Opening Statements

Astrology is a complex subject which is rapidly gaining in recognition and popularity. This growth begs for a more formal definition of what it is, and what it is not. Astrology is not easy to define because it is part craft, part art, part science and part written and oral tradition. Astrology embraces branches which view what it is and how it is to be practiced in quite different ways.

This begging need for definition also asks who has the right to use the title "Astrologer," and what should the minimum expected level of ethics be for astrological activities. Assumptions about astrology are currently being made without regard for its traditional definitions and practices. This is leading to a dilution of traditional ideas and standards and brings serious implications.

I think of astrology as having three quite different parts. These are a:
- language
- set of tools
- facility for determining human strengths and weaknesses.

There are two quite different ways to define astrology: through function (technique) or through practice (application). Function, or technique, implies that the definition centers on how the various astrological tools are used. Examples of definition of astrology by function include such schools of thought as: Cosmobiology, Hindu, Uranian, Tropical Placidian, Medieval, the use of Sabian Symbols, etc. Practice, or application, implies that the definition embody the various applications used. Examples of definition of astrology by practice include such schools of thought as: Humanistic, Esoteric, Psychological, Compatibility, Mundane, Horary, Shamanistic, Religious (e.g., The X Temple of Astrology), Art Forms (e.g., Astro-Drama), etc. It is important to note these distinctions when discussing how astrology is to be defined.

The advantage to definition through function is that various schools of thought and practice remain independent from the definition. The disadvantage is that practitioners may find themselves working in more than one area and thus the minimum standards required to practice are more complex. The advantage of defining it through practice is that practitioners can easily switch among various functions or techniques. The disadvantage is that different schools of application could become a part of the definition. This could imply that the people who tout this practice then become part of the definition.
The fields of engineering and medicine are also complex. Engineering divides along lines of practice such as mechanical engineering, civil engineering, computer science, electronic design, etc. The only relationship among some of these fields is their commonality with the ideas of design and production. Each of these fields has their own professional organizations, accrediting practices, newsletters, etc. They also have colleges (e.g., the school of electrical engineering) devoted to educating students in their practices. The field of medicine divides into obstetrics, internal medicine, ophthalmology, urology, radiology, etc. Their commonalty is a dedication to healing. In daily practice we recognize that if you need eye care, you do not go to a radiologist or a urologist. If we want a bridge or a building built we do not go to a computer design engineer. Yet, there are civil engineers who use computers. They just don't advertise themselves as being experts in computers. Both the fields of medicine and engineering have done good jobs of educating the public about their various branches. There is an important lesson to be learned from this.

In medicine a student takes four college years of general medical courses, four years of medical school courses, and then specializes and practices in a field for a number of years before being certified for public practice. There is both a state and a national certification process. In engineering a student takes specific courses in college but is qualified to practice in a field as soon as he or she passes an accrediting exam (e.g., obtains a civil engineer's license). Licensing is also a requirement in the field of medicine, and a doctor is licensed for his or her particular field of interest. In both fields professional organizations are strong and encourage active membership for on-going educational practices.

Using these fields as an example it makes sense to divide astrology in a similar manner, that is along the lines of practice. The ideas which unite the astrological fields include the use of solar system planets, zodiacal signs, aspects (or harmonics), the personal sensitive points, houses, fixed stars, other solar system bodies, and long precessional cycles as basic tools. Astrological practices include psychological, predictive, business, synastry, esoteric, etc., divisions of fields. Within psychological there are branches for counseling, astro-drama, mythology, etc. Within predictive there are branches for horary, electional, the use of oracles along with or as a horoscope, progression, etc. Business ideas include both mundane and business applications. Synastry includes both counseling for interpersonal relationships and counseling for company / employee interactions, etc. Esoteric includes practices of astrology associated with religion, ritual, soul development, stone circles, reincarnation, natural settings, rhythmic movement, etc. Such diverse parts to astrology are currently causing confusion among the public as to what astrology is as a practice, and who has the right to call themselves or to practice as an astrologer.

Specifically omitted from these particular fields are practices which cause qualms among some astrologers. These include the use of tarot cards (or a
similar oracle) as a reading vehicle as opposed to a astrological tools while still retaining the title "astrologer"; the primary use of intuition as a vehicle for interpretation of a horoscope or oracle -- as opposed to studied practice; and the mixing of techniques from various oracular practices along with astrological symbols. Few, if any, standards exist today within the professional practice of astrology to differentiate among practitioners who place large signs depicting red-painted hands with symbols of Jupiter or the Moon imprinted thereon; or with practitioners who take the time to gain experience and accreditation in using more traditional methods.

If professionals in the field of astrology are to follow the successful public educational practices used by medicine or engineering then these people should start to identify themselves not as "astrologers," but as "Natal Astrologers," "Electional Astrologers," "Business Astrologers," etc.

I am deliberately NOT addressing the issue of accreditation. Accreditation is a totally separate issue from the definition of astrology. There can be no movement toward public recognition of the practice of astrology without an adequate definition of what astrology is and what astrology is not. There can be no movement toward an adequate scientific test of astrology without a definition of what astrology is and what astrology is not. Accreditation involves the examination and licensing of people to ensure that they meet certain levels of education and competence in their chosen field of practice. Definition of these fields allows any person to identify with the techniques and specific practices in which they choose to develop competency. This paper is about definition.

The implications of what is being presented here are quite large. Should it be decided or shown that astrology is a language or a set of tools, then efforts toward the "scientific proof" of astrology make little sense. No one is trying to scientifically prove that German or French, or a hammer and wrench, are scientifically valid. Requests for a "proof" of astrology are often mixed with trying to determine how astrology works. Scientists do not test the validity of German or French. Rather they use German or French in situations to determine various aspects of our physical nature. In a similar way, asking if right or left handedness, or one's hair color, is provable through astrology may be the wrong type of question to ask. Rather one should ask questions like "How does a skilled Horary Astrologer use his or her tools to arrive at answers?" "Are the answers so derived correct?" What is meant by the word "correct"? "Are such practices reproducible in other contexts?"

Suggested Definitions

**Astrology** is a practice designed to help people understand themselves, their current life situations, and their strengths and weaknesses. Astrology uses
certain tools which are called the: solar system planets, zodiacal signs, aspects (or harmonics), the personal sensitive points, houses, fixed stars, other solar system bodies, planetary nodes, and long precessional cycles.

**An astrologer** is a person who has studied the tools of astrology; knows and understands their definitions, applications and limitations; and can interpret a chart using them to answer questions or provide insight.

**A chart** is a traditional, symbolic and stylized diagram which uses at least three of the astrological tools depicted in a recognized manner. A natal chart depicts a birth, a horary chart a horary question, etc.

**A horoscope** is one of the tools that astrologers use, sometimes called the rising sign. The map or chart, often miscalled a horoscope, is just that: a map or chart of the various astrological tools drawn in a traditional way.

Astrology can be divided into fields of practice, such as

**Psychological Astrology**

The use of astrological knowledge and tools to counsel people to help them understand themselves, their role in life, their strengths, weaknesses, etc.

**Synastry**

The use of astrological knowledge and tools to counsel people in interpersonal situations.

**Business Astrology**

The use of astrological knowledge and tools to counsel people in business, mundane, political, event, or historical situations. This includes the study and interpretation all forms of market cycles.

**Predictive Astrology**

The use of astrological knowledge and tools to answer people's questions about future, present, or past trends, select times for propitious astrological influences, etc. This includes horary and electional methods.

**Esoteric Astrology**

The use of astrologically based knowledge to help others identify with their culture, background, self, soul, etc. The use of and mixing in of various oracles along with the basic astrological tools may be acceptable.
Medical Astrology
The use of astrological knowledge and tools to counsel people concerning their medical situation.

Rectification Astrology
The use of astrological knowledge and tools to determine the time of a birth or the time of an event.
Cycle Astrology
The use of astrological knowledge and tools to forecast weather, sun spots, natural cycles in populations, etc.

Others
(These require further development and definition)

Conclusions - It is Time ...

It is time to seriously address what astrology is and what astrology is not. If astrologers choose to follow the lead of the fields of engineering and medicine then it is time to start defining our various fields of practice, as well as the minimum educational levels acceptable within each field. It is time to start organizing astrology along these fields of practice. It is time to start educating ourselves and the general public about the differences among these various fields. It is time to start organizational groups within these fields. It is also time for the teachers and leaders in astrology to identify themselves and their students as "Medical Astrologers," or "Natal Astrologers," etc. The word "astrologer" has simply become too general to use as a one word definition.

What I have intended here is to open a community-wide discussion about the definition and role of astrology. Because we lack such a definition, along with its acceptance, we open ourselves to criticism from many different angles. A definition of what astrology is and what astrology is not is becoming increasingly necessary. Once such a definition is decided then it needs to be adopted by all astrological practitioners. This could take a long time, perhaps twenty or fifty or more years. I hope that my preliminary thinking can help bring some order to a very complex subject.