses and actors in France all have Libra Ascendants and that Aries Ascendants were very, very rare. But that again is the norm for this latitude. And so on. Nobody has done the research. So I'm doing the foot work. I'm laying a foundation.

KH: I would think the Sun-Venus semi-square would be common because that is when Venus is slowing down so it's there for a longer period of time.

CB: It's hanging almost exactly at about 45 degrees on either side of the Sun, so looking from the Earth we can see it almost stationary for a very long time, while it is moving away or towards us.

Then, of course, I try to implement my counting for practical use. So if I see something in a chart that is rare, like Sun opposition Mars, that person maybe has a feeling of not being able to find fellows or people who share their opinions or ideas. Having a rare combination makes you more of an outsider or even alien. It makes you special. And other people can feel that subconsciously. Like there is a hidden mystery or treasure in that person.

KH: Such rare things are not shared by other people, so it's an experience you can't talk about and be understood all the time. Do you have any of those in your chart?

CB: No. I'm a total commoner!

KH: You travel a lot in your work, so you've been all around. You must have a pretty good overview of what is going on in astrology. What is your impression of the wider world of astrology and how our field is developing? That's a big question these days.

CB: We've had a strange development. I've now been doing this as a profession for thirty-two years, since 1978. Just in that relatively short span of time a lot has happened. When I got into astrology we were in the slip stream of the 60s, and it was psychological, humanistic and spiritual astrology, based on what we then considered to be old astrology, meaning Charles E.O. Carter, Zane, Alan Leo and those guys. Back then, that was the old astrology. Then it was in, what?—1988 or 1991? that Lilly's book came out for the first time, opening up a whole vista of things, followed by Project Hindsight. So, what used to be old suddenly wasn't old anymore. We had new access to our history and tradition. New vistas opened up and established astrology as a field more separate from psychology. Today I like my astrology to be practical and, hopefully, a tool to help people who come to me for a consultation. I have a lot of people from all walks of life. Especially because I did all these TV shows for a long period of time.

KH: You were the best-known astrologer in Denmark.

CB: Yes, it was horrible. I'd get stopped on the street. I felt like Michael Jackson or something. (laughs)

KH: You were a celebrity!

CB: Sort of, but now it has quieted down. I had to escape to Serbia! (laughs) But for a while that show made people interested in astrology in a big way. It was a very good set-up. It was like a game show. Ultimately we had to try and guess the name of a famous secret guest. But to get an idea about who the person was, we first had to guess certain personality traits for that person: what kind of

newspaper does he read? Does he like rock music or classical music? What kind of car does he drive. What kind of food does he eat? What turns him on? and stuff like that. Profiling actually.

KH: Did you see a chart? Was it just you or other people as well?

CB: Yeah, I got all the needed data and did a proper chart. On the team there was myself, a life style expert who knew about profiling people, and a psychologist. We each had our take on things, we had to agree, and we were "fighting" another team who was trying to guess it, too—

another astrologer, another life style expert and another psychologist. Adrian Duncan was on the other team for a while, and we had a palm reader who got a print of the hand. Then, at the very end of the show, we had to figure out who it might be of some celebrity in Denmark. It's an ideal setup for astrology to guess such things: What kind of newspaper does he read? Does he like to be outdoors? Does he spend his time in bars? Is he a sports person? or whatever. So all this gave us the clues about the person's identity.

KH: Did they actually ask you those questions?

CB: Yes, and you'd get points and win if you get it right. So it made people say, "Well, astrology can really do something."



KH: You had a pretty good success rate?

CB: Yeah, and it was fun. People would say, that is weird, how does he know? And then you'd get a question like, What happened in 1980 in this man's life? The secret persons who were being read were shown in the corner of the screen, so the viewers could see their reaction but we couldn't. Sometimes the secret person would feel very touched and even cry sometimes, because you might have to talk about events that were quite sensitive—with tact and respect, of course. That's one of the great gifts that astrology can give to a client: being recognized and seen for who you really are.

KH: Did you have your computer so you could do progressions and such?

CB: Yes. I was asked before the show, so I didn't have the computer on the set with me. It was all surrounded by great secrecy. This was in 2000 to 2004. We did 60 shows. They are still being rerun. People really like them. I've been in television before, but it's all been bullshit, to tell you the truth, like: Who do you think is going to win the election? Which team is going to win the football match? or whatever. I always had a problem with that. But this show was real astrology. You had a real chart, with a real birth time, and you had relevant questions that actually should be answerable with astrology. I and the life style expert were profiling, and the psychologist was participating with her or his input. So we had these internal heated discussions, on camera of course,

until we decided it's probably that politician, it's probably that actor, it has to be an actor, no it's not. We would sometimes disagree heartedly. So it was fun.

KH: You became really well-known from that. I remember hearing a story about you doing a charity event, doing readings in a train station.

CB: Yes, for the tsunami. We all went down to the main train station in Copenhagen for a day. They had turned it into a TV studio and broadcasted from there. The palm reader read palms and I read charts. There were long lines of people, and people paid a lot of money to move up in the line. The organizers were saying, "If you want to be sure you make it, you have to pay \$100 more," and so on, so we really collected a lot of money for the tsunami victims there. The "clients" only got about ten minutes. People didn't come necessarily to really know about themselves, but to give money. And to be seen on TV of course.

KH: Well, those days are over! You are living in obscurity in Serbia now. Are you involved in the astrology community there, which is very vibrant one!

CB: Very vibrant in Serbia. Yes. I've done lectures in Serbia and I'm good friends with Lea and Aleksander Imsiragic. They do the annual Astrology Conference in Belgrade every year. Aleksander and my fiancée Branka Stamenkovic did the first ones together in 2001 and 2002, so a lot of astrology friends from all over are coming to Belgrade every May. The problem is I don't speak the language yet, and I don't see clients there. There is a language barrier. And because I do astrology the way I do it, I need to know the fabric of the society that I'm working within.

KH: That is an important factor in psychological astrology.

CB: It is, and it's a very big deal for me at the moment. I've reached a point with my astrology, where I use my knowledge and experience of life and people more and more. To be able to do that, I need to know the culture inside out. I haven't had that many clients in the States, maybe 50 or 60, but it made me very aware of the importance the differences between the cultures has. You can always read a chart, but you can only make it magical if you know the cultural rules. I believe astrologers need to train their skills in what the psychologists call "cold reading," that is, to read the body language, build, demeanor, dress code, speech, handwriting and so on. All this information is a gift to a practicing astrologer and, when combined with the natal chart, it hones your intuition and makes it sharp and to the point. People give out millions of small subliminal signals, and they can all be interpreted. On a provocative note: Everything can be interpreted! You just need to know your astrological correspondences.

I probably got inspired by the life style expert from the TV show, who would do precise psychological profiles based on the content of the secret guest's fridge. For fun and personal amusement, I sometimes do psychological profiling using women's handbags (laughs). Everything we touch will contain a part of our inner reality. That's why we have a house in the chart, that belongs to "the others," the 7th house. So to me, everything is a sign, everything is a symbol. There is astrology behind everything: therefore, everything can be interpreted!

KH: I can understand that. I was thinking one of the talks here this week about the technology we have to do remote work. I often do charts by phone, yet miss out on the body language. The way people look tells you so much about what could be real in their lives.

CB: That is what I learned from that TV show. I would do the chart and say this person probably does this and he probably likes that, or whatever, just blind interpretation. The life style expert would get things that were taken out of the person's fridge—what they eat and what that means psychologically, whether they drink milk or white wine. This life style expert, just like an astrologer, could easily have talk for half an hour about the difference between white wine and red wine, what kind of people drink each one, because he knows the different kinds of segmentation from the advertising business. If he drives a Citroen, then he's that kind of person, because 83% of all Citroen drivers earn that much money a year and are usually belong to this or that demographic, and so on. So it's all this belonging to a certain social fabric kind of thing. I incorporated the same idea in my consultations, because that guy was impressive! He hated astrology from the beginning, but as time went by, he realized its usefulness.

KH: Another kind of profiling. What did the psychologist bring to the table there?

CB: Also the profiling part of it. There were different setups and sometimes the psychologist would be someone who knew a lot of well-known people from being part of the circuit of VIPs. So in the end, she would say, well it can't be that guy because he doesn't have a poodle. So it's got to be this one, he might have a German sheep dog. We were combining our knowledge in weird ways. It was fun.

But it made me use cold reading even more, meaning looking at people, using whatever it is you see. Knowing a bit about palmistry, too, is a great help. Seeing people's hands: even if the chart looks intelligent, if the person had a square hand, this person is probably a practical kind of intellectual or has a hobby in the intellectual field but works in practical things. Some people would call it cheating. I call it being smart.

KH: I would think that being a Virgo, you would use more of those physical clues. Virgo is so responsive, picking up subtle

clues about a person. Virgo is a very physical sign, so tuned in to the body. So you had the medical part and now this other.

CB: Yes, as I told you, I keep seeing organs! I'm trying to see the soul, instead of always seeing the organs (laughs).

KH: It's a kind of intelligence. As an astrologer, I often get asked, "Are you psychic?" Do you get asked that?

CB: Yes, sometimes I do get asked that, and I would always say no- except in a way I think, of course, we all are. We all use it all the time. So much of being a human being is intuition. Most of the time, logic is just used to justify the feelings or intuition we had in the first place. We like to think we are in control and make our decisions based on logic, but mostly we don't. People spent two weeks researching which car to buy, but decide whom to marry in a split second. The car will last you a couple of years, the spouse hopefully a lifetime. So much for logic.

KH: It also depends on how you interpret "psychic." If we are talking about "of the psyche," then it's certainly true. I think studying astrology does enhance our intuitive intelligence.

CB: Sometimes I have this picture that intuition is like a big cloud. There is something there and you can feel what it is, sort of. But then you take out the chart, you look at it and you can cut away most of the cloud and be left with what is actually there. Astrology is like a filter for the intuition. It sort of distills the essence of the intuition. It makes you certain.

KH: It's part of experience, too. Astrology is certainly not just an intellectual exercise. People talk about experiential astrology and think of astro-drama or guided meditations, but you are talking about another kind of experiential astrology that is very grounded in the moment, in the experience and the whole gestalt of the situation and the person.

CB: Not to be flippant about it, but even though you are an astrologer, you might as well be smart. Use whatever is there consciously, because you do it unconsciously anyway! For instance, my consultation table is a glass plate, so that I can see what the client's feet are doing all during the consultation. It's there. You need the feet to give you clues, so that you know: "Now I am getting closer to the core issue here." You can see the leg going faster and faster, and then you can slowly talk your way into the core of the issue, guided by the feet (laughs).

You also realize that when we translate the astrological language into words, there are so many ways to do it. Any

translation will always be just an error-prone copy of the original. Sometimes you just hit the right word by chance, maybe, or by intuition, or I don't know what, but you hit it right on the spot. Some picture you use, might cause someone to say, "This is exactly what my father always said to me," "That was what my uncle always said," "That is what my partner is always complaining about." Finding the best translation is so important.

KH: It is a language and when we are in the flow of translation...

CB: ...sometimes wonderful magical things will happen and that's the great thing about astrology, that it is so simple and yet so deep. There are many ways of explaining Venus. Learning never stops. It's really a joy when that magic happens.

KH: You don't get bored doing astrology, do you?

CB: No.

KH: And if you do, you better learn another technique or go off and write some poetry!

CB: Or—another thing that is very important, and it's probably not kosher that I am saying this, is: start writing Sun signs. I write Sun signs in the national newspaper every day and I have done for fifteen or sixteen years.

KH: That's rigorous.

CB: That is a lot of work, and I really write them properly. I write them every week. Two sentences per sign per day.

KH: That's awfully short. You've got to really zoom in.

CB: It's like writing a koan or a haiku. It's like a small poem to me somehow.

KH: I call it fortune cookie astrology.

CB: It is, absolutely.

KH: Do you have a formula? Do you think about the rising sign, and where the Jupiter transit is and where the Mercury retrograde is, those kinds of things?

CB: Yeah, yeah. Writing Sun signs is just a special branch of astrology, but it's very much astrology with a method. And that is exactly why it is important that astrologers should be writing them rather than the 18 year old newspaper intern. The main thing that Sun signs has taught me is finding new ways of expressing the same astrological principles. Otherwise, it would be the same sentences repeatedly. Writing

Sun signs forces you to think outside the box all the time. And one has to remember, that people often don't read their own Sun sign, but the Sun signs of their kids, their partner or their co-workers. I think you have to put that into the text, as a basis for a good discussion. "Oh, now I know why you are so stingy today!" This is how people use them. I like the Sun signs to be used as a basis or an instigator of interaction between people.

Some of my students have started writing Sun signs. I tell them that you will find it very easy to do it in the beginning, but after a couple of months, you are going to run out of words. You're going to hit the wall and start repeating yourself and to sound like an astrology cookbook. It's like running a marathon, because you've got to find new layers of interpretation. You've got to find your own personal style. Finding words to express the same thing in many different ways, to hone it. Basically, writing Sun signs is boring and a one way street, so you have to invent a competition with yourself.

KH: It's a grind. You've got to keep it up. You don't get much of a vacation there. You must write ahead.

CB: Yes, and it never stops. Planets keep moving and you've got to translate it to human-speak. But I actually think, looking back, that this has been very important for variation. You know instantly, when you read Sun sign columns, whether they are written by an astrologer. That is why I was hired by the newspaper in the first place. Due to the I.C. Institute, the astrological education level was getting so high within society, that people would phone the newspaper saying, "What are these bullshit Sun signs you have today? We have a Sun square Mars. That's not quiet, that's not good for meditation. What are you doing? Who the hell is your astrologer?"

KH: That's great—an informed astrology public.

CB: So they actually said, "OK, we've got to pay someone proper to do it and stop the people from complaining."

KH: When I first moved to the Virgin Islands, I wanted to advertise a class I was giving. So I sent the ad to the newspaper with a check, and they sent it back. They said they don't take astrology ads. I said, "What do you mean? You have an astrology column." And they replied, "Well, that's entertainment. We have to have that." It felt like a double standard.

CB: Most newspapers or magazines would rather not have astrology. Some even have very strict policies only accepting skeptical views on the subject. The problem for the media is, that sun signs is the most-read column, next to

the weather. Weather and astrology are always fighting for first place.

KH: That's appropriate, as astrology is cosmic weather. You do other writing as well, articles and books?

CB: I was in a couple of American anthologies, edited by Noel Tyl, but otherwise I have not published much in English. For years my website has been Danish only. Some day... In my whole career, I have written at least one article a month, in my native language. I was the editor of the monthly "Stjernerne" for ten years and have, more or less, worked for all the magazines in Denmark at some point in my career.

KH: So what haven't I asked you that I should ask you?

CB: I don't know, we've covered a lot of ground, haven't we? Well this had made me think of the fact that I am a Dane. Denmark, astrology-wise, has always been a weird and wonderful place. Here in England, not that much any more, but ten, fifteen or twenty years ago, there was a great divide between horary, traditional and psychological astrology, and never shall the twain meet.

KH: I've heard echoes of that here this weekend.

CB: Yes, but then you have people like me who do psychological consultations and also do horary and event charts, even event charts for the consultation, with no fear of the responsibility of prediction—within the limits set by the chart, of course. Adrian Duncan, who works and lives in Denmark, same thing! He is a psychological astrologer but he uses the consultation chart a lot. So we don't have this divide at all. Danish astrology is very practical. Anything that works well is considered good astrology.

We take things in and apply them. That's a special, I think, for Danish astrology. The Hindu astrologers do their Hindu thing, they do the ayanamsha, which is another chart, but the same system. What counts in the end result: enhancing the life quality of the client.

That's what totally shocked Branka, too. She's a traditionalist and though I'm a psychological astrologer, I do horary—but in a different way than she does. She even doesn't use Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. The first year we were together, she would always test me. She would give me a horary and say, "What do you think of this?" I would say, "blah, blah, blah, blah, blah" about the chart, and she would answer, "That's what I was going to say!" So we ended up agreeing, despite using different methods. This is, I think, one of the big mysteries in astrology, that you can use whatever you want. You can take out all the planets and put in asteroids instead, or the moons of Jupiter, or Kuiper Belt Objects and TransNeptunian

planets, or whatever. If you work with it long enough, you are going to make it work.

KH: Uranian planets are still elusive to me.

CB: Very much so, but after all they are not actually there! They are really far out. (laughs)

KH: How far out do you go?

CB: I'm always saying that I don't think astrology works but astrology can make astrologers work. I think that's the distinction. That means the method you use is maybe not that important. This is the very typical, open, tolerant, Danish all encompassing way. Sorry (laughs).

KH: This brings to mind the divinatory tradition, using astrology as a tool to divine, to divine the condition or the situation or....

CB: The framework....

KH: ...the framework, yes, of life experience.

CB: That is what astrology is to me. It is like a coordinate system, in a way, where you can orient whatever is going on and realize on what level things are happening. That's my main thing. I actually think that's how it is.

As you say, I've traveled a lot. In the 1990s, I went to Russia about thirteen times. Because astrology was underground in Russia from 1928 to 1990, it developed in weird ways. I've listened to lectures about fixed stars being progressed. So instead of one day for a year, you had one life-year for a person progressed for ten thousand years. They talked about how the constellations change and how the fixed stars move between themselves, that kind of thing. Weirdest stuff you've ever heard, a very symbolic direction indeed. I wonder what Charles E.O. Carter would have said to that! (laughs) But those people could get it to work.

KH: It sure opens our minds. It's fascinating to hear how people think about it, for instance, in your own background, with all the multiple disciplines you bring to your practice.

CB: In a way we're always doing ourselves. There are things I just can't do because I am me. So I have to let other people do it, in peace, being tolerant enough to say, "Well, this isn't my thing, but it's great and it's interesting what you do. I understand it with my brain, but I could never use it"—instead of fighting between different fragments of this and that. If astrology is a big carpet of different things, we each maybe only get one small part of the pattern and we can make that part work. But seeing the whole pattern, I think nobody can. It really is a macrocosmic/microcosmic thing.

KH: It's like you are a Virgo Sun sign. You are not a Sagittarian or Gemini. You can have those signs represented, and we all have all of the signs in our basic natures, but you are oriented as a Sun sign Virgo. That doesn't make a Gemini bad or wrong.

CB: True. Everybody is put together differently, but we all contain the same building blocks. Having a particular birth chart makes it more difficult to understand something alien to that chart. We can only be what we are. And a very big secret is, that astrologers have charts too (laughs).

KH: That's what I've always liked about astrology. It has not only helped me understand myself better, but understand the differences between people, that we aren't all hard-wired to understand each other automatically.

CB: The best thing we can say about astrology is that it gives another dimension to life. That 3-D dimension, that last dimension is the dimension that the skeptics and scientists don't like, because it's scary to go there. You give a person one drop of LSD and that person's perspective of the world changes totally. All it takes is milligrams of chemistry. That's how frail the ego is. Irrational worlds exist inside us all. That's scary for most people. Especially to charts/people who want to be in control. (laughs)

KH: Sometimes doing a person's astrology chart is like giving them LSD, in the sense that they may go through a life-altering experience.

CB: And suddenly they see connections between things that weren't connected before, and they see the pattern. It takes long, post-consultation processing.

KH: That's certainly part of psychological astrology. Astrology as a mind-altering, a consciousness-altering... well, we won't call it a drug.

CB: Why not? What is a drug?

KH: Well, you sure can get high from it!

CB: Sometimes when I think about us living in the western world, I think most people don't have real friends. That's what I learned from moving to Serbia, where everybody is very tight-knit. You have people who will help you. You have people in whom you confide and people who follow your life as life witnesses to your own life, from the moment you are born until the moment you leave. Most Westerners, we don't have friends that close. There are a lot of things we can't talk to people about. Privacy is a big thing. Then society takes over, for instance, we put old people in homes when they become a burden and start to interfere with our work schedule. We just don't have time to be there as a

friend for other people anymore. And this where the astrologer comes in—as somebody to whom you can express anything, no matter how horrible, wonderful, scary, transgressing, criminal or whatever it is. You have someone to whom to confide your darkest thoughts, your darkest memories, your most vulnerable sides, knowing your secrets are safe. There is somebody who will listen and be there and be on your side, no matter how stupidly you behave or whatever,

I realized that by having a client years ago. I can't remember the exact aspects, something like Mars in the 12th house being activated by a progressed MH, with a square. I said something like, "At that time of your life you were nine years old. Something very serious happened in your life dealing with aggression and suddenly exploding and letting your aggressions out."

The client started crying and said, "I killed one of my school mates." I asked how, and we started talking about the thing and she said, "I have never spoken to anybody about this before. This is the biggest secret in my life. Not a day or an hour passes that I don't think about it."

I asked, "How did it happen?" She said, "I was always mobbed in school, they were all after me. After many months of being teased and having my school books stolen and everything, one day they were all joining hands and dancing around me, singing a taunting song. I got so mad. I got so mad, I slashed out and hit one of them on the side of her face. I just let all my aggressions go"—a great description when Mars in the 12th house suddenly gets activated. "And then?" I asked.

"One month later that girl got a brain tumor and died. I killed her."

Just explaining to that client about the 12th house, with its sacrificing bit, the feeling of being a victim and being at fault, being the person who has the responsibility, just totally lifted this weight. I said, "Just look at this logically. There is no connection between the slap and that she died of a brain tumor one month later." The woman had never thought about this way. It was hidden for so many years, it grew like an infection, like a tumor inside her, something that she just couldn't get rid of. Just because she never let her vocal cords express the event in words. Doing that made the mind-body connection happen, and she was freed.

KH: That's so powerful. Like those priests that were such influences in your own life, there's a kind of priestly role, as a confessor.

CB: Yes, in the Catholic sense. We're so called atheistic Protestant in Denmark, but my first two years of school were in a Catholic school. The problem with finding explanations all started when I was thirteen years old. It was a true crisis of faith I went into, when I started looking in all these different places for answers. And I'm still looking. (laughs) Christianity

or being a Christian, despite my name, never really came back to me. There is so much that needs to be explained. That is why astrology is great. It's a fixed framework with enough slack to explain the human condition. Astrology is great. Yeah. That's a good topic.

KH: Astrology IS great!

[Note: When Christian edited this piece, he put in a lot more (laughs). I want you to know: I laughed a lot, too.]



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