

# The Well-Tempered Astrologer

## Using an Ancient System in Modern Astrology

by Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum

*“Temperament is the iron wire on which the beads are strung.”*  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

How times have changed! Many astrologers practicing today would never think of using their client’s temperament in their analysis. But no medieval or Renaissance astrologer would have ever considered leaving the temperament of their clients out of their delineations. For them, temperament was the backbone on which the rest of the chart depended. From temperament, they could understand physical appearance, habits, and psychological tendencies; finding the temperament and the “quality of soul” (or “manners,” as William Lilly called it) gave an almost complete picture of the *soma* and *psyche* of the person.

This article will explain what temperament is, give a brief overview of its long history within the astrological tradition, and describe how we can use it today. Temperament is astrology’s own system, introduced by the Greeks and developed by medieval and Renaissance astrologers. It is whole in itself, not grafted on from another discipline, and it is completely consistent with astrology’s fundamental principles. I believe that every astrologer ought to be using temperament in their work. I hope that, after reading this article, you do, too.

### What Is Temperament?

Nowadays, when we hear the word “temperament,” we are apt to think of online quizzes like the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, a kind of pop personality test based on the Jungian functions (thinking, feeling, intuition, and sensation) and attitudes (introvert and extrovert).<sup>1</sup> Temperament is a word that is used rather loosely in our modern times. We talk about someone’s temperament as an attitude or style, without really thinking much

about what we actually mean. For example, we consider flamboyant, diva-like behavior to be typical of the “artistic” temperament — a byproduct of an artist’s creativity.

Temperament is often confused with “personality” or “character.” How are these three different? First of all, temperament is *innate*, whereas both character and personality can have external components. Personality, in fact, combines both internal and external factors, and some dictionaries define it as “behavior as a whole.” But the term “personality” (which didn’t even come into use until the end of the 19th century) uses the Latin word *persona*, which means “mask” — as in the masks worn by characters in a play — and thus implies the outward expression of a person. “Character” comes from the Greek word *charaktēr*, a stamp, something used to make an impression on wax or metal; today we take “character” to mean both the features that distinguish one form from another *and* a person’s moral nature. In modern connotation, character can be both internal and external, but the Greek definition implies something imposed from without (parental or societal) rather than from within.

Temperament, by contrast, falls on the “nature” rather than the “nurture” side of the spectrum. We are born with our temperaments, as any mother of more than one child can tell you. We may have overlays to our temperaments at various times in our lives, but temperament is our default position, what we naturally fall back on when faced with new situations. What you’re born with is what you keep. As a card-carrying phlegmatic, I am never going to enjoy chitchat and socializing at a cocktail party, but I can learn the skills



needed to do this. My choleric husband will never really understand why I deliberate so much over my decisions, even though he can choose to do that, too. My sanguine daughter doesn't get why I love being a recluse, and my melancholic son just can't comprehend why I don't feel sad about being alone.

These "temperamental" words — choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic — have even come down into our present vocabulary as testimony to the enduring ideas behind temperament theory. I want to tell you more about the various temperaments (keep in mind that most people are not a pure temperament), but first we need to look at where the concept of temperament came from and how it developed. The word "temperament" comes from the Latin *temperamentum*, a mixture, the same meaning as the Greek word *krasis*. The "mixture" was a combination of qualities (hot, cold, wet, and dry) that combine to form the four elements in physics and the four humors in medicine. Our temperaments — choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic — take their names from the humors *cholē* (yellow bile), *sanguis* (Greek *haima*, blood), *melaina cholē* (black bile), and *phlegm* (phlegm).

### Qualities, Elements, and Humors

As astrologers, we all use the four classical elements in our work. Indeed, imagining astrology without the use of elements seems almost impossible. We correlate signs with elements and even consider them when we describe planets: The Sun and Mars are fiery, the Moon is watery, and Saturn is earthy. Elements had their foundation in Greek physics and medicine and were then applied to the emerging *technē* (Greek for both the "art" and "craft") of astrology.

We usually speak metaphorically when we talk about the elements, and we find them in many of the expressions we use in common speech: a fiery temper, a down-to-earth person, an airhead (space cadet), "spending money like water." We do the same thing with the qualities. Examining how we use them in common expressions helps us to define what they mean to us: A person who gets things going and has a lot of vitality is a "hot ticket." Someone who seems to have no emotion is a

"cold fish." When we're "hot under the collar," we need to take some time to "cool off." The opening act at a show "warms up" the crowd and "breaks the ice." A person who's "all wet" has probably made connections where none exist, while a "dry wit" has pointed out precisely what makes a situation funny. Completely dry is "dry as a bone." A "dry stick" might be told to "go jump in a lake," that is, loosen up and get wet. A "hot streak" shows an increase in activity; a "cold streak" doesn't. Alcoholics go to rehab to "dry out."

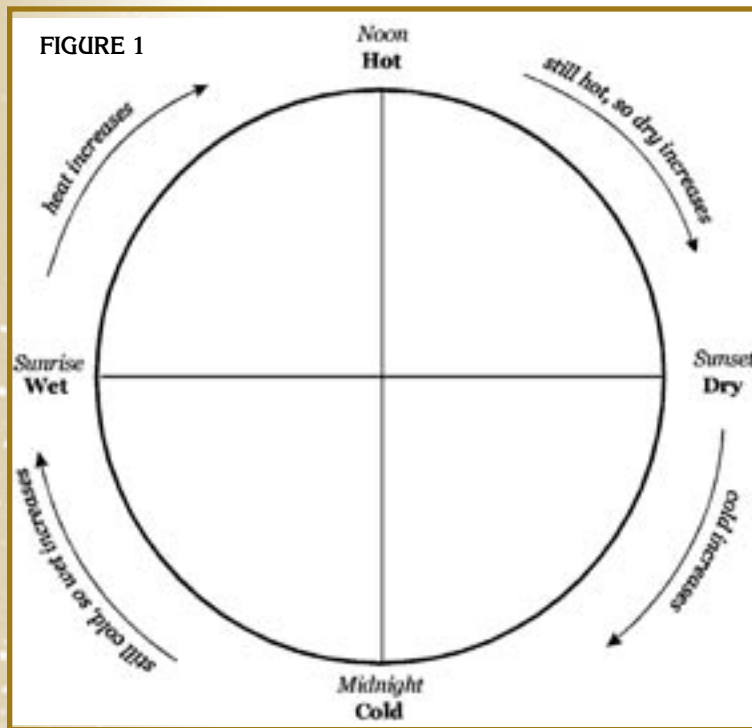
I should point out that there are gradations in the qualities of hot, cold, wet, and dry. Thus, a pillow is "wet" because of its squishiness, and a chair is "dry" because of its hardness, but a wooden chair will be wetter than a metal chair (that is, softer equates with wetter). A pool can feel cold when we first get into it, but after a few minutes it can feel warm, even though it is still relatively cold. Walkers heat themselves up less than runners, but both are engaging in energy-increasing and thus *hot* activity. Qualities can also be applied to things that are not necessarily physically hot, cold, wet, or dry. Salsa music is hot and wet; composer Philip Glass is cold and dry. New Age thinking tends to be wet; Kant is definitely dry!

The Greeks, however, were often more literal in their understanding of the qualities and the elements. They considered the qualities and elements to be the building blocks of the cosmos, the stuff of which everything is made. The theories on which Hippocrates based his humoral theory can be traced to Empedocles and his "roots" of all things. Galen, in turn, built on the work of Hippocrates and Aristotle in his treatment of temperament.

Hippocrates and those who followed him (like Galen) always stress a balance among the four humors, but this is actually difficult to achieve. Most people have an imbalance of one or another of the humors, and when too much of an imbalance occurs, disease results. It becomes important, then, for a physician to be able to figure out the imbalances, and astrology is a useful tool for doing just that. Ptolemy even compares the astrologer to the physician.<sup>2</sup>

In the Greek system developed by Aristotle, elements are formed out of the qualities hot, cold, wet, and dry, in a circular pattern





that allows their “coming-to-be and passing away.”<sup>3</sup> Aristotle calls hot and cold “active” qualities, because they are capable of initiating change; wet and dry are “passive.” That is, hot can bring about dryness by heating, and cold can bring about moisture by cooling. This is easily seen if we just think about the day cycle: At sunrise, the dew is still on the ground but burns off as the heat of the day increases. At noon, heat has absorbed all the moisture and dryness begins to increase. At sunset, cold begins to increase as the heat of the Sun can no longer warm the Earth, and at midnight, coldness brings about the formation of dew — or frost, depending on the season. (See **Figure 1**, above.)

Aristotle’s system assigned two qualities to each element. Thus, air was hot and wet, fire hot and dry, earth cold and dry, and water cold and wet.

In **Figure 1**, each quarter falls between two qualities, which allows us to assign an element to each quadrant: *air* in the quadrant between sunrise and noon, *fire* in the quadrant between noon and sunset, *earth* in the quadrant between sunset and midnight, and *water* in the quadrant between midnight and sunrise.

We can also adapt this to the annual cycle, if we substitute spring, summer, autumn, and winter for sunrise, noon, sunset, and midnight — and make the midpoint between them correspond to each element.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the air point falls at the cross-quarter of the year, called Beltane, the midpoint between spring and summer, corresponding to 15° Taurus; the fire point is at Lammas, 15° Leo; the earth point, at 15° Scorpio or Samhain; and the water point, at 15° Aquarius or Candlemas (Imbolc). (See **Figure 2**, opposite.)

The Greeks and the Arabic-era astrologers who followed them adapted Aristotle’s system to astrology and added to it, also assigning qualities/elements to the signs and the planets. By the time we come to Abu Mashar (787–866 C.E.), we see a system of signs and planets completely correlated with qualities, elements, and the humors espoused by Hippocrates and Galen. The fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) are hot and dry and choleric; the earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn) are cold, dry, and melancholic; the air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) are hot, wet, and sanguine; and the water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) are cold, wet, and phlegmatic. This system was adopted completely by the medieval and Renaissance astrologers. Johannes Schoener gives a succinct diagram in his *Opusculum Astrologicum*.<sup>5</sup> (See **Figure 3**, opposite.)

## The Astrological History of Temperament

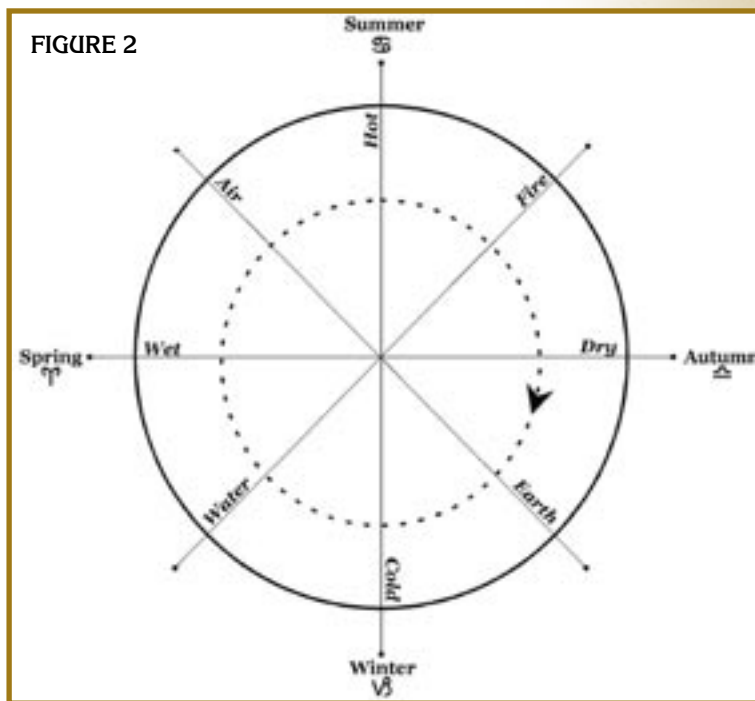
Now, what does all this mean for astrology? Well, it gives astrologers a way to determine temperament from the birth chart and thereby help physicians in making diagnoses. This, of course, is why numerous physicians, from antiquity to the Enlightenment, also studied and used astrology. Over the centuries, several methods were created to uncover temperament in the birth chart. The first to mention temperament within an astrological context was Ptolemy, in the *Tetrabiblos*. In Book I, Ptolemy assigns qualities to the signs (he never uses the word “element”), based partly on their place in the seasonal cycle and partly on their planetary rulers. Ptolemy also assigns qualities to the planets, Moon phases, seasons, and solstices/equinoxes. These assignments are mostly fol-

lowed in succeeding eras, right up through Lilly and his contemporaries.<sup>6</sup> These characterizations become important in Book III, where Ptolemy explains how to identify one's "mixture"<sup>7</sup> from the birth chart.

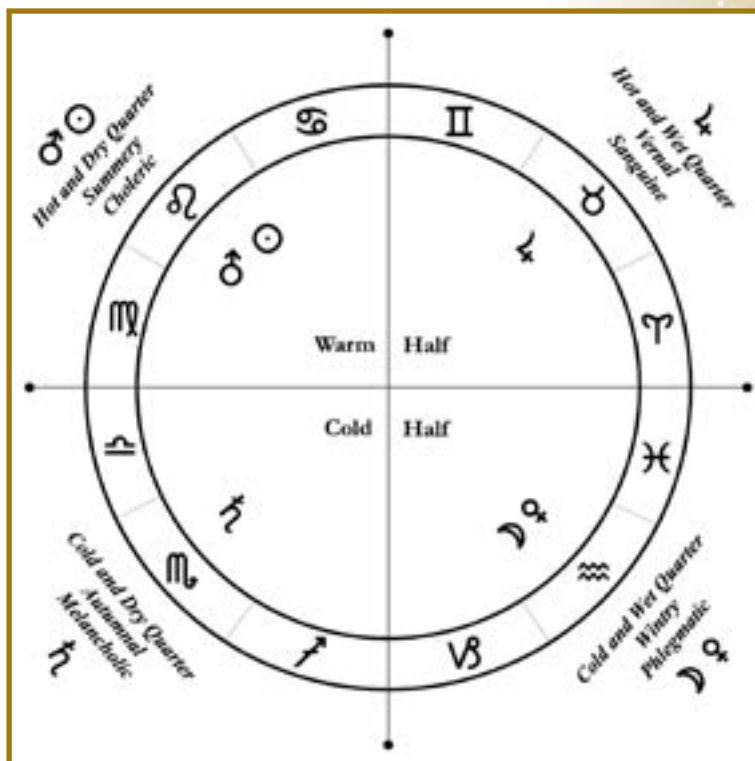
The only other astrologer who mentions temperament in the late Classical period is Hephaistio of Thebes (415 C.E.), who follows (and often quotes) Ptolemy's system. But the real flowering of temperament theory happens in the medieval period, with Guido Bonatti — and particularly Antonio de Montulmo, whose technique for temperament follows Ptolemy closely. The main change from Ptolemy in the medieval formula for temperament is adding the season of birth to the formula.<sup>8</sup> By the time of the Renaissance, consideration of the Moon phase (which involves different qualities than those given by Ptolemy) has been added. Fixed stars are mentioned in temperament formulae beginning with Ptolemy, but their importance to the determination of temperament lessens over the years, so that by the time of Garcaeus (1530–1574), they are listed last, and by Lilly's era they disappear altogether — though they are a component of his formula for manners (corresponding to less innate traits that are learned in order to adapt to the environment).

By the time of Lilly, temperament was a well-established technique in astrological delineation. The words associated with temperament had been in common use since the Middle Ages; we can find examples of them from Chaucer to Shakespeare, suggesting that ordinary people knew enough about the basic characteristics of each of the temperaments to appreciate the imagery of these authors. Ben Jonson even wrote a play entitled *Every Man in His Humour*, and he describes, in *Cynthia's Revels*:

A creature of a most perfect and  
divine temper;  
One, in whom the Humours and  
Elements are peaceably met,  
without an emulation of Precedencie:  
he is neither too fantastically  
Melancholy, too slowly Phlegmatick,  
too lightly Sanguine,  
or too rashly Cholerick ...<sup>9</sup>



**FIGURE 3:**  
*Schoener's Qualities, Elements, Seasons, Planets, Humors*



## The Well-Tempered Astrologer

John Gadbury's descriptions of the four temperaments are standard for his time, and we can see in them the roots of the modern connotations of choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic:

"Those persons that are of a sanguine Complexion are generally the emblems of honesty; liberal, cheerful, affable and faithful; peace-makers, true, open-hearted and modest; very vertuous and religious ... gentle, courteous, affable disposition and temper.

"Melancholy persons are full of mental reserves, ponderous and slow in conception and resolution; fraudulent, suspicious, inexorable, fearful, sorrowful, froward, ambitious, seldom forgetting injuries, loving no man's esteem but his own; very close and subtle in all their actions ... of a mental reserved and close disposition.

"The cholérique person is imperious, tyrannical, full of revenge, quarrelsome, apt to anger, importunate, hardy, rash, involving himself in many unnecessary troubles and vexations; a seditious Fellow, yet in many things ingenious and wittily apprehensive; but a very *Proteus* in his Opinion ... of a rugged, surly and tyrannical disposition.

"The Phlegmatic person is uxorious and a busie-body, a mutable person, not capable of keeping secrets; a vapor-ing, bragging, boasting, crackling person, yet a very coward; wonderful slow, dull and sluggish in the performance of any business ... yet he is sometimes given to Mirth."<sup>10</sup>

As we can see from the above excerpts, the temperaments had become not only physical descriptions but psychological ones as well. We see evidence of this as early as the 13th century, in Ramon Lull's descriptions of the temperaments. For example, "They also say that the choleric man quickly gives his accord or refuses it, and quickly undertakes affairs and quickly neglects them, and is inconstant and ready to do an about-face. This nature comes to him through the great movement of fire ..."<sup>11</sup>

By the beginning of the 18th century, the new "Enlightenment" world view erased the importance of both astrology and temperament and, except for a piece on temperament by Immanuel Kant in about 1796,<sup>12</sup> temperament as a concept went dormant. It would reappear later (as would astrology!) but in disguise, in the attitudes and functions of psychologist Carl Jung. The truest application of traditional temperament theory in the 20th century can be found in the work of Rudolf Steiner, who applied temperament as a diagnostic and pedagogical tool in Waldorf schools. It is Steiner's use of temperament that led me to conduct a study on correlating temperament to the birth chart. From that study, I was able to formulate some ideas about how we can use temperament in our modern practice. Let me tell you a little bit about the study.

### The Waldorf Study

I worked at a Waldorf School for six years as a Classical Language teacher, and both of my children attended the school for three years. During that time, I learned about the use of temperament when working with students. Waldorf teachers were taught how to recognize temperament, and they often employed different teaching styles for each of the temperaments. In Steiner's temperament system, we can see the clear influence of the Greek tradition: Choleric is opposed to phlegmatic, and melancholic to sanguine. (See Figure 4, below.)

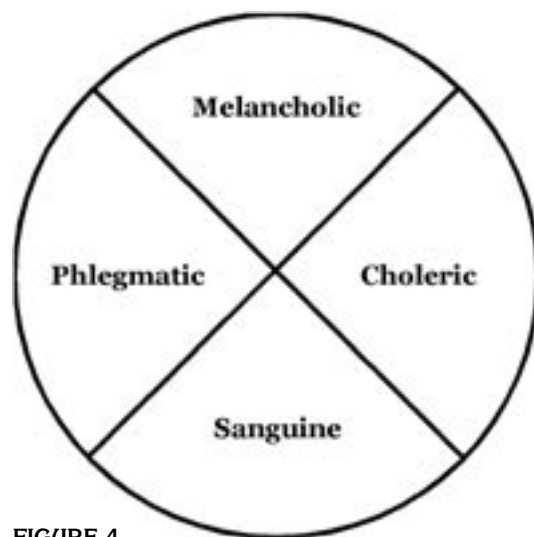


FIGURE 4



TABLE 1:  
*Analysis of Temperament in the Natal Chart*

	SANGUINE (hot & wet)	CHOLERIC (hot and dry)	MELANCHOLIC (cold and dry)	PHLEGMATIC (cold & wet)
BY ELEMENT	Air	Fire	Earth	Water
BY SEASON	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
BY SIGN (element of the sign)	♈ ♎ ♊	♈ ♎ ♊	♈ ♎ ♊	♈ ♎ ♊
BY PLANET* (intrinsic quality)	♃: ♀ (oriental); ♅ (oriental)	♁: ♂	♁: ♀ (occidental)	♁: ♀ (occidental)
BY MOON PHASE	New to 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter to Full	Full to Last Quarter	Last Quarter to New
BY HUMORS	Blood	Yellow Bile	Black Bile	Phlegm
BY AGES OF MAN	Childhood	Early Adulthood	Middle Age	Old Age

\* Oriental refers to a planet rising before the Sun; an Occidental planet rises after the Sun.

Cholerics, who are hot and dry, have no quality in common with phlegmatics, who are cold and wet; the same can be said for melancholics (cold and dry) when compared to sanguines (hot and wet).

Besides the different teaching methods for each temperament, the students in the classroom were often seated according to temperament as well. Here, Steiner employs a homeopathic concept: Like cures like — so cholerics seated together will produce a calming effect on each other, while phlegmatics will be stimulated to action by their extreme boredom at being seated together. Steiner even suggests seating the temperaments exactly according to his diagram, so that the “similar” children (phlegmatic/sanguine or phlegmatic/melancholic) are next to each other, and the dissimilar (choleric/phlegmatic) are opposite each other.<sup>13</sup>

My study on correlating temperament to the birth chart relied on the observations of teachers to determine temperament in their students and on obtaining the birth charts of Waldorf students to use in the study. The children I studied were all at least ten years old at the time, that being the age at which the true temperament could be determined. (Before age 10, there is too much of a sanguine overlay that makes it difficult to tell the true temperament.)<sup>14</sup> Most of the children were not purely one temperament, but a mixture, and some were difficult to categorize, either because they were too well-blended or because teach-

ers disagreed on their temperament. Though it was useful to begin with the rare children who were a “pure” temperament, I got equally important information from those who were, more or less, an equal mix of two temperaments, those who seemed to be a blend of two or more temperaments, and even those whose temperament didn’t seem to fit their charts at all. Once I had thoroughly examined all the information, I was able to draw a number of conclusions about finding temperament in the birth chart, from these charts and their associated temperaments.<sup>15</sup>

### Significant Chart Factors

Three factors stood out as being most important for determining the correct temperament: the *Ascendant sign*, the *Moon sign*, and the *season of birth* (assigning spring births to sanguine, summer to choleric, autumn to melancholic, and winter to phlegmatic). The Sun sign was relatively unimportant in ascertaining temperament; it was the season of birth that, time and again, came up as a determining factor. Other factors that also proved to be useful were the *Ascendant ruler* (by intrinsic quality), the *Ascendant almuten* (by intrinsic quality), and the *Moon ruler by sign* (i.e., the sign’s element and hence its corresponding humor). Almost as significant was the *Moon phase*.<sup>16</sup> (I am using the phase qualities used by most Renaissance astrologers, including William Lilly; for these and the intrinsic qualities of the planets, see Table 1, above.)

I think I just saw some eyes glazing over. Let me explain what I mean by the “intrinsic quality” of a planet and what the almuten of the Ascendant is. In traditional astrology, each planet has intrinsic qualities that best express its form and function. The Sun, for example, is intrinsically hot and dry, thus fiery and choleric. The Moon, its opposite, is intrinsically cold and wet, watery and phleg-

matic. Mars, like the Sun, is hot and dry, fiery and choleric; Jupiter is hot and wet, airy and sanguine; and Saturn is cold and dry, earthy and melancholic.

You will notice that I haven’t mentioned Venus or Mercury. The Greeks considered Venus to be slightly warm and moist (fertile qualities); however, from the Arabic era onward, Venus is always called cold and moist. Mercury is usually dry, but its intrinsic quality changes depending on its position in relation to the Sun: An oriental Mercury (rising ahead of the Sun) may be considered hot; an occidental Mercury (rising after the Sun), dry.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, Mercury is thought of as cold and dry.

For the purposes of temperament, I am considering oriental Venus to be sanguine, occidental Venus to be phlegmatic, oriental Mercury to be sanguine, and occidental Mercury to be melancholic.<sup>18</sup>

The almuten is the planet that has the most essential dignity in a particular degree of the zodiac. Often, the almuten is the same as what we call the “ruler” — Mercury is always the almuten of any degree in Virgo, and Jupiter is the almuten of any degree in Sagittarius. But sometimes the almuten is not the sign ruler: Saturn can be the almuten of some degrees of Libra, for example, and Jupiter can be the almuten of some degrees of Cancer. For the purposes of this article, I have provided the almuten in the charts I am presenting as examples, so you do not need to figure them out for yourself. For your own charts, check a Table of Essential Dignities<sup>19</sup> for the planet with the most dignity in the degree and sign of the Ascendant, to find the Ascendant almuten.

Are you ready to look at some charts now?

## Finding Temperament in the Chart

As you read the following examples, refer to **Table 2** (left), which gives descriptions of the various temperaments. This should help you to absorb the qualities of each temperament, so you can begin to apply them to yourself, your family, and your clients.

**TABLE 2:**  
*Temperament Keywords and Favorites*

### *Choleric*

<b>Keywords:</b>	inexhaustible, optimistic, aggressive, impatient, take-charge
<b>Favorite Book:</b>	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>
<b>Favorite Songs:</b>	“Climb Every Mountain” “Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better”
<b>Favorite Music:</b>	Wagner, “Ride of the Valkyries”

### *Sanguine*

<b>Keywords:</b>	friendly, shallow, unfocused, cheerful, lucky
<b>Favorite Book:</b>	Peale, <i>The Power of Positive Thinking</i>
<b>Favorite Songs:</b>	“Consider Yourself (at home)” “Life Is a Cabaret”
<b>Favorite Music:</b>	Joplin, “The Entertainer”

### *Melancholic*

<b>Keywords:</b>	antisocial, analytical, pessimistic, studious, a connoisseur
<b>Favorite Book:</b>	Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i>
<b>Favorite Songs:</b>	“I Am a Rock” “Send in the Clowns”
<b>Favorite Music:</b>	Beethoven, <i>Pathétique Sonata</i>

### *Phlegmatic*

<b>Keywords:</b>	contemplative, reserved, shy, slow-moving, resigned
<b>Favorite Book:</b>	Burnett, <i>The Secret Garden</i>
<b>Favorite Songs:</b>	“Wouldn’t It Be Lovely” “Mellow Yellow”
<b>Favorite Music:</b>	Debussy, <i>La Mer</i>

### George W. Bush

We'll begin by looking at a very clear example: George W. Bush, who is unquestionably choleric in temperament. (See **Chart 1**, below.) What do we see in his chart to confirm this?

Let's look first at the three factors I found to be most important in the Waldorf study: **Ascendant sign**, **Moon sign**, and **season of birth**. You should weight these more heavily than the rest of the factors we're considering. Bush's Ascendant sign is Leo, a fire sign and thus choleric. His Moon sign is Libra, an air sign and thus sanguine. His season of birth is summer, thus choleric. So far, he is two-thirds choleric, one-third sanguine. The **ruler of his Ascendant** is the Sun, intrinsically hot and dry, thus choleric. The **almuten of his Ascendant** is also the Sun. His **Moon ruler by sign** is Venus in Leo, a fire sign, thus choleric. Even his **Moon phase**, First Quarter to Full, is choleric.

Here is a man who could be the poster boy for choleric: steadfastness of purpose, burning ambition (in Bush's case, masked in part by his sanguine Libra Moon). He is inexhaustible, optimistic, aggressive, impatient, hates details and loves challenges — a person for whom Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" is an anthem. The extreme choleric can also be prone to excess, unable to admit making mistakes, and quick on the trigger. Bush's temperament factors show an excess of hot (even his Libra Moon is hot by phase), magnifying the usual characteristics of the choleric.

Do you see how temperament can help you to understand someone better? A modern analysis of Bush's chart would certainly pick up on the Leo Ascendant and the stellium in Leo, but we might wonder how the 12th-house Cancer Sun and the Libra Moon conjunct Jupiter would fit with his aggressive personality and his need to prove he's right. A choleric temperament takes these things as self-evident; we can then look at Bush's Sun as an expression of his loyalty to home and family, and his Moon as reflective of his ability to charm those he meets but not necessarily strive for consensus with any of them. His temperament is his underlying disposition, his fall-back position, and it is certainly borne out by his actions.

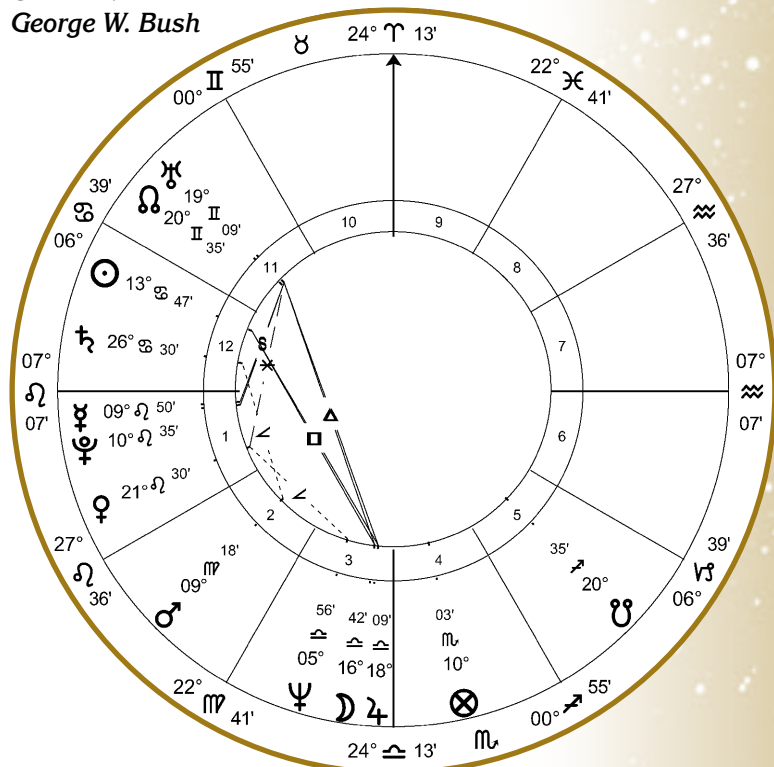
### George Harrison

Let's look at another chart, that of George Harrison. (See **Chart 2**, p. 10.) What do you think his temperament might be?

Known as "the quiet Beatle," George Harrison always seemed to be in the shadows of the more flamboyant, charismatic Lennon and McCartney and was even eclipsed by the zany antics of Ringo Starr. Yet, he continued on, playing his guitar with an increasingly refined skill, seemingly unperturbed at being out of the spotlight (or as much "out of the spotlight" as any Beatle could be).

He was a school friend of Paul McCartney and was encouraged by Paul to improve his guitar playing. He spent several years slowly developing his style by listening to other guitarists such as Chet Atkins and Buddy Holly — a true phlegmatic's approach to learning (imitation and slow deliberation bring you where you want to be). Even though the songwriting of Lennon and McCartney dominated the Beatles' work, Harrison left his mark on the group with his songs "While My Guitar Gently Weeps"

**CHART 1:**  
*George W. Bush*



All charts use Placidus houses and the True Node.

(a phlegmatic lament, if there ever was one) and “Here Comes the Sun” — about the long, cold, lonely (phlegmatic) winter leading to the Sun that makes everything all right.

What does George’s chart say about his temperament? His *Ascendant sign* is Libra, an air sign, and therefore sanguine; his *Moon sign* is Scorpio, a water sign, phlegmatic; and his *season of birth* is winter, phlegmatic. Right away, we can see a strong tendency toward the phlegmatic. His *Ascendant ruler* is Venus, and she is occidental in his chart, so phlegmatic. The *almuten of his Ascendant* is also Venus. His *Moon ruler by sign* is Mars in Capricorn, an earth sign, melancholic; and his *Moon phase* also is melancholic (Full to Last Quarter). He has a preponderance of phlegmatic, with a smattering of melancholic and sanguine, and *no* choleric. Wouldn’t you say that this fits him quite well?

## Compound Temperaments

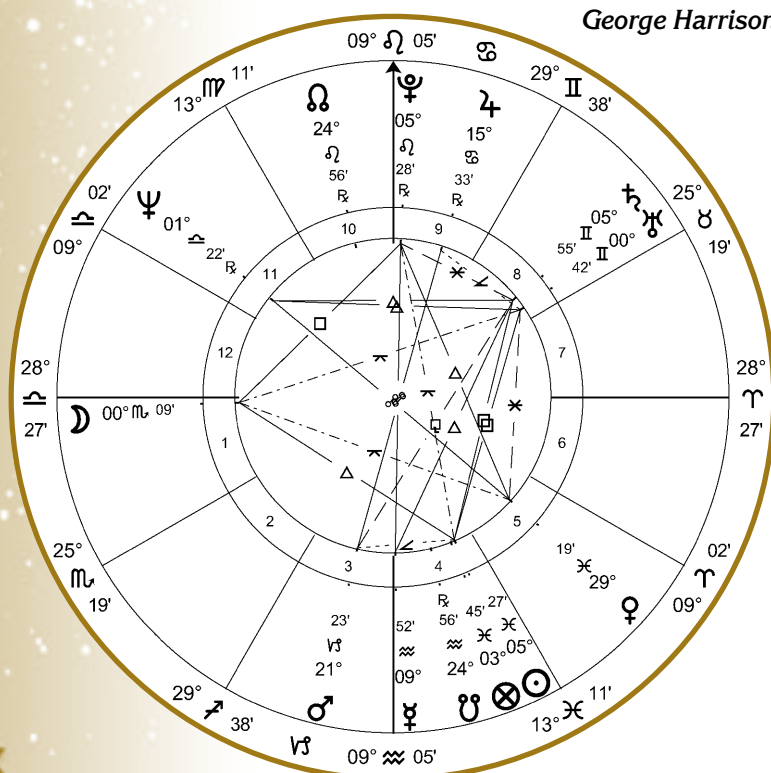
I pointed out earlier that most people are not one pure temperament, but a mix-

ture of two or even more temperaments. Usually, there is one temperament we could call predominant, with a second subdominant one. My work with temperament has shown me that there are twelve identifiable compound temperaments.<sup>20</sup>

Each compound temperament has facets of both of the temperaments that it combines, but they are not as strong as the pure temperament. The temperament given first is the stronger of the two; the secondary temperament modifies the first. Space doesn’t permit examples of each of them, but let’s take a look at one, the melancholic/choleric, to give you an idea of how these mixed temperaments work in “real life.”

Note that since these temperaments both contain the *dry* quality, there will be a lack of moisture in the compound temperament, which will have an effect on its expression. Someone in whom these temperaments predominate will be more structured or rigid and will tend toward the analytical rather than the synthesizing, the discrete rather than the encompassing.

CHART 2:  
George Harrison



## Attributes of the Melancholic/Choleric

- Would rather stay in the background, but can take the spotlight if necessary; not overly ambitious
- Not as pessimistic as the pure melancholic; able to see the positive more easily
- Not as focused on achievement as the pure choleric
- Deliberate thinking with flashes of inspiration
- Dry wit; master of puns
- Wants to coach the winner of the spelling bee
- The power behind the throne
- Can take too long to make a decision and thus lose momentum
- Strikes only when the iron is hot
- More reflective than impulsive; may regret too much reflection

## John Cleese

At the age of 13, John Cleese began to collect and organize jokes that he liked — a melancholic premonition (the penchant for categorization) of his later comedic career. He began to write humor while studying law at Cambridge; his first televised successes were with David Frost's *The Frost Report*. He came to international fame, however, with *Monty Python's Flying Circus*; he had major roles as both writer (for four seasons) and performer (for three). His "Dead Parrot" and "Ministry of Silly Walks" routines are classics. Much in his humor is dry, as befits a melancholic choleric temperament where dry is the dominant quality. A short biography written by Cleese at the "Python on Line" Web site pokes fun at his melancholic side: "Mr. Cleese is happily unmarried and is the President of the Holland Park Schadenfreude Society."<sup>21</sup> His brilliant characterization of the hapless Basil Fawlty in *Fawlty Towers* shows earnestness and pedantry combined with arrogance and stubbornness, a perfect blend of melancholy with choler. Cleese has since made a fortune in business training videos (choleric drive coupled with melancholic efficiency).

Let's look at his chart (see **Chart 3**, right): His *Ascendant sign* is Virgo — earth, melancholic. His *Moon sign* is Aries, fire and choleric. His *season of birth* is autumn, melancholic. His *Ascendant ruler and almuten* is Mercury, occidental in his chart and thus melancholic. The *sign of his Moon ruler*, Mars, is Aquarius, a small but welcome portion of sanguine. His *Moon phase* is First Quarter to Full, choleric, emphasizing the choler of his Aries Moon. Here, we have a person who is fairly melancholic, but with a choleric streak that allows him to propel his melancholic tendencies toward achievement. We might speculate that, without the choleric component, he would not have had the impetus to put his unique brand of humor before the world.

## The End of the Whirlwind Tour

This has been an all-too-short journey through the mysteries of temperament, but I hope it has been enough to whet your appetite for this new/old concept that I have found so incredibly useful in my own astrological work. Today, I would no more leave out a tempera-

ment analysis of my clients than I would forget to note the houses that the planets fall in. Now that you've gotten your feet wet in the big pool of temperament, I hope you'll take a little swim.

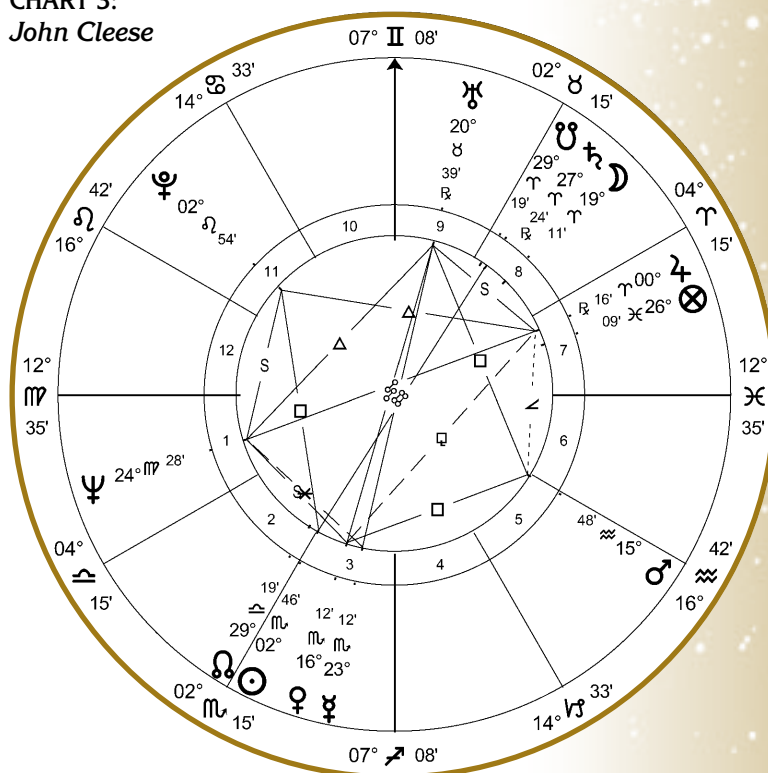
So, if this brief introduction to temperament has piqued your interest, if you decide to try it for yourself, if you tell your friends about it or share it with your class — in short, if you find yourself thinking that perhaps some of these old, forgotten techniques might have a place in our modern astrological world — I guess I've done my job!

This article is adapted from Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum's book, *Temperament: Astrology's Forgotten Key*, available from The Wessex Astrologer, <http://www.wessexastrologer.com/> or from Dorian's Web site, [www.classicalastrology.org](http://www.classicalastrology.org), as well as many commercial book Web sites.

## Chart Data and Sources

George W. Bush, July 6, 1946; 7:26 a.m. EDT; New Haven, CT, USA (41°N18', 72°W55'); AA: birth record.

**CHART 3:**  
*John Cleese*



**John Cleese**, October 27, 1939; 3:15 a.m. GDT; Weston-Super-Mare, England (51°N21', 02°W59'); A: from mother's memory; David Fisher quotes Eve Jackson in *Transit* 11/83, from Cleese's mom by phone.

**George Harrison**, February 24, 1943; 11:42 p.m. GDT; Liverpool, England (53°N25', 02°W55'); A: from memory; *Mercury Hour*, 4/1993, quotes Janice Gilles who cites correspondence from Harrison.

## References and Notes

1. Developed in Carl Jung's book, *Psychological Types*. In fact, Jung clearly borrowed from the ancient Greek and medieval temperament systems when he formulated his own typology.
2. Claudius Ptolemy, trans. Robbins, *Tetrabiblos*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1940, 1994, Book I, Ch. 3, p. 27.
3. See Aristotle, *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away in Aristotle III*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1955, 1992, especially Book II.
4. My thanks to Robert Hand for suggesting this scheme and providing the original diagram.
5. Johannes Schoener, trans. Hand, *Opusculum Astrologicum*, The Golden Hind Press, 1994, p. 13.
6. There are some variations: For instance, Ptolemy characterizes Venus as slightly warm and moist; from the Arabic era on, Venus is described as cold and moist. The qualities of Ptolemy's Moon phases are different from those used by Schoener, Garcaeus, Lilly, and others of his era. See Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, Book I.
7. Ptolemy, *op. cit.*, Book III, Ch. 11, "On Bodily Form and Mixture."
8. Montulmo also considers whether the chart is of the day or the night. See Antonius de Montulmo, trans. Hand, *On the Judgment of Nativities, Part 2*, Golden Hind Press, 1995, pp. 26–27.
9. A copy of *Cynthia's Revels* can be found at [http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk\\_files=5176&pageno=49](http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=5176&pageno=49) (accessed December 2005).
10. John Gadbury, *Doctrine of Nativities*, Ballantrae reprint, no date, Ch. 12, Section 5, p. 94, and Section 7, p. 97.
11. Ramon Lull, trans. Shapar, *Treatise on Astronomy*, Book I, Golden Hind Press, 1994, pp. 13–14.
12. Immanuel Kant, trans. Dowdell, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1978, especially pp. 197–202.
13. Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers*, Anthroposophic Press, 1997, pp. 19–20.
14. The idea that there are different temperaments associated with different ages of life is as old as Hippocrates, who first associated the sanguine humor with childhood, phlegmatic with the middle-aged, and

melancholic with the aged. (See Hippocrates, trans. Jones, *Hippocrates IV*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1931, 1998, *Aphorisms*, III, 18, pp. 128–129.) The usual assignments are sanguine with childhood, choleric with adolescence/young adulthood, melancholic with middle age, and phlegmatic with old age. Steiner follows this latter schema.

15. My description of the study in this article is necessarily brief and simplified. For full details, see my book, *Temperament: Astrology's Forgotten Key*, The Wessex Astrologer, 2005, pp. 57–72.

16. My thanks to Garry Phillipson for his invaluable help in making these assessments.

17. In the rare instance of a cazimi Mercury or Venus (within 17 minutes of the Sun), I would use the same criteria: Mercury or Venus in earlier zodiacal longitude than the Sun (no matter how close) would be considered oriental; in later zodiacal longitude, occidental. (I haven't come across any case of this in actual practice.)

18. I decided on these characterizations in October 2002; for more about the rationale behind them, see *Temperament*, pp. 77 and 87–89.

19. A table of essential dignities can be found in many texts on traditional astrology, including William Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, Regulus Reprint, 1985, p. 104; Joseph Crane, *A Practical Guide to Traditional Astrology*, ARHAT, 1997, p. 10; Lee Lehman, *Essential Dignities*, Whitford Press, 1989, inside front cover.

20. These are described in more detail, and with examples, in my book, *Temperament*; descriptions of many of the compound temperaments can also be found in Nicholas Culpeper, *Galen's Art of Physick*, excerpted in Appendix F of *Temperament*, and listed in table form in Graeme Toby, *Culpeper's Medicine: A Practice of Western Holistic Medicine*, Element Books, 1997.

21. John Cleese, biography online at <http://www.pythonline.com/plugs/cleese/index.shtml> (accessed December 2005).

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