

The Cult of the Individual: An Analysis of the Popularity of Astrology and Myers-Briggs Type
Indicator

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Abstract

In the modern individualist society, astrology and the Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI) are popular on the media and present a unique pattern of noninstitutional practices. However, there is few research stressing their sociological significance. This thesis argues that the popularity of astrology and MBTI are closely connected to the modern individualism. As a case study, the research focuses on online communities and adopts the Durkheimian theoretical approaches of religion, analyzing, interpreting, and comparing the two cultural products in theory, practice, and application. For both astrology and MBTI, enthusiasts embrace a set of theories promoting the independent self, utilize certain types of learning methods, and hold a pragmatic view about the applications in elucidating the self and providing guidance. In the time of scientific dominance, astrology and MBTI feature knowledge and inquisitiveness, the important characteristics of science, whereas they continue to take the different religious forms. Astrology is an individualistic religion that recognizes a mysterious external principle, while MBTI employs a totemic system that identifies people and suggests their actions. The coexistence of the two distinct religious form in terms of individualism in modern society needs to be further investigated in the future.

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Dramatic changes in information transmission were a crucial factor of modernity and significantly influence societal changes and popular culture. From the rise of printing press to the development of internet, each individual in modern society is connected in a unprecedented scope. The media culture has established an intensive tie with the public, strongly influencing people's life and values and simultaneously reflecting our ideas, preference, and needs.

Astrology and Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI) are two cultural objects popular on the Internet. We may find someone using them in self-introduction or as a label on social media. They have a potential implication with the contemporary individualism. In the paper, I aim at exploring "the self" as a theme in the cultural products and develop a deeper understanding of their mechanisms and relationships by analyzing and comparing online communities. Astrology and MBTI serve the same purpose of handling a unique concern in the era. Their popularity are closely related to the self in modern society.

On the surface astrology and MBTI seem to come from different domains, except for both being popular in the media culture. Astrology is historically an esoteric practice across regions and cultures and a surviving tradition in the time capitalist and consumeristic time. In the United States, 43.4% of the General Social Survey participants have ever read horoscopes in 2018 (Davern et al. 2021). MBTI is a psychological model of personality, although much of its influence in mass media does not come from the scientific community. Outside the field of psychology or academics, other psychometric instruments are rarely favored by people to a similar degree. However, the more important similarity between them is their free, noninstitutional, and individual practices. There is no central authority or strict hierarchy

organizing the enthusiasts. The affiliation of any organization does not determine whether someone is an adherent or not.

The enthusiasts sometimes perceive the similarities between the two, but social science researchers haven't noticed the potential connection. Astrology and MBTI have received little attentions from sociologists. This paper emphasizes the values of researching the two cultural products and potentially other phenomena on the media that are neglected by researchers and scholars.

Literature Review

Few literatures have spotlighted sociological significance of astrology and MBTI. For MBTI, most academic research focuses on its evaluation and application as a personality model in psychology. For astrology, scholars often investigate its history and relation to science, except for Adorno's study (1957) on the Los Angeles Times astrology columns, Evens's critique (1996) on astrology advice for women from different social class, and Fehérváry's analysis (2007) on the role of horoscopes in Hungarian post-socialist transition. There is no known study that compares astrology and MBTI. Still, inquiry into existing theories can give insights into their natures and functions. For the analysis, a good theoretical approach should adequately explain the two phenomena, interpret their differences and similarities, and, especially, feature the unique characteristic that they attract enthusiasts in a noninstitutionalized way. Also, the theoretical framework better fulfills the need of comparison, accommodating both phenomena and demonstrating the possible relationship.

In the Marxist theory, interaction between base and the superstructure is a focal idea. Because of alienation in real life struggles, astrology and MBTI reflect a notion of alienation in ideologies. Astrology conveys a religious alienation, in which "the spontaneous activity of the

human imagination” works on the self as an alien force (Marx 1932/1964). One's actions and wills are perceived as the result of planets' compositions or an external transcendent work. MBTI reinforces the alienation in capitalist economic production. It creates a false sense of self-realization, given that Marxist self-realization appreciates an “expressive power” of people (Schacht 1991). While MBTI illustrates one’s character, the expression of personality is bounded by 16 categories. In career counseling, the inventory matches one's personality with their competent occupation, arguing a goal of meritocracy, but the relation of production can shape behavior pattern and self-expression. The superficial view of personality and job conceals the deeper inequality issues and supports the operation of a capitalist system. The Marxist perspective is helpful for understanding the similarity and the difference between astrology and MBTI. Nevertheless, it is inadequate to interpret the uniqueness of astrology as an individualistic spiritual practice distinguished from traditional organized religion.

Foucault’s study of knowledge introduces the concept of “technologies of the self,” the practices that allow people to “exert power to control themselves” (Hernandez-Ramirez 2017), by completing a self-transformation “in order to attain a certain state of” refinement (Foucault 1988). Since self-knowledge has been a long-term tradition in western societies, the technologies of the self have been evolving over times, from “caring of the self” in Greco-Roman era to obedience and submission in early Christianity (Foucault 1988). In the modern era, as the powerful institution emerged and the individual become an object of knowledge (Foucault 1982), technology of the self would correspondingly involve institutional knowledge. From Foucauldian theory, both astrology and MBTI can be considered as technologies of the self, which people apply to themselves and acquire a new way to understand themselves. Astrology reveals one’s fortune, personality, and worldview and the MBTI test result informs one’s personality with

implication of behavioral models and career suggestions. However, only MBTI fits the description of modern technologies of the self. In spite of being somewhat controversial, the indicator exists within the institutional knowledge of psychology, whereas astrology is entirely outside the domination of science. Why both are popular in modern society? The Foucauldian perspective recognizes their common function but fails to explain their differences. The emphasis of institutional dominance is also not helpful for the goal of researching the noninstitutional aspect.

Max Weber suggested a process of rationalization from ancient to modern society, intellectualization and disenchantment, a trend towards increasing calculability (Weber 1919/1946). A part of which is the theoretical rationalization that highlights a change in “increasingly precise abstract concepts” and “the formation of symbolic meaning,” a separation between values, traditionally in the religious authority, and mainstream principles, now in the scientific system (Kalberg 1980). As science won its status, values would be transferred from public to private domain, either “mystic life” or “personal relations” (Weber 1919/1946). The perspective potentially places astrology and MBTI in an evolutionary framework. Completing a personality test is indisputably more analytical than reading planets. Thus, to some extent, astrology can be understood as a precedent of MBTI in rationalization. Moreover, the Weberian perspective possibly can explain their popularity as a personal practice outside formal institutions: The phenomena might entail values. Since values no longer belong to the public context, people choose to use them in more “mystic” or “personal” contexts.

The Weberian perspective is advantageous in explaining the unique characteristics of astrology and MBTI and giving a framework that connects the two. On the other hand, the theoretical approach has main drawbacks, the complexity of “identifying symbolic” and

“unexpected effect” (Boudon 2001). First, the boundary between symbolic and non-symbolic meaning is obscure (Boudon 2001). In another word, it is difficult to determine whether astrology and MBTI embrace the comparable values addressed by the traditional societies and in what ways the scientific MBTI can play the non-scientific function. Second, the Weberian model considers the expected incidents, such as the gathering of products from different times (Boudon 2001). The complexity of the model obstructs the analysis. With uncertainty and possibilities, the relation between astrology and MBTI could be intricate or even untenable.

In comparison, the Durkheimian model sets a relatively flexible boundary between science and religion: “Scientific thought is only a more perfect form of religious thought” (Durkheim 1912/2012). Society is the essence of religion, and in the scientific era, religion would transform to justify itself in science (Durkheim 1912/2012). In the less complicated model, despite one being spiritual while the other being scientific, astrology and MBTI are able to be compared on a common ground.

Similar to Weber, Durkheim also noticed an individualizing shift in morality or values. In Durkheim’s theory, religion is marked by a distinction of the sacred and the profane, a set of beliefs and rituals managing the sacred, and a moral collective united by the beliefs and rituals (Durkheim 1912/2012). The form of religion always matches the organization of society (Durkheim 1912/2012). Historically, individuals were organized by a mechanical solidarity, in which each one in the society was not significantly different from each other; In modern society, as the increasing division of labor and organic solidarity, the disperse of morality makes the individual as the only concept in collective conscience (Marske 1987). This results in individualism, a modern cult of the individual in the contemporary society (Marske 1987).

To interpret the function and mechanism of astrology and MBTI, this paper would adopt the Durkheimian perspective and also address the book *Habits of Heart* and Randall Collins' discussion of religion in the essay "The Sociology of God." Both publications further elaborate the development of culture and society in an individualistic time. In *Habits*, Bellah et al. (1985/2008) gives a complete analysis of American society that the individualism has intruded every corner of people's life. In reference to the cases in the book, the common role of astrology and MBTI is familiar: They relieve the problem of defining the self (Bellah et al. 1985/2008), connecting us while protecting our essence as an individual. Collins' writing indicates the mechanism of using astrology and MBTI in everyday life: They become the sacred symbol for distinct individuals in modern complex society and direct the inter-personal social rituals (Collins 1982).

Lastly, a problem for analysis is how to define astrology and MBTI, the two objects of study. From theoretical perspectives above, they are typically distributed into different categories. Durkheim and Weber may perceive them as religion and science, but both are not representative for each category. As noted, astrology is often practiced personally without a religious organization, while MBTI's significant popularity is mostly outside the academics. A better method is using the Foucauldian concept, defining them as "techniques," but the term overemphasizes their functions and neglects their multi-aspect nature. This paper refers them as "cultural products," specifying the complex qualities and dynamics, as well as the main point of the thesis: Though in different forms, both astrology and MBTI result from, embody, and function for the individualistic culture in modern society. They display the modern religion, "the cult of the individual."

Methodology

For in-depth understanding and comparing astrology and MBTI in modern society, I adopt the case study method and examine the online communities on Reddit. Three communities, or subreddits, r/astrology, r/astrologyreadings, and r/MBTI are selected. R/astrology and r/MBTI are the largest forums for their themes, and the relatively smaller subreddit r/astrologyreadings serves as a complement to the analysis of astrology due to r/astrology's theoretical focus and restriction on personal questions. At least eighty discussion posts and the following threads are read. Most of quoted posts in the paper are collected in January 2023.

As one of the most popular discussion websites, Reddit is open to the public and retains good anonymity for users. Without intervention and privacy concerns, the subreddits present the natural and everyday conversations of users sharing an interest in the cultural objects and allow the researcher to grasp the core features in the popularity of astrology and MBTI.

Also, the research has a potential limitation on generalizability. The widespread and anonymous attributes raise a challenge in accessing the demographic composition of the users. The moderators of each subreddits may affect neutrality and presentation of data.

Results and Discussion

Astrology

A Study Through the Lens of the Self

As the largest community about astrology on reddit, subreddit r/astrology promotes a strong learning atmosphere and defines astrology as “the study of the correlation between celestial movements and earthly events.” “Earthly events” may designate a board range, such as public affair, societal change, or spirit of an era, but personal problems have always been the major topic. Birth charts are probably the most popular and essential part of astrology for enthusiasts.

Constructed by one's date, time, and location of birth, a birth chart exhibits celestial bodies' positions in relation to zodiac, astrological signs, and a division of twelve houses. The most prominent characteristic of birth charts is individuality. Since it requires the precise birth time, it's typically rare for people to find someone whose birth chart is exactly the same as their own. A birth chart builds a complicated meaning system around the self. Each element on the charts, including celestial bodies, zodiac, signs, houses, and their arrangements, represents a piece of information. Assembled together, they reveal the substantive, everyday aspect of lives, such as financial fortune, romantic relationships, and expression of personality, as well as the relatively spiritual level which encompasses values, worldview, and fundamental perceptions of oneself and life purpose. For example, the following is an introduction of the north node sign in birth charts:

To know one's purpose requires analyzing the whole chart and experiencing life itself.

With that said, the north node does play a major role in one's purpose. The north node is the difficult but necessary change we must go through at a spiritual level. Embracing the north node qualities opens up possibilities that you would never have thought possible for yourself. It relates to the moon which is our emotional/soul nature.

The passage highlights the north node's metaphysical meaning for oneself. Astrological interpretations are often understood from the standpoint of the self. Even relationships with others would remain in the lens. As in a discussion about empty houses, a user explains that empty 5th house "means that children and raising kids is not important in their personal journey. They might have kids or not, but either way that experience is not particularly relevant to them."

Composite and synastry charts, two additional popular techniques to examine relationship

compatibility, are generated based on two personal charts, spotlight one-to-one relationships, and demonstrate an interplay of both perspectives.

The significance of the individual self in astrology easily echoes to a religious individualism. Through the time of birth and a complex system consisting of signs, the adherents possess a direct and personalized connection to the cosmos. While mystified, the selfhood is affirmed, justified, and transformed into an apprehensible object of study. Yet, despite these, astrology is not overly individualistic. There are sacred beliefs that the community recognized and accepted: the knowledge of interpretation. As readers may notice, when elucidating symbols and concepts, astrologers often utilize personal pronouns, such as “we,” “you,” “they,” interchangeably. Although astrology does not accept a particular authority that manifests the transcendence as in the conservative or fundamentalist religions, it does accept an external power that manages the physical, mundane, world (Bellah et al. 1985/2008): the validity of the correlation between the occurrences in space and on the earth. Between the two radical forms, astrology prevents the chaotic and confusing issues in radically individualistic religion (Bellah et al. 1985/2008) and creates a subject of study that guarantees and centers the individual self.

Experience and Exercise

With many symbols, concepts, and elements, astrology involves hundreds of compositions and placements. Regarding the complexity, it is not surprising that the enthusiasts passionately participate in theoretical discussions. Nevertheless, theories about the “celestial movement” are not enough; People draw on “earthly events” in the learning process. There are two common strategies to study astrology. First, people use the cases of their own and close ones to comprehend theories and interpretive methods. Knowing one’s condition and astrological

chart, they attempt to identify a pattern of connection. For instance, in the conception of Aries moon:

From personal experience, Aries Moons tend to have emotional outbursts, difficulties expressing themselves in a calm manner and highly combative if they feel triggered. Aggressive, outlandish and sometimes irrational. They will strike you if you're in their way or if you pushed the wrong button. That being said, they love hard, they are very protective of their loved ones and extremely loyal. I grew up with two Aries Moons in my household - my mother and eldest sister. Overtime I saw the aggression taper but only once they felt safe, went through some tough life lessons and figured out being very "reactive" always came back to bite them.

Another tool to learn astrology is public figures' cases. The "Public Figure Chart" is a type of posts in r/astrology. Celebrities' birthdays and lives are available to the public, and their charts become good examples to examine, acquire insights, and exercise the skill of reading. R/astrology provides another type of posts for "Practicum," which contain an unnamed public figure chart and questions about what an astrologer would learn about this person's personality, career, relationships, life, and death.

In the learning activities, personal experiences engage in the knowledge, introducing the subjective perception into the individual study. Empirical evidence is incorporated into the sacred, professional language, which eventually needs to be translated into concrete and plain facts in exercise. In *Habit of the Heart*, the abstraction of speech makes people struggle between "inner freedom" and "outer control" in religious life (Bellah et al. 1985/2008). Astrology still employs an abstract language, but it enables the adherents to practice a scheme to relieve the

problem. During the process of experiencing and exercising, people can “mediate among self, society, the natural world, and the ultimate reality” (Bellah et al. 1985/2008, p.237).

Consultation for Life Questions

What are we doing with astrology? In r/astrologyreadings the users show their chart and expresses concerns about careers, relationships, life problems. Some questions can be more general: What does my chart say? What will happen in the future? Astrology thus meets the needs of finding meanings and knowing the uncertain things. Enthusiasts hold a functional view toward astrology. In the FAQ page of r/astrology, a question asks: “Does astrology really work?”

“Everyone will have a different answer to this question,” the answer says, “so it's best to do the research yourself before forming an opinion. Short answer: yep, it certainly appears to work!” Before giving a definite answer, people are encouraged to learn astrology and discover its functions themselves. Elaborating theories, mastering reading skills, and applying it to benefit life is a personal choice. The question and answer direct the second type of astrology users. They do not necessarily believe in its “work” but hold curiosity about astrology, ideas, functions, and especially the interpretation of their own conditions.

The application of astrology is sometimes comparable to other studies. Remarkably, astrology is integrated with psychology or counseling, initiating an interdisciplinary specialization. Training, organizations, and certificates for psychological astrology or astrology in counseling arise. Meanwhile, some users express their concerns about the current application and the development of modern astrology:

If modern astrology is unconcerned with the "astro-" and lacks an "-ology," it can really only be defined as a language or a counseling framework. It's a way to assist people in articulating their views on the world around them and helps them navigate the many

triumphs and tribulations of their lives... I can't help but make note of the fact that most of the early modern astrologers were psychologists. What carried their understanding of astrology was their expertise in psychology, sociology, and counseling, not necessarily anything related to astrology as an isolated system. It's no wonder that so many beginner modern books emphasize the importance of basic counseling principles over basic astronomy.

The author critiques that subjectiveness and influence from other fields have caused astrology to lose its original qualities. Despite a long history and various branches, modern astrology carries the characteristics of our time. It is important to acknowledge how the culture of modern society has shaped astrology. Additionally, the author compares modern astrology to applied psychology. The book *Habit of the Heart* analyzed therapy, a closely related field, as an ideal relationship that concentrates one person and remains bureaucratic and distanced (Bellah et al. 1985/2008). Without emotional attachment, the therapist only gives help and gets paid, leaving a personal autonomy for the patient (Bellah et al. 1985/2008). Outlining the self, astrology can be incorporated into the therapeutic relationship perfectly just as in requesting interpretations from a more experienced astrologer. Another intriguing pattern of applied astrology is that the adherents apply the knowledge to themselves and play both the roles of the therapist and the patient when simulating such a relationship. In sum, seeking a constructive solution or reasonable explanation through therapy or psychology or through astrological study leads to the same outcome: to “translate our experience of this society into personal meanings, and then back into social action” (Bellah et al. 1985/2008, p.127).

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Categorization and Connection

“All personalities are welcome!” This is written on the homepage of r/MBTI. As the largest community about MBTI on Reddit, r/MBTI is active on diverse topics, ranging from theoretical discussions, survey, and polls to stereotypes and memes. The typological system of 16 personalities is invented based on Jung’s theory about functions, but it is the types, instead of analytical psychology principles, that bring to people’s attention. In fact, the personality types constitute an identity. In r/MBTI, many users label their types under the usernames, or note the types in posts and comments. As in a discussion about toxic traits of personalities:

What’s your toxic trait based on your MBTI?

As an ESTP...my personal toxic trait is I love to be controversial. A day is a good day if I’ve annoyed someone.

Bonus edition, I’ll be annoyed if people don’t listen to me.

This is a common form of discussion, in which a user brings up a question and people share their personal situation and analyze themselves in the comments. Some reply that they feel related to the condition since they or someone they know have a similar personality type. Marking the type, individuals compare themselves to each other, in search of a consistency in expressions and behaviors among those with the same personality. Through categorizing and comparing, people gain knowledge about themselves and others with the same or different types. Therefore, the enthusiasts are interested in exploring the relationships between types. MBTI’s interpretation of relationships can deal with multiple people and even construct a network. Under the post requesting interpretation of family dynamics, with the personality types of all family members, and others may infer a “warm” family environment.

The MBTI forum values personal opinions. As in previous examples, the users freely express themselves and request others’ opinions. In a type of “tier list” posts, one indicates their

preferences and thoughts on each personality. However, except for individuality, the collective is significant as well. Polls and surveys are popular in the subreddit and platforms. They are not only the platform for personal voices, but also a collection of personal ideas. Results in a poll or survey ultimately illustrate the group experience. The individual and the collective are well coordinated and linked in the community.

This is corresponding to the theory of MBTI. Presumably, the typological model of 16 personalities is applicable to each person in society. Everybody can be classified into a type. MBTI creates a “community” beyond a community of interest, a much larger community of everyone in the therapeutic sense, “a context within which personal identity is formed” through connections with others (Bellah et al. 1985/2008, p.135). The 16-personality categorization may resemble a totemic system in Durkheim’s works. Even so, the totem is assigned to individuals as a sacred symbol of society (Durkheim 1912/2012; Collins 1982), while MBTI’s sense of community arises to satisfy the individual needs (Bellah et al. 1985/2008). The next section would further examine the posts in r/MBTI in terms of their function in social life.

Online Interaction as a Practice

As stated earlier, personal opinions are essential in the MBTI community. R/MBTI recognizes the subjectiveness in conversation. Personal bias and subjective statement confirm the validity of personality theory and give a glimpse into the traits of personality. Noting the types and encouraging self-expression, interactions within the community become empirical practices of MBTI. In a type of “ask me anything” post, a user clarifies their type and invites others to ask questions. The question and answers can be either serious and thought-provoking or irregular and jokey. The following is an example conversation:

(ENFP): What are your passions [?]

(ISFP): This will probably sound lame to people with actual passions, hopes, and dreams, but something I love doing and that I always try to do, is try every flavor of something[.] Like for example, my passion right now is to try every flavor of Lindt Lindor Truffle.

Online communications provide opportunities for users to interact, know each other, and regulate their behaviors. After interacting with different personalities in the anonymous forum, a person can form an expectation of personality types and determine an appropriate mode of communicating with certain types in future formal social occasions. A complementary practice is posts with a title of “guess my type,” in which users speculate a person’s type with limited information. Although user’s personality type is often accessible in the r/MBTI, the MBTI lovers need to identify the personality of others via observation in real-life situations.

Interactions are critical for the individual because they sustain and even create the self (Collins 1982). Erving Goffman studied everyday interactions analogous to a theater (Collins 1982). In conversations, people prepare the self that they want to express in the backstage, and then perform the idealized self in front of each other on the front stage (Collins 1982). The online communications are used as a rehearsal for future social interactions. With a simple system of categories, MBTI is a prop in the backstage. It helps individuals adjust the self-presentation and eventually achieve a better social self in others’ responses (Collins 1982)

A Tool and For Fun

Widely applied in society, People possibly hear about MBTI through schools, corporations, media, or close ones. MBTI is significant in explaining the self and giving social guidance. In a user’s comment, “it’s a complex system with real world application that I can shove into my framework and get by better in most social situations.” Another user describes

they “cried with relief” after accessing MBTI: “It was the first time I ever felt understood.”

MBTI enthusiasts tend to take a pragmatic view, especially when realizing the criticisms toward its scientific validity. Some tend to reject these skeptical ideas, emphasizing its usage in organizations of authority and its position in modern psychology; Others claims that MBTI is useful, regardless of scientific proofs: “It's a tool.”

Interestingly, people detect similarities between MBTI and astrology. At least, they are often compared together. Both meet doubts regarding whether they are “scientific.” The MBTI lovers have various opinions on astrology, but the rules of the r/MBTI subreddit announce a solid attitude: “No astrology.”

Others appreciate the aspects of entertainment and interest: “it was a pretty interesting concept.” MBTI is fun. Certainly, memes and creative contents take up a proportion of the posts. Memes comedically depict a stereotypical image of types in a fictional setting. Even though the identities of who create or spread these contents are often anonymous, they evoke an emotional resonance among the group. As an interest or hobby, MBTI plays a role in the relaxing and leisure time. The fun aspect keeps “a psychological detachment from the pressures and social organizations around us” (Collins 1982, p.55). Laughing at a joke, perhaps for a while, we will be free from the stressors in our mind. More importantly, we might forget temporarily that ourselves are also contained in the categories of 16 personalities.

A Comparative Discussion

“The self” is the pivotal theme for both cultural products. In the previous sections, I analyze astrology and MBTI in three major facets, theory, practice, and application. Although they are in different forms, both operate to handle the problems of the self. Their largest similarity is the important function of guidance. Both tell us who we are and how we will act.

The modern individualistic culture exerts the burdens of self-knowledge and self-selected morality on us and expects us to confront the challenges independently (Bellah et. al. 1985/2008). Astrology and MBTI are the valuable options of assistance in our journey alone. Hence, it is no wonder that the enthusiasts often exercise them in a noninstitutional setting. The ability to use them individually is at the core of the appeal for people.

The tension between astrology and MBTI is noteworthy. In contrast to the shared intentions, the relationship between astrology and MBTI appears to have controversy. Astrology is rejected from the MBTI discussions. The “no astrology” rule in r/MBTI can possibly be accredited to an anxiety in the milieu of scientific authority, which everything needs to be justified by science. By denying astrology that is critiqued as a “pseudoscience,” MBTI lovers highlight their interest as a scientific model in psychology. For the same reason, astrology is combined with psychology or other social science disciplines.

From the Durkheimian perspective, science is not differentiated from religion but a lately developed substitute during the past centuries (Durkheim 1912/2012). As a better religion, the scientific method and authority are parts of the sacred in science. In response to the popular, mainstream religion of science, for astrology and MBTI, the sacred covers the validity of their fundamental principles beside the self. Even though specific points in the sets of knowledge associates with personal comprehension, all adherents have a consensus of the propositions: The connection between stars’ and humans’ activities must exist; Classifying the personalities has to be effective. Notably, astrology and MBTI are emphasized as “studies.” Online activities of enthusiasts show their efforts to internalize the ideas and proceed the proficiency of using them. Yet, with influence of science, being the techniques of “grounding the self” (Bellah et al.,

1985/2008, p.35) is the main point. Doubts about scientific validity hardly sway people's interest or make them to pursue concepts with more approvals in academic science.

For Durkheim, what distinguishes science from traditional religions is that it uses logics and reasons instead of sensation and sentiment (Durkheim 1912/2012). In the standard, for the adherents, astrology and MBTI are religions. The adherents address psychology in their application because the individual human behavior is an object of psychological studies as well. The non-institutional practices of astrology and MBTI is a reaction to the institutional scientific studies: While sacralizing rationality, science cannot give a solution for the individualistic issue.

This paper compares each astrology and MBTI to different religious forms. Similar to a religious individualism, astrology's link to "the cult of the individual" in our society is apparent. In contrast, MBTI takes a totemic form. Why do we need such an ancient, "primitive" religious form in the modern, industrialized society? The problem deserves further investigation. In fact, in astrology, a popular branch is also in the totemic form. Only considering the zodiac sign of sun, it creates a classification of 12 signs and labels each person with a sign. Certainly, a set of categories are easier for transmission than a complicated system. Another potential explanation is totems' significance of social life. They allow people to "know how to act towards one another" (Collins 1982, p.44).

I suppose that the different strategies of individualistic astrology and totemic MBTI attract different populations. Examining the anonymous forums, this study is unable to perceive the demographic groups among enthusiasts of the two cultural products. Future studies may explore the different forms of astrology and MBTI and their mechanisms for "the cult of the individual."

Conclusion

The paper endeavors to interpret astrology and MBTI from the Durkheimian framework. By analyzing anonymous online forums on Reddit, the paper suggests that the popularity of astrology and MBTI are produced by individualism. My analysis discovers their similarities in theory, practice, and application. Though having seemingly distinct origins and different methods to organize their beliefs, the self is a central concept for both cultural products. In comparable ways, people consider them as knowledge, invent a set of techniques to exercise them as skills, and focus on the practical functions of explaining the self and guiding life or social problems.

The findings demonstrate astrology and MBTI as an intriguing topic to study for their relation to modernity and individualism and leads to more problems that can be unfold in the future. First, as I have noted previously, regarding that both are popular and contain the same purpose, why do astrology and MBTI adopt a significantly different religious form? Second, as the products and parts of “the cult of the individual,” the enthusiasts’ astrology and MBTI are considered non-scientific in Durkheimian theory. It potentially indicates a conflict between science and individualism, the two major modern religions. Or, at least, science cannot deal with the concerns around individualism. Finally, we may find much more phenomena on the media that are organized or practiced in a personal, noninstitutional way. Are astrology and MBTI unique and distinct from them in the sense of “the individual”? Undoubtedly, other phenomena do not necessarily involve identities or a theme of the self, but it is important to remember that many view the cultural products as a hobby. It would be interesting to study if astrology and MBTI are same as other common hobbies for these individuals. In sum, although many phenomena on the media, such as astrology and MBTI, are neglected, we may find values for future research when we start to think about them.

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