

**An Introduction
to
Archetypal Astrology**

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A birth chart or natal chart is a portrait of the heavens at the moment of one's birth. The Sun, Moon, and planets are positioned around the chart to reflect their positions around the Earth when one was born. For example, where the symbol for the Sun is located in the chart reflects the time of day one was born: thus if one was born at noon, the Sun would be at the top of the chart (called the Midheaven), while if one was born at dawn the Sun would be shown rising on the left side of the chart near the eastern horizon (called the Ascendant).

The main difference between the natal chart and the astronomical reality it portrays is that the natal chart has two dimensions rather than three, and it does not reflect the varying distances of the planets from the Earth. What the birth chart does convey is the exact pattern of angular relationships existing between the planets and the Earth at the time and place of one's birth.

The basic principle of astrology is that the planets have a fundamental, cosmically based connection to specific archetypal forces or principles which influence human existence, and that the patterns formed by the planets in the heavens bear a meaningful correspondence to the patterns of human affairs on the Earth. In terms of individuals, the positions of the planets at the time and place of a person's birth are regarded as corresponding to the basic archetypal patterns of that person's life and character.

Astrology makes possible a further understanding of one's life—its cycles, its ups and downs, the crises and the breakthroughs, the periods of major change and transformation—through the study of transits. Transits occur when the planets currently in the sky form certain geometrical patterns with respect to the planetary positions at one's birth. The nature of those patterns--which planets are involved and how they are positioned—appears to correlate in a strikingly consistent way with the archetypal character of the experiences one tends to have at that time.

Three Preliminary Issues

To begin, I would like to address three important matters that people usually need discussed when approaching astrology. The first concerns the nature of archetypes, the second involves the question of determinism vs. free will, and the third

concerns the nature of astrology's causal mechanism, or why it works. These three issues are closely interrelated.

First, what is an *archetype*? Archetypes can be understood and described in many ways, and in fact much of the history of Western thought from Plato and Aristotle onward has been concerned with this very question. But for our present purposes, we can define an archetype as a universal principle or force that affects--impels, structures, permeates--the human psyche and human behavior on many levels. One can think of them as primordial instincts, as Freud did, or as transcendent first principles as Plato did, or as gods of the psyche as James Hillman does. Archetypes (for example, Venus or Mars) seem to have a transcendent, mythic quality, yet they also have very specific psychological expressions--as in the desire for love and the experience of beauty (Venus), or the impulse toward forceful activity and aggression (Mars). Moreover, archetypes seem to work from both within and without, for they can express themselves as impulses and images from the interior psyche, yet also as events and situations in the external world.

Jung thought of archetypes as the basic constituents of the human psyche, shared cross-culturally by all human beings, and he regarded them as universal expressions of a collective unconscious. Much earlier, the Platonic tradition considered archetypes to be not only psychological but also cosmic and objective, as primordial forms of a Universal Mind that transcended the human psyche. Astrology would appear to support the Platonic view as well as the Jungian, since it gives evidence that Jungian archetypes are not only visible in human psychology, in human experience and behavior, but are also linked to the macrocosm itself--to the planets and their movements in the heavens. Astrology thus supports the ancient idea of an *anima mundi*, or world soul, in which the human psyche participates. From this perspective, what Jung called the collective unconscious can be viewed as being ultimately embedded within the cosmos itself.

The issue of *free will vs. determinism*: It used to be believed that astrology revealed a person's destined fate, that the birth chart was rigidly deterministic. Properly understood, however, astrology can serve to greatly increase personal freedom, rather than limit it. Partly this is because awareness of the basic archetypal structures and patterns of meaning in one's birth chart allows one to bring considerably more consciousness to the task of fulfilling one's deepest potential, one's authentic nature. But astrology's emancipatory character also derives from the fact that the more deeply we understand the archetypal forces that affect our lives, the more free we can be in our dealings with them. If we are altogether unconscious of these potent forces, we are like puppets of the archetypes: we then act according to unconscious motivations without any possibility of our being intelligent agents interacting with those forces. To the exact extent that we are conscious of the archetypes, we can respond with greater autonomy and self-awareness. This is of course the whole rationale for depth psychology, from Freud and Jung onward--to become conscious of the unconscious, to release ourselves from the bondage of blind action, to explore and experience the

hidden forces in the human psyche. Astrology's great merit is that it seems to reveal very precisely which archetypes are especially important for each person, how they interact with each other, and when and how they are most likely to be expressed in the course of each life.

Related to this issue is the question of our birth, and how random is the fate by which we are assigned something as weighty as the birth chart with its specific configuration of planets. I personally believe that the circumstances of our birth are not accidental, but are in some sense a consequence of our spiritual and karmic character. Like many others, I have come to believe that we choose the circumstances of our lives, we choose the family and culture and age into which we are born, and that this choice is somehow made from a higher level of our spiritual being than that of which we are usually conscious.

From this point of view, the birth chart is not the randomly allotted prison-structure of our inexorable fate, but can be seen rather as defining the basic structure of our potential unfolding--suggesting the personal gifts and trials that we have chosen for this lifetime to work with and evolve through. Astrology illuminates the fundamental archetypal dynamics that profoundly *condition* our lives, which is not to say they absolutely *determine* our lives. Because our personal response to life always contains an element of unpredictability and potential freedom, and because astrology gives a greater understanding of our basic archetypal complexes and their timing, then a knowledge of our birth chart and transits can significantly increase the range of options, flexibility, and intelligence with which we approach life. The study of astrology can be extraordinarily liberating.

Finally, the issue of *causal mechanism*, or why astrology works: It seems unlikely to me that the planets send out some kind of physical emanations that causally influence events in human life in a mechanistic way. The range of coincidences between planetary positions and human existence is just too vast, too experientially complex, too aesthetically subtle and endlessly creative to be explained by physical factors alone. I believe that a more plausible and comprehensive explanation is that the universe is informed and pervaded by a fundamental holistic patterning which extends through every level, so that a constant synchronicity or meaningful correlation exists between astronomical events and human events. This is represented in the basic esoteric axiom, "as above, so below," which reflects a universe all of whose parts are integrated into an intelligible whole.

From this perspective, the planets themselves are not "causing" anything to be happening in our lives, any more than the hands on a clock are now causing it to be 7:30 PM. Rather, the planetary positions are *indicative* of the cosmic state of the archetypal forces at that time. The fact that the planets constantly seem to indicate these things with such accuracy simply suggests that the cosmic order is much more profound and pervasive than our conventional beliefs have assumed. But the relationship between a specific planetary pattern and a human experience is best seen as one of meaningful correlation or correspondence, not one of simple linear causality.

There is, however, a sense in which causality does enter into the astrological perspective, and this is in the sense of *archetypal* causation (comparable to Aristotle's concepts of formal and final causes). While the physical planets themselves may bear only a synchronistic connection with a given human experience, that experience is nevertheless being affected or caused--influenced, patterned, impelled, drawn forth--by the relevant planetary *archetypes*, and in this sense it is quite appropriate to speak, for example, of Saturn (as archetype) "influencing" one in a specific way, or as "governing" certain kinds of experience.

But why should the cosmos have established a systematic correspondence between planetary patterns and archetypally patterned phenomena in human lives? There are many possible answers to this question, not the least of which might point toward a kind of intrinsic aesthetic splendor in the universe, an overflow of cosmic intelligence and delight that reveals itself in this continuous marriage of mathematical astronomy and mythic poetry. But in more pragmatic, human terms, my sense of astrology is that the constant coincidence between planetary positions and human lives exists as a kind of universal code for the human mind to unravel, so that we can better understand ourselves and our world, rediscover our deep connection to the cosmos, and be more complete human beings.

There are two categories that are most important for understanding the archetypal dynamics of one's birth chart and transits: planets and aspects. The *planets* represent the essential archetypal forces themselves, while the aspects—the angular relationships between the planets, often indicated on the chart by lines drawn between the planetary symbols—reflect the general nature of the interaction between those archetypal forces. First I will outline the meanings of the individual planets, then the aspects.

Planets

Sun	Jupiter
Moon	Saturn
Mercury	Uranus
Venus	Neptune
Mars	Pluto

There are ten planetary archetypes, and it is these that form the foundation of any astrological analysis. (Following the original ancient Greek usage, the term

“planet” in astrology includes the Sun and Moon as well as Mercury, Venus, Mars, et al.) Although every planetary archetype plays an important role in one’s chart, in certain ways the most personally significant are the Sun and Moon.

The Sun represents the central principle of vital energy and conscious selfhood in the birth chart. Just as the Sun is the central entity in the solar system, so is the Sun the central entity in the individual psyche reflected in the birth chart. The Sun represents the center of personal identity, the conscious ego, the autonomous willing self, and is associated with one's sense of individual self-directedness and self-expression. It rules one's basic energy drive, the will to exist, to express oneself dynamically as an autonomous individual. It represents that dynamic expression of the personal will which influences and draws upon all the other planetary energies. It is the part of one that, simply put, strives to be: to “shine,” to create, to achieve, to manifest itself. It is tied to one’s basic personal identity in life: “I am John Smith, this is who I am, what I've done, where I'm going” etc. In mythic terms, the Sun is associated with the Hero archetype, and is yang in nature.

When the Sun forms a major aspect with another planet in one’s birth chart (for example, a conjunction with Venus, or an opposition with Mars), then this second planetary archetype will tend to be particularly prominent in one’s life and character, infusing its qualities into the basic energy of the self as represented by the Sun. Any major Sun aspects are therefore of great importance in one’s chart. Also, in both women's and men's charts, the Sun tends to reflect significant male figures in one's life.

The Moon, by contrast, represents the feminine side of the psyche, the anima in Jungian terms. It is closely associated with the emotionally and instinctively responsive personality, with the psychosomatic basis of one's being, and with the early mother-child relationship. The Moon symbolizes, in a sense, the womb or matrix of one's being. While the Sun reflects one's sense of autonomous conscious selfhood, one's personal identity and will, and is more active and self-directing in nature, the Moon represents more one's underlying psychological character--those parts of oneself that are more hidden to one's conscious ego--and is more receptive and spontaneously reactive or responsive in nature. In particular, the Moon corresponds to one's feelings and those pervasive but largely unconscious psychological patterns that were established deep in one's past. It is not that the Moon simply *is* the unconscious; rather it is archetypally associated with what the modern self tends to be unconscious *of*: the psyche's emotional, physical, imaginal, familial, and ancestral ground or matrix.

The Moon corresponds to how one feels about oneself even before one thinks about oneself--as well as how one tends to relate spontaneously to others and to life's various situations. Like the ever-shifting cycles and phases of the Moon, the lunar part of the psyche, associated with one's moods and feelings, tends to be changeable and fluctuating in character, though on another level its deeply imprinted patterns are very enduring. The Moon concerns one’s immediate psychosomatic mode of response to life that begins in one's earliest years, that is partly a matter of inheritance, and partly forged

in one's early interactions with the world--especially with one's mother and other mother-figures, one's family (siblings, father) and one's early home environment in general. It governs one's sense of belonging (or not), how one tends to nurture and be nurtured, and is associated with both the maternal instinct and the needs and instincts of infancy and childhood. In later life, the Moon reflects the nature of all one's intimate relationships, familial and otherwise, as well as one's home life. In mythic terms, the Moon is associated with certain aspects of the Great Mother goddess, and is yin in nature.

Again, as with the Sun, if any major aspect is formed between the Moon and another planet in one's birth chart, this second planetary archetype will tend to be especially significant in one's life. But in this case that second archetype will tend to channel itself through those parts of one's life governed by the Moon: one's emotions and moods, one's infancy and childhood, one's mother and early familial environment, one's intimate relationships and domestic life, and so forth. Also, in both women's and men's charts, the Moon tends to reflect significant female figures in a person's life.

It is important to remember that both women and men have both the Sun and Moon, the basic masculine and feminine archetypes, within their psyche. These principles represent the great yang-yin polarity that pervades existence. It is unclear how much of our masculine and feminine "natures" is culturally conditioned and how much is innate, though certainly there does seem to be a greater intrinsic resonance between the Moon archetype and a woman's body and psyche in her childbearing and nurturing capacities. However, on another level, it seems to be one of the main challenges for all human beings to attain an inner balance between these two fundamental polarities--between the striving for autonomous individuality and the sense of connectedness to a larger whole, between active and receptive, will and feeling, conscious and unconscious, self and psyche.

Mercury represents the principle of mind, thinking, and the movement or exchange of ideas through speaking, writing, and other forms of communication. It governs the capacity to conceptualize and communicate, to articulate, to use words and language, to analyze and comprehend, to learn, to perceive, to mediate, transport, and connect. The Mercury archetype is associated with the Greek mythic figure of Hermes, the Roman Mercury, the messenger of the gods. A major aspect between Mercury and another planet tends to correlate with how one's mental and neural processes tend to work, how one gives and receives information, and the nature of one's education and intellectual vision.

Venus represents the principle of love and beauty. Venus is Eros, as Mercury is Logos. Venus rules the desire to be involved in romantic and social relations, to attract and be attracted to others, to engage in artistic activities, to seek harmony and aesthetic or sensuous pleasure. The Venus archetype is associated with the Greek mythic figure of Aphrodite, the Roman Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. Major aspects involving Venus tend to correlate with how one gives and receives love and affection,

the nature of one's social and romantic relationships, and the character of one's artistic impulse and aesthetic sensibility.

Mars represents the principle of energetic force. It symbolizes that part of the psyche which impels us to act, to assert ourselves, to struggle, to press forward and against, to be courageous and vigorous, to be competitive or combative. Mars is the archetypal warrior: it governs the capacity for aggressiveness, anger, and physical energy, as well as tendencies toward injury, violence, and impulsiveness. It is connected with athletic activity, and also, as the polar complement to Venus, governs the yang aspect of sexuality. The Mars archetype is associated with the Greek mythic figure of Ares, the Roman Mars, the god of war. Major aspects involving Mars are indicative of how one tends to act and assert oneself in life and how one experiences conflict and aggression.

Jupiter represents the principle of expansion and success. It governs the tendency to expand and grow, to elevate and uplift, to seek that which is better or higher, to improve and magnify, to incorporate that which is external, to make larger wholes. It also governs the tendency to experience success, honor, abundance, happiness, and good fortune, and is connected with the capacity for magnanimity, liberality, pride, and optimism. In addition Jupiter corresponds to a concern with moral and philosophical ideals and principles, with long-range or broad perspectives, with the urge for intellectual and cultural breadth, and more generally with the striving for breadth of experience (e.g., through travel, wide reading, inner exploration, etc.). On the negative side, Jupiter is connected with the tendency toward excess, inflation, extravagance, overconcern with wealth and status, self-indulgence, complacency, overconfidence, and sense of personal superiority.

The Jupiter archetype is associated with the Greek mythic figure of Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods, the Roman Jupiter; called the Great Benefic, it is related also to Fortuna and Providence. Major aspects involving Jupiter tend to indicate the nature of one's experience of personal expansion, growth, and success in all realms of life, as well as how impulses in these directions might be excessive.

Saturn is the next planetary archetype to discuss, and because it is an especially complex archetype I will describe it in more detail. Saturn represents the principle of limit, structure, and necessity. It governs the material world, time, tradition, the past, aging, death, and the endings of things. The Saturn archetype is associated with the Greek mythic figure of Kronos, the stern father of the gods, the Roman Saturn. Called the Great Malefic in traditional astrology, it is associated with such archetypal figures as Fate, Father Time, Death, and the Grim Reaper. In Jungian and archetypal psychology, Saturn is often called the senex.

Saturn represents the hard structure of things, the reality principle, the bottom line. It is in many ways the opposite of Jupiter in nature: where Jupiter expands and

grants success, Saturn contracts and inhibits; where Jupiter is liberal and magnanimous, Saturn is conservative and strict; where Jupiter uplifts, Saturn oppresses. Indeed, Saturn can well seem to be a one-sidedly negative planet in the astrological pantheon, though in fact the situation is much more complicated. Saturn opposes and limits, but in doing so, it strengthens, grounds, forges, gives our soul substance and gravitas, makes us real.

In an important sense, Saturn is the ruler of the birth chart itself, for Saturn is Time, Chronos, as well as that which fixes a moment in time, creates through birth a separate embodiment of reality, and then sustains and works out through time all the meaning and challenges of that archetypal moment.

Saturn is the archetype that rules the structure of our lives. It is the matrix of things, that which provides both limit and structure, thereby permitting the possibility of manifestation itself. In limiting and bringing closure, Saturn defines. Saturn is also the principle of judgment, governing the consequences of our actions, confronting us with our past. Esoterically, it is considered to be the planet of karma, the carrier of karma from past lifetimes, the consequences of which we now have to encounter in the present life. It might be seen as the cross we bear, for it concerns our trials and sufferings which may often seem inexplicable and undeserved. In theological terms Saturn bears resemblance to some (though not all) aspects of the Hebrew Yahweh: the strict patriarchal ruler and law-giver of creation, the God of justice and retribution who condemns humankind to a life of separation, labor, suffering, disease, pain in childbirth, and death. Saturn is lord of the realm of finitude, imperfection, and mortality. At a deep level, Saturn can be seen as the archetypal birth labor of existence: that which constricts and limits, rigidifies, alienates, cuts one off from the primal union, makes us die to the womb--but also that which incarnates us, gives us embodiment, form, firmness, substance, material reality.

Saturn is therefore often symbolized as a skeleton, both as a symbol of death, the ultimate consuming power of time, but also as the skeletal structure and foundation of things, without which there would be no form, no stability, no supporting frame of strength and solidity which has slowly evolved through time and experience.

Saturn makes us stand alone and know solitude; it separates us from others--from the womb when we are born, from our childhood family as we grow older, and from everyone as we face our death. Yet it is also Saturn that makes us who we are, that disciplines and orders our existence until it has sculpted our essence. It is the superego inside us--our inner judge and conscience, that complex reflection of internalized social convention, religious tradition, and moral law. Saturn governs the consequences of error, guilt, pessimism, inferiority, depression, deprivation; yet it also gives us the capacity for rigor, order, concentration, endurance, seriousness, fidelity, responsibility, maturity. To continue the comparison with Jupiter, where Jupiter may be inflated, exaggerated, or overoptimistic, Saturn is judicious, grounded, and pragmatic. Saturn works slowly and gradually, painstakingly, often painfully, but effectively, with enduring results.

Saturn rules our work in the world, that which we do to make ends meet, the labor of life. It governs "reality" as we usually think of that term--that which makes

concrete demands on us, which confronts us with material limitations, which brings us down to earth. It makes us know defeat, limiting our aspirations and negating our dreams. Saturn resists and oppresses us, and yet also defines us, brings us experience and wisdom, makes us take responsibility for ourselves so that we become our own master. As Nietzsche said, "He who cannot obey himself will be commanded." It is Saturn alone that can give us that special sense of inner authority which can only be purchased through time and experience.

The position of Saturn in one's birth chart is thus a matter of great importance, and the major aspects it makes to other planets can tell us much about one's principal concerns in life. Transits involving Saturn regularly mark periods of major developmental importance, often bringing times of personal trial, but also of deep maturation and the establishment of significant life structures involving one's career, important relationships, or major karmic responsibilities. Perhaps the main thing to remember--or to adopt as a working hypothesis--is that Saturn indicates that which we have chosen to work with and through in this life in order to achieve a higher level of spiritual awareness. The sufferings and frustrations it may bring can perhaps best be seen as serving a purpose which will in the long run be recognized as worth all the hard labor of life. Again, Saturn is that part of the archetypal birth process which oppresses and alienates, and yet slowly molds and structures, and, in the end, ushers us into a new level of existence. It is the guardian of the threshold.

Uranus represents the principle of change, of freedom, rebellion, and revolution. It is associated with unexpected phenomena of all kinds, with sudden surprises and awakenings, with breakthroughs--intellectual, psychological, spiritual. It governs the sudden breakup of established structures, and tends to have an exciting and electric quality. It also rules individualism and originality, invention and technology, creative genius and brilliant mental insight. The planet Uranus, the first planet to be discovered in modern times--in 1781, during an age of radical cultural change and revolution--can best be understood archetypally in terms of the Greek mythic figure of Prometheus, who stole fire from the heavens in rebellion against the gods to give humankind greater freedom.

The Promethean impulse associated with the planet Uranus represents that part of us that seeks to go our own way, to choose our own individual path in life. Its influence inclines one to be changeable, restless, and unpredictable--sometimes irresponsibly so--in a constant quest for personal freedom and new experience. Uranus also mediates creativity and innovation: in its less exalted forms it can signify only eccentricity or lawlessness, but in its highest expression it can indicate real genius, and a capacity for making significant personal or cultural breakthroughs in the course of one's life. The Prometheus archetype associated with the planet Uranus correlates with that stage in the archetypal birth process in which one is suddenly liberated from the constrictions of the birth canal and experiences sudden freedom, awakening, new life, new identity, a radical expansion of horizons: Prometheus Unbound.

There is another side to this archetype's energy, however, which can make the experience of Uranus a very different matter. When a person has not integrated the Promethean impulse toward creative freedom, autonomous individualism, and capacity for change, there is a strong tendency to experience this archetype as something that happens to one from without in upsetting, disruptive ways. That is, instead of being ourselves a source of change and independence and excitement, we may tend to have change and unpredictable events thrust upon us, so that we are forced to open up our life to new horizons and new possibilities. Uranus thus confronts the Saturnian part of us that wishes to hold on, to maintain the status quo, to resist change in favor of security, tradition, and the established order.

The rebel-trickster side of the Prometheus archetype can thus come from within or without, and in the latter case a person can feel constantly subject to problematic changes that require one to reorient one's life. Whether these changes are precipitated by other people, by new psychological or physical conditions, or by external circumstances, their role is to open one's life to something new. If one is identified excessively with the past, if one tries to hold on to structures that are outmoded, then one will experience Uranus as a disruptive force that at times can be quite uncomfortable. But the potential is always there for one to integrate the archetype, and for one to contact one's own capacity for freedom and excitement, for openness to the unexpected and the new.

When any planet is in major aspect to Uranus, that second planetary archetype tends to be liberated into expression, often in sudden, unusual, or unexpected ways. The second archetype is given an exciting, creative or innovative stimulation, and can be a source of both freedom and unanticipated change.

Neptune is the archetype of the transcendent, of ideal reality, of imagination and the spiritual. It represents the ocean of consciousness that dissolves all boundaries between self and other, between self and universe, between self and God, and between this concrete reality and other realities. In perinatal terms Neptune has much to do with the intrauterine condition in which the child's being and consciousness are not yet differentiated from the mother's, where there is a symbiotic union, a melting oceanic feeling. Individuals who contact this primal memory in deep self-exploration often associate that state with the mystical condition of oneness with Nature, union with God, or union with the All, and also with a free-floating consciousness in which many realities--spiritual, imaginative, or illusory--seem to interpenetrate without sharp distinction.

Neptune thus governs the ideal world, whether this be defined as the perfect all-encompassing maternal womb, the spiritual world of ideal reality, or one's highest dreams and aspirations. Yet, like every other planetary archetype, Neptune has opposite sides, light and shadow. For it can both illuminate one with the highest spiritual truths that transcend the everyday world, and yet also lead one into escapist fantasy, illusion, and deception. Neptune represents Nirvana, the supreme state of mystical bliss where all the divisions and structures of this world are transcended; yet it also represents

Maya, the divine play which produces the many illusions of reality that enchant consciousness. Neptune relates to both madness and mysticism, and the line is often hard to draw.

Neptune can also be seen as connected to the Narcissus archetype--that which is absorbed in its own reflection. Again this can be understood as the ultimate Divinity eternally experiencing its infinite consciousness, as reflected in the mystic who is absorbed in blissful meditation; but also as the self-absorbed narcissist, the drug addict or alcoholic, the television couch-potato, the escapist, or the psychotic who can no longer accurately discern what is consensus reality. There is a selflessness and unworldliness to Neptune which is visible in the saint and martyr, the altruistic social worker, the yogi or monk. Yet these same qualities can result in an unhealthy denial of self, a sense of helpless weakness, a regressive impulse away from life and the challenges of being an individual self, or an exaggerated spirituality that would altogether deny the claims of the physical world and physical body. What is required of us, as always, is to find a good balance between the demands of Neptune and those of the other planets.

Neptune rules the basic human drive or thirst for transcendence: the yearning for an invisible ideal, the longing to dissolve one's boundaries into the cosmic unity, to melt into a dream, to transcend this world of separation and limit, to experience the flow of love and compassion and a transcendence of the boundaries of the personal ego. It is just this drive or thirst that fuels the addictive impulse as well as the spiritual quest. Because of Neptune's association with the ideal, with a kind of mystical paradise or oceanic womb of which the psyche may have, as it were, archetypal memories, there is often an accompanying sense of loss or longing connected with whatever it touches in the chart.

Because it dissolves one's boundaries, Neptune tends to sensitize one to everything--to other people and their inner states, to external stimuli, to other realities, and so forth. It greatly increases the intuition, but it can also make one liable to projecting one's own inner states on to others in a delusive way. Neptune is related to healing abilities, both physical and psychological. It has a refining, purifying, sublimating influence. Yet physically Neptune tends to weaken one's own body (in favor of the spiritual), just as psychologically it tends to weaken the ego (in favor of the larger whole of consciousness). Its constant dynamic is to dissolve structures, to bring all things back to an undifferentiated unity. Neptune also seems to be related to all things watery, whether the physical ocean or the amniotic fluid in which floats the embryo.

Since it governs the realm of imagination, Neptune can be seen as the source of all imaginative creativity and artistic imagery. It governs myth, dreams, symbols, and the flow of images in consciousness. It is the spiritual matrix of the *anima mundi*, the world soul or cosmic psyche. Also, as the symbol of the ultimate spiritual unity of all things, Neptune can be seen as the wellspring of love and compassion. It rules faith and hope, a sense of the unseen, the quest for spiritual beauty. It is the mystical religious archetype par excellence.

When a planet is in major aspect to Neptune, that second planetary archetype tends to be especially sensitized, sometimes weakened, sometimes spiritualized, sometimes both. The second archetype tends to be idealized in some way, making it subject to either illusion on the one hand or mystical meaning on the other. It becomes allied to the principle of imagination and the spiritual, and potentially can be a significant channel for the expansion of consciousness.

And finally Pluto: the archetype of primordial energy, the universal life force which impels all evolution and transformation. Pluto represents the principle of power itself, of elemental force, of primal libido and aggression, and is essentially identical to Freud's notion of the id. It is the Dionysian energy of life, the Serpent power, the Kundalini. It compels, empowers, overwhelms, transforms; it destroys and resurrects. Pluto governs the instincts and the forces of nature. It rules the biological processes of birth, sex, and death, and at its deepest level it involves the mystery of death and rebirth.

Pluto rules upheaval, breakdown and decay, but also regeneration and the purifying fire of catharsis. It reflects the archetypal Underworld--the dark, mysterious, and often terrifying reality which lurks beneath the surface of things, beneath our ego and societal conventions and the veneer of civilization, and which is periodically unleashed with great destructive and transformative force. Many of the problematic instincts that lie deep within the human psyche, such as murderous hatred, violent jealousy, compulsive greed and lust and so forth, reflect the activity of Pluto: this is Freud's broiling cauldron of the instincts. Pluto is visible in the elemental power of a volcanic eruption, of a devouring lion, of a war, of an orgasm, of a mother in the climactic stages of giving birth. It is present in all violent, purgatorial discharge of pent-up energies--from the Earth as in an earthquake, or from the human body and psyche as in therapy or in a psychotic break. Pluto is in many ways the polar complement of Neptune--together they represent the great polarities of Dionysus and Apollo, the chthonic and the transcendent, the volcanic and the oceanic, nature and spirit, instinct and imagination. And, like Neptune, Pluto is unfathomable.

In terms of the archetypal birth process, Pluto corresponds to the stage in which the baby is being powerfully expelled from within the mother's body in a life-and-death struggle of bloody biology, when the erotic and aggressive instincts are being aroused to the utmost. Pluto thus has two sides, both expressed in the processes of Nature: a destructive side, personified as Kali, the Devouring Mother, and a creative side, personified as Shakti, the universal divine energy that impels all life and evolution. Pluto is what Schopenhauer and Nietzsche called the universal Will--at one level seeming to reflect only blind, driving instinct, at another possessing all the evolutionary intelligence of Nature, the divine Shakti. Pluto is Nature itself, life eternally transforming and overcoming itself in an immense evolutionary dynamic.

It has been said that in the course of life we are all consumed by life's fire: the only question--and this is where our challenge lies--is whether we will be deformed or perfected by that process.

When a planet forms a major aspect to Pluto, that second planetary archetype tends to be greatly intensified and empowered in one's life and character, sometimes to a compulsive extreme. It may be a source of power struggles in one's life, outer or inner, but also of profound personal transformation.

These, then, are the ten planetary archetypes. Archetypes are deep and many-faceted, and their meanings constantly open up to one in new ways each time one studies them. It is also important to remember that, although I have described them here individually, in actual life they always interact with each other, Pluto with Venus, for example, or Uranus with Mars, and often three or more interacting simultaneously. It is these complex archetypal interactions--in the birth chart and in transits--that form the basis of astrological analysis.

Aspects

Now I will define the aspects, which are the geometrical relationships between planets which indicate how the corresponding archetypes tend to interact with each other and express themselves in one's life.

An aspect is a specific angular relationship (such as 90 degrees or 180) between two planets. The existence of an aspect between planets indicates a mutual activation of the corresponding archetypes. That is, when two planets are positioned in a specific angular relationship (measured in degrees of celestial longitude along the ecliptic), the two corresponding planetary archetypes are brought into interaction and into concrete expression in human affairs. (For example, if Mercury and Pluto are in close aspect in one's birth chart, then a decisive interaction between the Mercury and Pluto archetypes would tend to be visible in one's life and character.) There are five major aspects:

conjunction (approx. 0 degrees between planets)

opposition (approx. 180)

trine (approx. 120)

square (approx. 90)

sextile (approx. 60)

Of the major aspects, the conjunction and opposition are the most significant and potent, representing the two climaxes of any planetary cycle (for example, the new Moon and full Moon, which are formed by the Moon's conjunction and opposition with the Sun). The trine and square aspects are intermediate in strength, the sextile the least

potent. Also, generally speaking, the more exact the aspect (for example, two planets that are 2 degrees away from exact conjunction, rather than 7 degrees), then the more pronounced will be the archetypal interaction.

The trine and sextile generally indicate a harmonious (“soft”) interaction between two planetary archetypes, in which the two principles or forms of energy tend to flow together in an easy manner. The opposition and square correspond to a more dynamic or conflicting (“hard”) interaction. Here the two principles tend to have a more dialectical relationship, working both with and against each other; the individual has to work hard to bring the two together in a positive way, to have them come to terms with each other. And the conjunction indicates a synthesis in which the interaction can be of either category. Thus an aspect between two planets brings the two corresponding archetypes into interaction, and also determines the nature of that interaction.

[For those who are interested in these matters, the character of each aspect is defined by Pythagorean principles. The major aspects are formed by dividing the 360 degree circle by the whole numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, respectively, and the Pythagorean meaning of each number gives to the corresponding aspect its specific quality. Thus the unity or synthesis inherent in the number 1 and the conjunction; the polarity or duality inherent in the number 2 and the opposition; the equilibrium or stable balance of the number 3 and the trine. The characters of the square (4) and the sextile (6) derive from their components (2x2 and 3x2), with the square resembling the opposition, and the sextile resembling the trine.]

Also important in our analysis are alignments known as midpoints, which can be regarded as a more subtle kind of aspect. When one planet is positioned in aspect to the exact midpoint of two other planets, then the corresponding archetypes are considered to be brought into interaction. Such a configuration indicates a complex mutual activation of all three archetypes.

Although by necessity we discuss the various individual aspects and midpoint configurations in a chart in isolation, two or three planets at a time, in actuality they are all parts of an integrated whole that is greater than the sum of its discrete parts. This complexly interacting whole, one’s birth chart, ultimately defies full intellectual comprehension, but by selecting out and focusing on the individual aspects and their specific archetypal dynamics, we can shed considerable light on the whole birth chart and the life it symbolically reflects.

Let me emphasize here that though the soft aspects are indeed great gifts, it is often the hard aspects, in both birth charts and transits, that prove to be the most fruitful in a person's life, sometimes dramatically so. Although they are rightly associated with difficulties, crises, and challenges, it is the hard aspects that tend to make things happen in life. The pressure of their conflict tends to create greater energetic dynamism, and challenge one to move toward higher creative syntheses. They are more likely to produce concrete manifestations, strengthening of character, deepening of the soul. Also, as one works through the negative side of such an aspect, the psychic energy that is bound within that archetypal complex can be freed up to manifest in more creative,

life-enhancing ways (e.g., the compulsive rigidity that can accompany hard Saturn-Pluto aspects can turn into sustained strength of purpose, and so forth). Individuals who achieve things of real consequence in life regularly have birth charts with hard aspects between the planets most relevant to their achievement, and those major achievements often occur during periods of life marked by demanding transits.

Transits

The study of transits is especially valuable because it allows us to get a sense for the timing of the planetary archetypes in our lives. Perhaps of all areas of astrology, it is the study of transits that produces the most compelling evidence for the power of the astrological perspective, and its immense pragmatic value. The principle of transits rests on the fact that as the planets continue moving after a person's birth, they move into and out of aspect in relation to the natal planetary positions. Thus when any planet's present position in the sky forms an aspect to a point that was occupied by any planet at the time of one's birth (for example Uranus now in the sky forming a conjunction to Venus in the natal chart), then during the period in which that particular aspect is in range one would tend to have experiences that correlate with the planets and aspect involved (in this example, a two-or-three year period in which one would tend to experience the awakening of new love, the stimulation of one's artistic creativity or aesthetic responsiveness to life, a certain restlessness and unpredictability in one's relationships, and so forth).

While the birth chart in itself is a portrait of one's life and character as a whole, transits to the birth chart reflect the dynamic unfolding of one's life and character in terms of specific events and experiences. Transits activate the potential that is inherent in the birth chart.

Since different planets move at different speeds, the duration of their transits varies--a Moon transit lasting only several hours, a Sun or Mars transit several days, and the outer planets several months or even years. The transits of the inner planets are useful for understanding the day-to-day changes and shorter cycles of one's life, but it is transits from the four outermost planets--Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto--that are of the greatest significance in understanding life's larger dynamics.

There are a number of other significant factors in the birth chart that are well worth examining, such as the sign positions of the planets (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc.), the houses, the elements and qualities, hemispheric emphasis, harmonics, as well as other predictive techniques such as progressions, solar arc directions, solar and lunar

returns, etc. I find all of these to be valuable factors to explore, and I may at times bring some of them into discussion, but my own particular expertise, as well as the bulk of my empirical research, is in the area of interpreting the combinations of planetary archetypes, the major aspects (including midpoints), and transits. I regard these, after many years of research, as the most essential factors in astrology, possessing great precision and richness of meaning. These factors reflect a certain beautifully lucid geometry of archetypal forms and forces, and I believe they offer the most intellectually cogent and clarifying path of entry into the mysteries of the astrological perspective.

I recommend seeking out interpretations or readings from every good astrologer who crosses your path, for astrology is so complex, and your chart has so many facets and levels of meaning, that each astrologer can illuminate it in new ways and give you important new insights. Also, my own focus is on the psychological and spiritual dimensions of life (as well as on long-term cultural and historical cycles). There are other astrologers who focus on medical, financial, horary, and other specialized areas of astrology, which you may find particularly relevant to your own interests. But beyond getting readings from good astrologers, I believe the most rewarding path to take in the end is to learn something about the field for yourself, learn how to calculate your own transits (it is not difficult), and then examine the evidence and experience this profound source of insight and understanding for yourself.

A few last comments

Every planetary combination has a problematic side as well as a more obviously beneficent and productive side, and I always attempt to describe both as clearly as possible. But particularly the hard aspects between planets (both in the birth chart and in transits) are likely to challenge one to come to terms with the energies involved, and in describing these one should not sugarcoat them so that it would seem as if you have only marvelous personal qualities and your life has been and will always be an uninterrupted series of wonderful experiences. No one's life or character is like that. The birth chart provides a vivid portrait of one's self, and its usefulness is dependent on how clearly and fully you are willing to face your true character, including parts of yourself and your life that may be difficult or hidden. An astrological chart provides a kind of x-ray of the soul and its movements, which cuts through the more superficial levels of the psyche to reach the archetypal foundations of one's life and being.

The main thing to understand here is that astrology is not *concretely* predictive, but *archetypally* predictive. That is, the birth chart and transits indicate which universal principles are emphasized, in what combination, and when. They do not give information such as “You will get an offer of a job as editor-in-chief for a large publishing firm on April 26, 2004,” or “You will meet your soul mate on the beach at Waikiki at sunset on New Year's Day in 2005.” It may not be impossible for a gifted clairvoyant to do something like this, but astrology has a different character.

Along the same lines, some archetypal dynamics symbolized in our birth chart we recognize as true, but not so much of our own character as of the kinds of experiences we have drawn towards us, the character of events and relationships that are in our life. This is because the archetypal patterns in our birth chart describe the quality of our life experience. One cannot know for sure whether the particular archetypal energies will be something one is conscious of in oneself, or whether they express themselves in the larger sphere of one's life in the events, relationships, and circumstances that are to some degree external to one, yet ultimately reflect one's own consciousness. Particularly if we have not psychologically "owned" those qualities in our chart, we will tend to project them onto others--and thus draw towards us others who will fulfill those energies in our life. As Jung often said, what is forced to remain unconscious comes to us as "fate."

The value of a good astrological analysis is that it can shed a more coherent light on the many diverse and often chaotic particulars of our life, so that we can see clarifying archetypal patterns in it. In terms of the more problematic qualities suggested in the chart, some of these will no longer seem relevant to us simply because we have already lived them through, fully experienced their challenges, and outgrown them. More than that, we will have integrated those aspects and made them work for us in a more positive way. And that of course is as it should be. An analysis like this is meant to further encourage just this process. As an ancient esoteric dictum put it: "The sagacious person enhances the workings of the heavens in the same way a farmer enhances the workings of nature."

Finally, it is important to realize that, at least in one crucial sense, astrology operates beyond good and evil. All archetypes are Janus-faced, with positive and negative sides, and as the foregoing discussion suggests, no astrologer can look at a chart and, simply on that basis, conclude whether that person is "good" or "bad." The birth chart does not determine the moral vector of personal character. Nor does it determine ultimate "success" or "failure." It portrays rather the basic nature of the archetypal dynamics that inform that individual's life and character. How the individual copes with and grows through those particular dynamics, how she or he creatively embodies and integrates the diverse potentials of the birth chart, depends in the last analysis on the individual. The same archetype can express itself benignly or destructively, in an exalted way or an ignoble way, and to a great extent which of these occurs will be affected by the kind of consciousness that is brought to the situation. The god needs to be honored, the archetype will manifest, but there is considerable latitude as to how that may happen.

And herein lies the importance of astrological insight, for the very act of knowing the nature of the particular archetypes that are seeking to manifest, combined with an awareness of their potential timing, can play a significant role in positively influencing the outcome. Then life becomes more of a dance—a subtle interaction between archetypal forces and human awareness, a play of consciousness between the gods and the human mind and will and heart which they inform.