

ETHICS IN ACTION: Rectification

Ethics underlies the counselling role. In every interaction with a client ethical issues arise and these are usually professionally dealt with. However when our beliefs and personal opinions enter the mix we may unwittingly err on the side of our bias. I was reminded of this lately.

When a new client rang for a consultation and I was making the appointment he told me that his time of birth was 12.27 pm. As I always do, especially with such an accurate birth time for someone born in the 1950's, I queried if this was a hospital time or from some other source. The client then informed me that it was a rectified time of birth. He had consulted an astrologer some time ago and as he did not know his time of birth the astrologer suggested rectification.

I asked the client if he knew where he was born. He answered yes and named the hospital he was born at. As I know that the hospital in question still has birth records dating back to at least the 1940's¹ I asked if he had contacted the hospital to see if his birth records, and therefore the birth time, were available. "No", he answered "I have not". His tone of voice had changed. It had not occurred to him and the previous astrologer had not suggested this.

When I encouraged him to seek verification of his birth records before finalising the appointment, the client understandably became angry that he had not been previously alerted to the possibility of his birth time being available. He was not happy that he would be able to obtain his birth time for a small fee when he had already paid a considerable amount to have his chart rectified. Even less happy, that there may be a discrepancy between the two birth times, and therefore horoscopes.

This morning I had a call from the client to schedule his appointment, having now obtained the hospital records. The recorded time of birth is 8.15 pm, almost eight hours different from the rectified time. The client is angry and rightfully so. And this anger is being directed at the profession of astrology rather than the person responsible for such a breach of ethical behaviour.

Rectification may be a helpful process if a client's time of birth truly cannot be known. However our first responsibility is to ensure that the client is aware that a time of birth may be recorded and inform the client of how he or she may be able to ascertain if it is available. Only at the end of such a journey, leaving no stone unturned, would it be ethical to suggest rectification.

Personally I believe that an unknown time belongs to the person's story and I would far prefer to work with an unknown time of birth than a time that could be wrong. My beliefs do not support the mechanics of rectification, as I ultimately believe the psyche governs time and its manifestation. To try to define a moment of birth is fraught with subjectivity and therefore the rigidity of one's worldview. In my 25+ years of astrological enquiry sophisticated rectification systems have been devised but none as far as I know have been accurate enough when tested against known birth times. Yes we may have a 'chart that works' but it also is a chart that may be completely wrong! Charts with an unknown time of birth may be just as profound and revealing. Ultimately whether we rectify or not when there is an unknown birth time is a question of our beliefs about how astrology works. However ethically as astrological counsellors we must inform clients who have no birth time about all their options. This means being informed about birth records.

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¹ In Melbourne public hospitals like The Royal Women's, Queen Victoria, St. Vincent's and St George's generally have hospital records that date back to the 1950's.