

Speaking of Astrology Introduction

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Why Take Astrology Seriously?

Astrology provides an interesting roadmap that can help you "decode" some of the mysteries of your life, your relationships, other people, your individual pasts, your unfolding future, and your personal destiny. If you look at that list carefully, you'll see a tremendous wealth of material available through this often abused and misunderstood occult discipline.

- If you (or someone knowledgeable) can read it properly, your horoscope ... the map of the sky frozen in time at the moment of your birth that Astrology uses to describe your character ... tells you the "raw materials" you have to work with, the qualities and characteristics of personal energy you are using to express who you are, be who you need to be, and how you can do what you came here to do.
- Your horoscope can describe your talents, your strengths, your hang-ups, your challenges, your Karmic gifts, and your Karmic obligations. It can literally tell you who you were meant to be before life, society, and other factors got hold of you and possibly corrupted the picture so that you've had to spend a great deal of time and effort trying to get back on track.
- The opportunity to face the conditions of your life armed with that knowledge is indispensable. If, as Socrates said, the unexamined life is not worth living, Astrology is where you get a jump start on the knowledge you need to have about yourself and the curriculum you need to master to make progress on your soul's unfolding path with the time and energy you spend here.
- If you know Astrology well enough to read your own chart, it's a cinch you can read the chart of another person. This is not only a benefit for learning more about the people in your close relationships, but looking at the charts of historical figures, famous people you admire, or people making news for both great and terrible reasons can offer you an extraordinary new dimension of understanding in human psychology.
- Astrology can help you compare your chart (and therefore your character, needs, and potential) with those of another person or an important event in your life -- such as a marriage, a job, a relocation, an investment, an accident, even a theoretical event -- such as a pending decision ... and help you understand the dynamics of your relationship, what you provide for one another and the difficulties and challenges you face in your association.
- Astrology can especially help you examine your relationship between you and your parents, between your parents themselves, between your siblings and your parents, and between you and your partner. (You can learn more about why you had such an easy or difficult time with one of your parents while one of your siblings had just the opposite experience.)
- Astrology will help show upcoming experiences, the themes that will be emphasized in your immediate future, and the progress of major life trends and lessons. It can help you both take advantage of the beneficial energies that arrive and understand (and cope more wisely with) the challenges contained in every life. It can also help you examine your past and gain insight into what "life was asking of you" at certain times ... both happy and painful.
- Astrology will let you take one part of your life and examine in great detail what you have to work with and what you need to have for "best results." You can see what kind of job you are suited for and the best conditions for the work you were built to do. You can see what kind of parent you are to each of your children. (You're different with every one of them.) You can see what kind of partner you're looking for as a spouse. (Which, believe it or not is different from the kind of romantic lover you want.) You can see how you handle money and what your best income potentials are. Astrology can tell you volumes about all this and more.

- If you follow it far enough, you can also learn your Karma through your horoscope -- the gifts you brought to develop, the commitments you accepted, the challenges you are trying to solve, the weaknesses you are working to fortify.

I know of no other human science that can do this so thoroughly, so consistently, so accurately, and with such logic to its information. When you understand the value Astrology can provide in all these areas, you'll view the nonsensical "daily horoscopes" that so corrupt and mock its wisdom with the contempt they so richly deserve.

The Key To Your Character

The Code in the Stars

When people ask why I believe in astrology, I answer, "Because astrology works."

Long ago I proved to myself that I could look at a person's horoscope and know without question very explicit and observable things about his or her character.

And because I also knew the current planetary positions and other information astrology uses to forecast trends and events in life, I could further know and explain quite clearly the themes and issues that were unfolding, needing attention and being experienced in the life of the person whose chart I was reading.

I believe in astrology because it works. And that's really the only test that counts for me ... whether astrology gives truthful, practical, verifiable information people can rely on and use to advantage in conducting their lives, whether that information can help them know and understand themselves better, and whether it can describe and offer meaning for the experiences that happen to them.

Astrology can. I've proved it too many times to have any doubts.

If you're interested in learning Astrology enough to understand what it teaches ... and then objective enough to watch the world, events, and people around you, I'm confident you'll realize yourself that Astrology works ... and quite beautifully.

Of course, that investment is a choice you'll have to make, and maybe some of what you learn here will inspire you to get started. I hope so. There's precious little in the world that can teach you as keenly or as wisely about the art of being human than a study of Astrology ... if you take it with you as a tool for deciphering, interpreting, and managing your life.

But if you can accept even for the sake of argument and for a few minutes the idea that Astrology works, I think the better question is: Why does astrology work? It took me longer to come up with an acceptable answer for that one . . . mumbledly-odd years ago. But I have one now that fits well with the philosophy of life I have devised through the accumulated wisdom and adventures of my years -- which, again for all of us, is the place where the best learning occurs.

Astrology "works" because there is unity in the universe. By saying there is "unity in the universe" I mean that everything operates in cycles, in accordance with a fundamental, underlying harmony, a natural order that is both inevitable -- and predictable. There is an orderly progression in the evolutionary blossoming of all energy, all projects and developments that require attention, effort, work, structure, energy, vision, and time to mature.

In physical and practical reality, certain steps or stages have to occur before you can go on to accomplish the steps and stages that happen later. You have to plant seeds before they can sprout. Plants must sprout before they can bloom, bloom before they produce fruit, produce fruit before you can harvest the results. And from the harvest come seeds to begin the cycle again. No step can occur "out of turn."

And because there is unity in the universe, metaphors exist all around that reflect where in the evolutionary process life is at any given time. Astrology is a way of "decoding" the various steps and stages of these unfolding progressions of energy and applying them to the individual expressions of life -- people; events; everything that exists and has a history, a beginning, a development and an end -- so that they can be described in words and understood intellectually.

Astrology uses the positions of the eight known planets, not including the earth, plus the positions of the Sun and the Moon to "describe" the cycles of experience, the stages of evolving energy, that were operating, that had "come up for attention" when you were born.

Your horoscope is a snapshot of the sky, taken at the moment you were born, that "describes" the energies your soul is working to develop and experience along with the talents and challenges you will process in this life.

Conventional ignorance jeers that astrology casts people as victims of fate based on the accidental timing of their birth, which is not true at all. You are not who you were because of when you were born, you were born when you were because you are who you are.

Far from leaving you "trapped" in some rigid destiny, astrology helps describe how you as an expression of divine life and spirit are evolving.

By knowing "what's being asked of you" by certain combinations and placements of cosmic energy in your horoscope -- the metaphorical picture of your soul -- you can use your free will and individual choices to "be who you really are," which I believe is a very precious kind of knowledge and liberty. To know yourself and be yourself are the most basic freedoms of all.

As I said, astrology uses the positions of the eight planets, plus the Sun and the Moon -- in conjunction with the twelve signs of the Zodiac -- in further combination with the twelve houses of the horoscope, the twelve divisions of the circle astrologers refer to as a "chart" -- to describe the complexity of a personality or an event.

True, there's a lot to keep in mind. I won't pretend that Astrology is not a complex subject. It is. But, working step by step, you can also learn to see the patterns, understand the metaphors, and decode the energies that explain the basic character, the raw material, of the person whose chart you may have in your hand.

You can tell who that person is from a piece of paper, having never met this soul in any way, in your life. If you think about that, it's an astonishing statement.

Many people never live up to the full potential and promise of their horoscope. They never understand the complexities of their own characters. They don't live lives in flow with the person -- the unique spiritual expression -- they really are. Instead, they may spend incredible effort -- and years of confusion and misery -- trying to be someone they are not.

A butterfly is not a ladybug. Both are beautiful. Both are important. Both are miraculous creations ... but they are not the same. And neither one of them is a tree toad, and a tree toad is not a lizard, and a lizard is not a rabbit, and a rabbit is not a dog ... and were one to try to live the life of another, that would also be a sad and futile thing.

When you understand the metaphors of your chart, the pure energy combinations that go into making you who you are, you can perhaps find the courage and freedom to give up trying to be "someone else" -- no matter what your original reasons were for making that painful decision. You can start living life as the person you were truly meant to be.

Of all the "rights" you may have in this life, I think that one is by far the most fundamental.

"Inalienable" is exactly the word for it. You have the right -- maybe even the responsibility -- to live your life with integrity ... as the person you were created to be. No one's expectations of you ... not even your own ... should deprive you of that momentous and fundamental promise. Information about who you are can certainly help you regain your rightful balance if you need to find your center again.

Understanding the metaphors of Astrology as they apply to you is one of the best, most efficient, ways I know to accomplish what can almost amount to a miracle of rebirth into being the person you were meant to be. Because as the person living the life depicted in the chart, you can draw your own perfectly valid conclusions about how you are working with -- and experiencing -- certain "raw materials" of talents, gifts and abilities, as well as frustrations, challenges and other "problems."

Even people with extremely difficult charts can help ease their path in life by understanding the conflicting demands in their own characters, and working with the energy instead of constantly trying to fight against it. Talk about a wonderful gift to give yourself!!

Understand, Astrology doesn't guarantee to make your life serenely comfortable, or send it speeding along a smooth and level highway without a hitch. But when you hit the bumps and rocks and potholes, you at least can discover why things are so disagreeable and what the conflicts are about.

By understanding what life is asking of you, you can make adjustments to work with the energies instead of against them -- if you choose. At least you do have choices, even if they are limited sometimes, which is rarely the case when all you have is ignorance and a feeling that life is out to get you.

YOU, as a creation of Spirit, were fashioned rather like a very unique piece of equipment or art -- designed to work in a certain way. Astrology can describe for you that "design," ... that "way."

Astrology can tell you -- and help you learn -- how your personality is designed to operate -- but whether you are using your gifts to best advantage -- or even harmoniously -- is entirely up to you. You are in the best possible position to know and judge how you are using these energies and how satisfied you are with your strategies. It's possible to distort and abuse anything -- including your own energy. Many, many people do.

So if you're intrigued by the notion that learning Astrology -- or getting a full Natal Chart reading -- can help you ...and maybe other people, too ... live a more authentic, fulfilled, and lucid life ... your first stop is here.

The next essay is a description of what a horoscope is -- since that is the basic tool of the Astrologer's trade ... and later in the line, you'll find a description of the basic pure energy contained in each sign of the Zodiac.

There are many other wonderful pieces of information available through a **Premium Members** subscription. You don't have to wait another day to begin one of the most rewarding, useful, and intriguing journeys of self-discovery you will ever take. That's a promise.

Millions of people through the ages with open minds, impassioned hearts, and the courage to follow their convictions have discovered that wonderful truth.

I am one of them. And perhaps you will be, too.

What IS a Horoscope?

Whether you "believe" in astrology or not, components and words contained in the discipline are part of everyday life. Most people know their "sign." Many people also know the qualities of their sign. What they may not know is that when someone says he is a Capricorn or a Scorpio he's actually giving information about which zodiacal constellation contained the Sun when he was born.

And, indeed, there are certain qualities that the "natives" of a sign -- as astrologers call them -- seem to share commonly with others born under their same sign. But it's also true that not all Leos, or Libras, or Pisces people are alike beyond the range of certain general characteristics and broad "soul themes" that do seem to describe them.

Perhaps the second most important component in describing a person's character will be the Moon sign ... or, obviously, the zodiacal constellation that contained the Moon at the time he was born. Because the Moon changes signs approximately every two and a half days, this is an impossible piece of information to know without access to special books and charts.

But a Leo with a Moon in Capricorn is a very different creature from a Leo with a Moon in Gemini. And right there you can begin to see the outlines of the wonderful complexity that makes all people, regardless of the pigeon-hole of their Sun sign qualities, uniquely themselves.

A third crucial addition to the mix -- when describing a person's character by means of his astrological components -- is something called the Ascendant, or the Rising Sign. Those are synonyms for the same thing -- and astrologers use them interchangeably.

This thing -- which sounds so esoteric and mysterious -- is literally the zodiacal sign that was rising or ascending on the Eastern horizon at the time of birth in the place of birth ... and that's why those pieces of information are absolutely crucial in casting a valid (called a "radical") horoscope when doing an astrological reading -- for a person, an event, a question, a forecast ... whatever.

Think of the Zodiac as a large belt of star constellations encircling the earth, and as the earth turns, the procession of constellations "moves" across the sky. There are 12 signs of the Zodiac, and one circle is completed every 24 hours.

Obviously, therefore, every two hours -- the sign "rising" on the eastern horizon changes. And, a person born with the Sun in Aries, the Moon in Scorpio, and Sagittarius Rising is different from a person with the Sun in Aries, the Moon in Scorpio, and Cancer Rising.

So, you ask, how does an astrologer keep all this stuff straight -- to say nothing of the positions of the other eight planets that have bearing on a person's natal reading? It's easy, actually. We cast a horoscope.

Back in the bad old days before computers did all the work for us -- and much better in fact than the "done by hand" method -- we had to do the math calculations ourselves, and look up information in about four different tables and books. The process could take about half an hour -- and it was pretty darn tedious, I promise you!!

Which brings me to the answer of the title of this article: *What Is A Horoscope?*

I suppose most people think a horoscope is the little four line piece of advice based on your birthday that you can find in virtually every newspaper in the country. OK, that's one definition of it -- and a dreadful example, usually, of what the craft of astrology can accomplish.

But a horoscope is also what astrologers call "the chart" ... and if any of you have ever had a natal reading from a competent astrologer, you probably received this strange circular picture with funny signs and symbols -- none of which made any sense to you, but, for the price of your reading, this was one of the goodies.

In reality, a horoscope -- that circular picture -- is really a map of the sky, a snapshot of the positions of the constellations and astrological ingredients as they existed at the instant you were born. The map is contained within the circle, and there are some things astrologers can tell "at a glance" -- literally -- about the circumstances in the life of the person they are reading.

First of all, a horoscope is divided into twelve segments (or "houses") exactly like the twelve numerals on the face of a clock except that everything is backwards from everything you normally know about reading a map. East is to the left, West is to the right, North is to the bottom, and South is to the top.

The Rising sign -- the sign rising on the eastern horizon at the moment of birth -- is at what would be the 9 o'clock position of the clock.

That sign, with its qualities, characteristics, outlook, and concerns, blends with your Sun sign and Moon sign ... to create the personality you use "when you meet the world" ... the traits and attributes you show to "people in general." Obviously, this is both important and revealing about the "first impressions" you may make on other people.

You've probably all known people who were very different when you got to know them better (got to know their Sun sign qualities) than they appeared in the early part of your relationship (when they were projecting their Ascendant sign qualities for you to see.)

And when you really get to know a person well, get to know the "person inside" ... you are most likely being shown their Moon sign qualities, the elements they share only with very close friends and intimate companions.

If you've ever had a natal chart done -- and can put your hands on it after all this time -- there are some other things that a "first glance" at a chart will tell about you. Planets placed in the bottom half of the circle (or "below the horizon" in your chart) are elements you will use in conducting your personal affairs and private life.

If you have most of your planets here, this indicates a very subjective personality, someone focused intently on personal growth -- sometimes to the point of ignoring the outer world and outside circumstances. This can denote an extremely private, self-contained, inwardly directed character.

Things outside yourself are less eventful, less interesting to you than what is happening in yourself and in the circumstances of your individual world. You will have rather narrow interests, a noticeably "domestic" orientation, and could be fairly described as moody and introspective.

Planets in the top half of the circle (or "above the horizon" in your chart) are elements you will use in conducting your public life. If you have most of your planets there, your soul is seeking growth and learning experiences primarily through social encounters.

Matters of authority, career, social networking, and mutually controlled resources (all things not entirely under your own exclusive direction) will be of primary concern to you. You are more objective than subjective -- to the point, in extreme cases, of lacking an inward focus.

If you have most of your planets here, your interests and achievements may be quite ambitious and impressive, for out in the public arena, you are more likely (and perhaps more encouraged) to do things in a big way. After all, you want to attract the attention of the outside world.

You are likely quite independent, considered to be "your own person," proud of your image, and probably would call yourself a "lucky" individual. You are probably focused into professional areas -- or activities that will bring you recognition and status in the outer world. Your own leadership and authority are issues for you ... and you are actively looking for public approval and recognition.

Planets on the left hand side of the circle (or "rising" -- ascending -- in your chart) are metaphorical elements you will consider to be very much under your own personal direction and control. They represent qualities and energies you use directly to manufacture your life, its experiences, and conditions. Planets placed here let you "call your own shots."

If you have most of your planets here, you have what astrologers call a "destiny creating" chart. This pattern gives you the power to operate with a free hand, with little need (or perhaps even little ability) to take other people into account.

You will depend on very little outside yourself, your resources, your intelligence, your creative instincts, your intuitive talents, and your personal charisma to get you what you want in life. But you can be strangely (and infuriatingly, for those who have to deal with you) lacking in the ability to relate objectively to others.

You feel you are responsible to yourself (and perhaps no one else), that you create your own life and luck out of your own gumption, your own boldness and abilities, and your own willingness to pursue matters you find or initiate to their desired conclusion. Your self-reliance will be formidable.

Your personal path is that of your personal choice. You may, however, have problems managing yourself wisely -- and have a tendency for taking on too much, because you inherently feel so capable and so much in control of your own destiny.

A karmic astrologer would point to this as a life in which you are shaping the conditions and lessons you will encounter in the future.

Planets in the right hand side of the circle (or "setting" -- descending -- in your chart) are elements you will consider to be very much out of your hands, beyond your own personal direction and control. They represent qualities and energies that are brought into your life by other people, their choices, their needs, their actions.

You may often feel that other people "pull your strings" -- and there's not a lot you can do except respond. Your life may seem re-active, rather than active. You often may feel more a victim of fate or circumstances than the "captain of your own soul's journey."

If you have most of your planets here, you have what astrologers call a "destiny reaping" chart. This pattern gives you a lot of people in your life that you can utilize for mutual benefit.

But it does mean that you necessarily must take them into account, that you may often find your life is "not entirely your own" to manage as you choose, and that you are often dependent on the responses and contributions of these other people to make progress, solve problems, or get your own needs met. Along with the arrival of "other people" into the equation of your experience, come the "relationship issues and problems" they represent.

You look to others for direction, advice, moral support, and general input. You may find (or feel) you are often not able to act without some preliminary stimulation or condition that is provided

by "someone else." It can lead to major issues of dependency, in some cases, and major feelings of being "jerked around and whiplashed" in the more extreme examples.

It may be hard to manufacture self-confidence and self-direction when this pattern describes your life.

Personal initiative may be lacking -- and you may also have problems with self-awareness, self-definition, and even self-image. Much of this will be constantly filtered through the information and perspectives provided by others. You may feel your life is strangely "controlled" or "fated" by situations in which you played very little part arranging.

You may feel that you are often imposed on by the requirements and crises of others -- and that most problems in your life are caused by other people, not you.

A karmic astrologer would point to this as a life in which you are experiencing the conditions and lessons you fashioned for yourself in the past.

This, then, is the merest tip of the iceberg of what a horoscope can say about a person, available, as I said, at a glance. A horoscope is the collection of structure and symbols that are blended to interpret the quirks, interests, talents, flaws, character, and destiny of a person, an event, or whatever.

The short answer to the question in the title of this article is: a horoscope is a map of the sky, a snapshot taken at the moment of birth. The greater answer, however, is this: a horoscope is the blueprint of the energy unfolding from a point of creation in time -- be that a marriage, a new job, a new business structure, a decision -- or the arrival back into material reality of an evolving human soul.

Can Astrology Tell the Future?

Can Astrology tell the future? Well, yes, actually it can. But not in the cut-and-dried way many people would like to use it. It won't tell you when you're going to win the lottery.

(Let's face it. The almost-certain answer to that one is "Never." No, not ever ... put it from your mind, save your money. There are reasons why people joke that the lottery is a tax on people who are really, really, really bad at math.)

It won't tell you if that cute guy who hit on you last night is going to propose. (Talk about jumping the queue on the various stages of a relationship necessary to get to marriage, for crying out loud!!) It will tell you what kind of relationship you're likely to attract at the moment -- and how you work with the presence of other people in your life.

In some very interesting and important ways, Astrology will tell you what's going on in your life right now ... and what's coming up in the future. And in that way it can, yes, indeed ... predict the future.

But the real value of Astrology -- the pure gold you can mine from this fabulous and fascinating body of wisdom -- is that it can teach you to think differently about yourself, your life, your possibilities, your "problems" ... and from that it can help you understand and work more productively with the events of your future than you might have done fumbling along in the dark.

That said, I have to agree half-heartedly, half-jokingly, that sometimes ignorance is bliss -- and I sometimes have that thought in the back of my mind as I open up my chart and look at what's coming over the hill in the next several months ... or several years. But ignorance is not such bliss that I'm willing to adopt it as a lifestyle.

There's a real difference between ignorance-as-bliss and sheer-cursed-stupidity. (And for me, informed preparation and a heads-up alert beats them both hands-down.) I have never yet refused to look at my chart because I didn't want to know what it says. (Maybe that day is coming -- but not so far.) And I have to admit that sometimes what stares back at me from that page with all the funny symbols is not one bit joyful.

But to know what I know and not use it -- even when the going is tough and really, really unpleasant, makes no more sense to me than slapping a blindfold securely over my eyes as I fire up the car and pull out of my driveway onto the road. Or refusing to look at the map because it may show me that the river I'm sailing on is steering me straight toward one mother-bear of a waterfall.

There are some people who are even more adamant about the benefits of preparation than I am ... and others who just as firmly prefer the ignorance route. Both are choices -- and people get to make them.

But whether you want to be sure you have your life-jacket cinched on well and your cargo tied down twenty minutes ahead of time, or decide to beach the boat and, if possible, carry it and YOU around the problem on a different path, or whether you really "don't want to think about it" until you hear the deep roar of falling water on rocks and see the edge of the world coming up fast, the information is there.

And how you choose to use it ... or whether or not you even choose to know about it ... can have a real impact on your future, the quality of your experience, and the message you take from whatever happened.

To me, that's Astrology's real value. Not as a predictor of "what's going to happen to me" as a helpless victim of Fate ... but as an indicator that there are both pleasures and potholes (to put it mildly) on the road ahead, and I have some things to learn and some choices to make on how to deal with them.

Astrology

What It Can Tell You About Yourself Using Your Horoscope for Self-Discovery

Besides wanting to know about "what the future holds," people come to an astrologer wanting to know about themselves. That's an absolutely valid choice ... and a commendable one. Astrology can be a goldmine of information and assistance for the spiritual traveler who wants to understand himself and his inner terrain as thoroughly as possible.

Still, even this noble motive can have its unfortunate twists. People sometimes want an astrologer to tell them fun and amusing things about themselves -- approaching the serious subject of self-discovery almost in the same light-hearted mood of curiosity that invites them to take the quizzes in *Cosmo*.

It's not a bad start, actually ... especially for the client who is willing to learn more about himself than just two or three sentences about his emotional center, or his relationship skills, or the places in life where he feels constantly judged and vulnerable.

Just in that simple list of life categories, you can see why spending an hour to "get your chart done" will only scratch the surface. If you want to take your exploration of your horoscope beyond the limits of a parlor game curiosity and really mine it for the treasure it can reveal, you'd do well to find an astrologer willing and able to do more than just provide an hour's worth of one-liners from the on-the-surface information in your horoscope.

There are plenty of us around. And, yes, it takes a fair investment of time, consideration, effort and money from you ... to gain the benefits of what you're asking to receive.

I've said in other pieces that life takes work. Understanding yourself and working with your potentials, developing your abilities, doing something worthwhile with them ... and being something when you grow up ... takes lots of work. But if you ask me, it's also one of the best ways you can spend your time on this earth.

Astrology can tell you loads about what you've got to work with ... and what you may need to work with a lot -- or differently -- to become your best self.

Done right, several sessions of really analyzing your horoscope under the guidance of an astrologer willing to spend the time and take the journey with you can cut through months ... maybe years ... of psychoanalysis and counseling through talk-therapy.

It can certainly give you some fascinating places to start -- and continue -- your study of your own psyche and character, and hand you chunks of information to examine and consider, elegantly organized in ways you might never come up with on your own.

For the introspective soul, Astrology and its information about their personality, their inner workings, their potentials and their destiny can be a blessing beyond words.

But again, you can't escape the fact that the value of any body of information and knowledge depends a lot on what you do with it. A session of in-depth analysis of your horoscope is an invitation to get acquainted with "your stuff," to understand yourself, your values, your priorities, your possibilities, your challenges and your gifts as never before.

In the presence of a willing seeker and a skilled guide, Astrology can cut to the chase on these matters faster than a lightning strike -- and with lightning's brilliance and power, too.

It can also cut years off your wanderings as you search through psychology's dim corridors, seeking answers to the important questions of self-identity, personal standards, your spiritual focus ... and "what you're really like."

For people who like that kind of efficiency, Astrology is pure gold. Seekers and guides who settle for an hour of skimming the surface, doling out and scooping up little tidbits of stuff-about-yourself instead of pursuing a more extensive analysis of your soul's components and what all is available to you through them, truly miss the mark in their use of this amazing treasure.

These are facts that need study, thorough comprehension and conscious use -- to maximize everything at your disposal from earning money in the way you were designed to function to honoring your need for independence and originality to your ability to manage life's major transition points.

These are things we all meet in the course of a lifetime. How much more sensible is it to arrive ready to tackle them with the skills that came with you as "standard equipment" -- than to try to figure it out on your own and in the thick of things ... with hardly a clue to go on.

If your life is a self-created work of art ... and the perplexing patterns that repeat themselves in various guises like different choruses of the same old familiar song are the lessons you're supposed to work with as part of this life's curriculum ... isn't it kind and reasonable to know as much as you can about how you got where you are?

And then either use that environment -- and what you've built there -- to your advantage, or figure out how to get someplace where the climate is more congenial ... and work with the challenges that landed you in trouble so you can smooth them into something easier to manage and more agreeable all around?

I know that sounds like a rhetorical question ... except day after day I see people making that other-than-sensible choice. When I was younger, that used to bother me a lot more than it does now.

With a lot of Pisces and Sagittarius in my chart, it was easy for me back then to fall into an it's-my-job-to-help-save-the-world frame of mind. Once I moved into my 40's, and without much effort, I came to a more passive point of view. If people insist on learning through trial and sad, sad error, that's ok. You and I and everyone on earth learned a lot of early lessons just that way.

Someone else can tell you until he's blue in the face that touching a hot stove is a mighty unpleasant thing to do ... and it still won't pound the point home as well as happened the day you tried that trick for yourself -- and found out what "mighty unpleasant" feels like.

The Universe has infinite time and infinite patience. Your evolution and education can progress at a snail's pace or a galloping run ... whichever suits you ... with plenty of stops and mucking around at the way-stations, if you like.

Life's deck may be nicely stacked toward your learning what you need to know and moving on ... eventually. But as for when that happens, or what goes on in the meantime ... for the most part, the Universe doesn't care. That's both the beauty and the peril of free will. Use it any way you like.

The same with Astrology. You can use it or not, scoff at it or not. There are folks who find enduring value in its wisdom ... and comfort in its rhythms. And there are folks who get where they want to go by other routes -- which are just as valid, and just as meaningful to them.

And for the whole pack of people still looking for a path they can work with ... and a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, the facility of Astrology might be something to consider -- at least

enough to decide whether it has value for them, at this time and in their current place. It's been a lifeline for a lot of souls. Me included. Just a thought.

Astrology

What It Can Tell You About the Future Using Your Horoscope for Advice, not Fortune-Telling

It seems to me people come to an astrologer for a number of reasons. Some obvious. Some ... well, more subtle. I'd start asking point blank, "Why are you here today and what do you want from this reading" ... if I thought I'd get an honest answer -- and really learn something about my clients and their expectations.

But the time or two I've tried that, I got a lot of squirming from the clients. A lot of looking down or looking nervously around ... looking anywhere except at me. They either didn't have a clue what they wanted to gain ... or they didn't have a clear enough vision to be able to put it in words ... or whatever they were looking for, they didn't want to have to say it out loud. Interesting.

In any kind of counseling or therapy, that's one of the first questions the professional will ask the client, to help focus their work together ... and be sure the time is spent as productively as possible in getting the client's needs met. From what I know, they usually get this same mental shuffling ... and vague, elusive, tentative response.

Sure, it's a start -- sometimes. But what gets labeled as the objective in therapy at the beginning is rarely the core of what the therapist and client will eventually explore together.

All therapists know many of the people who come to them arrive hoping -- or worse, believing -- that the therapist will "fix them" somehow, patch up in a few hours the broken places that hold debris and injuries from decades of history -- unaddressed and unhealed, and not likely to ever be, unless the client does something about this.

All therapists know there are many clients who, the moment they get too uncomfortable or too inconvenienced with what they will have to examine or change or work with differently, they lose interest in the process of therapy and return to the same painful, dysfunctional patterns that sent them seeking help in the first place.

Therapy doesn't work for them ... because they're not willing to work on themselves. It's human nature. Sadly.

So, why do people come to astrologers? They come wanting to hear about the future. Their future. For the most part, they want to hear something good. A great new job promotion just around the corner. Tons of money arriving soon -- through the generosity of the cosmos, an inheritance from a relative they never knew they had but who died willing to dump loads of treasure in their laps.

The secret key to that winning lottery number ... something, anything that puts their life on an easy track and asks little of them in return. Prince Charming riding hard to meet them at this-and-such intersection so they can quit this incessant searching for each other ... and get down to the part of living happily ever after.

Of course, that's human nature, too. To want life to be easy. To want money to flow like water. To want love to surround us continually with its blessings and excitement. It happens that way in the movies. It rarely happens that way in real life.

Real life is not about living happily ever after. To believe otherwise is to set yourself up for just another bad disappointment. Real life is about being happy sometimes. And if you're lucky ... it's about being very happy sometimes, and maybe being happy right now.

Astrology, as many people see and want to use it -- as a fortune-telling device that reveals what's going to happen to them in the future, is not going to meet those expectations. I have to say, sometimes I wish it did. Other times, I'm extremely glad it doesn't.

Astrology is not a contrivance that takes away your free will. It won't tell you what choices you're going to make ... or what choices you should make. And it certainly won't tell you what choices other people are going to make!! So asking an astrologer ... "Is he going to call? Is he going to ask me out?" is a complete waste of everybody's time.

Astrology will tell you what kinds of opportunities you'll meet ... and when, and the kind of potential they hold. What you do with them -- including ignoring them right out of existence -- is completely up to you. People do it all the time -- and wonder why they never get any "breaks" ... and why their lives often look and feel so desolate.

For the most part, life for everyone takes work. Success belongs to the people willing to do the work, put themselves in the right place at the right time, and take advantage of their available opportunities more than those who sit around wishin' and hopin' and waiting for life to "happen" them.

This is part of what it means to create your own "breaks" ... and thus part of what it means to "create your own destiny."

Astrology will also tell you what kinds of challenges you'll meet. And when. And what they will look like ... what life is trying to arrange from the raw materials of your life with the crisis that's onstage. Again, what you do with it, how you respond, the choices you make ... is up to you.

Someone else with this same issue will almost certainly make different choices. You yourself probably have a variety of options to consider in handling whatever matters call for your decisions during this time. But it might help a great deal to know what's really going on and what life is asking of you as the issue arrives and develops.

Astrology can hand you that information like nothing else I have ever seen ... and therein is one of its greatest practical values. Not as a fortune-telling device, but as a counselor, an analyst, an advisor, a consultant and guide. From there, it's up to you. And it always serves your interests, even if you use Astrology as often and as thoroughly as I do, to have that fact ... that respect for your own free will and power ... constantly in mind.

Your Sun Sign, Moon Sign and Ascendant Sign

Just what's going on here?

Your Sun Sign

The Sun symbolizes your basic personality. The Zodiac sign it is in describes the "essential qualities" of your character. This sign is also the easiest one to find. You probably already know it. It's what you mean when you tell someone "I'm an Aries," or "I'm a Capricorn," or "I'm a Pisces."

This astrological symbol describes the qualities of your central ego, your individual self-expression, and your personal identity. Astrologers consider that your Sun sign describes your core personality ... and many will say it is the most important sign you have, although that's not entirely correct.

The Moon sign and the Ascendant sign are just as important -- although they are impossible to accurately determine unless an astrologer actually casts your horoscope and looks at the information it contains.

Information based on your Sun sign alone is "better than nothing," but it is also seriously incomplete. Forecasts based on your Sun sign will tell you what is happening with regard to your ego, your self-image, and your personal development out in the world. But that's not all you are ... not by a long shot.

Your Moon Sign

To an astrologer, the Moon symbolizes the part of you that reacts automatically and from force of habit to experiences in the world. In fact, you may identify very strongly with this part of yourself ... and feel it is who you really are on the inside.

(If you feel the "common knowledge" about your Sun sign qualities often don't describe you completely ... this could be one of the reasons why. Your Moon Sign qualities could be very different from your Sun sign qualities -- and you may be responding to or expressing those.)

The part of you described by your Moon sign is composed almost entirely of emotional energy. Whether you let it show on the outside or not, you are very aware of this energy. It operates in all areas where matters of family, security, and your feelings are involved. It is likely the self you most often show to people you are comfortable with and "familiar with" yourself.

Information based on your Moon sign is essential to creating a more complete and well-rounded picture of you as an individual spirit. Forecasts based on your Moon sign will tell you what is happening in your inner world where you really live about things that are very important to you personally. You will quite likely relate to readings involving your Moon sign energy much more directly than those based on your Sun sign alone.

As I said, both are important in describing experiences in your world and with you as an individual spirit, but the only way to determine your Moon Sign for sure is if an astrologer (or computer program) casts your horoscope -- and tells you. The Moon changes signs every 2 1/2 days ... and depending on the day you were born, its power will influence the qualities of your Sun sign tremendously.

Your Ascendant Sign

The Ascendant is also called the "Rising Sign" of a person's chart. Astrologers use the two terms interchangeably. It is literally the sign that was rising on the Eastern horizon of the sky at the time you were born in the place where you were born. This is why it is essential to have both a birthplace and a birth time in order to cast a completely valid Natal Chart.

All twelve signs of the Zodiac rotate across the sky in the course of a day. Therefore the sign that is ascending -- literally "rising" -- on the eastern horizon changes every two hours. And your Rising Sign ... or Ascendant Sign ... depends on the exact time you were born!

Only if you were born within two hours one way or the other of sunrise will your Ascendant Sign be the same as your Sun sign ... and it is completely independent of your Moon sign. Yet this third key component of your personality, will usually give the most valid information about who you appear to be to other people and how you take on the world!!

Your Ascendant sign describes your temperament, your outward mannerisms and behavior, the personality you put "on public display." It is the part of yourself you are most willing for other people to see in casual, impersonal situations.

Changes here will explain why even people born on the same day as you ... will have very different personalities, different strengths and interests, and different life experiences.

Forecasts based on your Ascendant sign are likely to be immediately recognizable in describing the events and focus of your life and immediate future. These contain perhaps the most important and valid information you can receive from a "general" astrology reading ... about what explicitly is happening in your life.

In this way, your Ascendant sign information is even more crucial, important ... and applicable than your Sun sign information.

But there is no way to tell you your Ascendant sign information without a birth time ... and place. Sorry. There just isn't.

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These are "the big three" components of your individual character. With this information, any competent astrologer can talk about the major themes unfolding in your life and your experiences at any given time.

Therefore, this is why I say subscriptions to these three pieces of forecasting information will give you the most complete and valid picture of what is going on in your world ... based on what astrology can capably provide.

In other words, a person with a Moon sign in Cancer, and especially a person with an Ascendant sign in Cancer will find information and predictions about the sign of Cancer itself just as valid and informative as a person who is a Cancer ... which is just another way of saying such a person has his Sun sign in Cancer.

Final note: Occasionally, a person will have only two major signs to consider because two placements will be in the same sign. And rarely, a person will have only one ... because he or she was born close to sunrise, on a day when the Sun and Moon were in the same sign.

It happens.

Planetary Energies

A Universal Cosmic Language

☉ **The Sun** represents your ego, your basic sense of yourself. The sign it occupies in the Zodiac at any given time tends to focus your ego and interests on certain generic matters represented by the sign itself, *in addition to* those of your personal Sun Sign. You are therefore apt to experience and express the personal characteristics of the current sign involved, *as well as* those of your own Sun Sign.

☾ **The Moon** represents your emotional self, your inner self, your instincts, habits, and automatic reactions. The sign it occupies in the Zodiac at any given time will color your reactions, feelings, and personal responses according to the issues and characteristics represented by the sign involved.

♿ **Mercury** represents your conscious, rational mind; your intellectual self; your capacity to use mental energy; your ability to study, learn, analyze, and communicate information; your capacity to form ideas and opinions; the way you deal with facts; and the way you process data.

♀ **Venus** represents your power to attract love and conduct relationships; your need for money and pleasure; your involvement with income, possessions, and material "things;" what you look for in relationships; what you offer another person as a partner; what you really enjoy and take pleasure in; and your abstract values.

♂ **Mars** represents your ability to take assertive action; your capacity for aggression; your outward sexual expression; your use of energy, force, and willpower to achieve your ambitions and desires; your ability to be direct and independent; and your competitive spirit.


♃ **Jupiter** represents your philosophical and ethical structures; your ability to claim and express your authoritative knowledge -often through teaching others by the example of your own life; your ability to expand your sphere of personal influence; your involvement with law and religion - and the "basic rules you live by;" your ability to share benevolently with others - thus your capacity for charitable contributions to promote the overall social progress you favor; your ability to envision the big picture of life and commit yourself to expansive undertakings; and your involvement with positive karma and the benefits you derive therefrom.

♄ **Saturn** represents your involvement with long-term structures designed to insure your future security; your desires and efforts to produce a public name for yourself through your professional achievements and career directions; your image as a person with experience and authority; your sense of responsibility and ability to concentrate; your capacity to deal with limitations; and your ability to work hard to overcome them.

♅ **Uranus** represents your urge to be free from traditions and patterns; your capacity for originality, inventiveness, independence, and eccentricity; your sense of personal uniqueness, your highest creative genius; your ability to deal with the unexpected and to be unconventional; your conduct of friendships; and your sense of altruism and involvement with humanitarian goals.

♆ **Neptune** represents your ability to act with inspiration, idealism, and "faith;" your involvement with mystery, chaos, fantasy, dreams, psychic experiences, spirituality, and altered realms of consciousness; your capacity for fraud, deception, and self-deception; your connection to deep subconscious emotions, motivations, and information; your contact with your

innermost creative impulses; your encounters with mystical experiences; and your sense of connection to the Divine Source.

 **Pluto** represents your involvement with regeneration, rebirth, and renewal; your use of fundamental creative energy in efforts that embrace destruction and resurrection; work wherein you join your resources and assets with those of others to create greater mutual benefit; your ability to survive emergency and crisis; your capacity to rebuild from nothing; your efforts at self-improvement; your potential for exerting ultimate power; and your experiences dealing with mysteries, secrets, and other hidden information.

Your Sun Sign

What is it ... and why is it important?

In Astrology, the Sun represents your basic personality, the central cluster of traits and interests, strengths and personal issues that color and influence the various other parts of your character -- the inner selves and different roles described by the nine other planets in your horoscope. The Sun is an important component in Astrology, but as you see ... it is only one player among many.

Astrologers consider The Sun one of the three most essential elements in any horoscope ... along with the Moon and the Ascendant. To some, the Sun is the most important citizen in the celestial map.

Others regard it with less reverence, but it is the centerpiece ... the starting point ... of any chart. It's position in the Zodiac on the day you were born is what determines your "Sun Sign" ... which is what people mean when they say someone is a Gemini, or a Capricorn, or a Libra.

The Sun owes some of its reputation to the fact that it's usually the easiest point in the native's character to identify. There is a good chance any given person's birthday will fall solidly and indisputably in one specific sign, and if you know the basic divisions of the Zodiac, you gain an essential piece of information about them by knowing their birthday and their Sun Sign qualities.

For the other planet positions, you need books and tables or a good computer program ... things which aren't mobile, are rarely right at hand, and that take time and effort to use.

Sure, there are folks "born on the cusp" ... during the time when the Sun moves from one sign's territory to another, and in some cases even an astrologer has to cast a chart to find a person's Sun Sign for sure. But that's not the norm.

Your Sun Sign describes your fundamental character. It represents:

- Your core identity -- who you basically are
- Your inherent sense of purpose, destiny or importance in life
- Ego, drive, willpower, ambition
- Your individual self-expression
- Your self-image

When it is comfortable and expressing positively, Sun energy is ambitious, self-confident, proud, vital, powerful, and authentic -- colored inevitably by the characteristics and qualities of its sign energy. When it is uncomfortable and stressed, Sun energy is arrogant, conceited, self-absorbed, vain -- again according to the qualities of its sign energy.

Your Sun Sign describes the qualities you use to promote yourself, the traits that tell the world who you are. Thus a person with the Sun in Aries will be assertive, competitive, independent, self-assured, and pioneering while a person with the Sun in Cancer will be sensitive, intuitive, moody, compassionate, nurturing, and family-oriented.

Other elements in a native's chart ... described by those other nine planets I mentioned ... or special patterns between the various planets called "aspects" ... may color, or even distort or overshadow the clear expression of someone's Sun Sign energy, but that part of his character is always there somewhere, working out its own means of being.

For one reason or another it may be deep in the background, hidden from view except to those who know the native extremely well ... but it is never lost.

Your Moon Sign

What is it ... and why is it important?

In Astrology, the Moon represents your emotions, your inner self, your instincts, habits, and reactions. The sign it occupied when you were born is your Moon Sign in your horoscope.

Your Moon Sign describes character traits, feelings, and personal responses that are very familiar to you. In fact, it's common for people to relate to their Moon Sign qualities far more than their Sun Sign characteristics when finally they learn, through research, by having their Natal Chart interpreted, or simply by accident what their Moon Sign IS ... and what it describes in their personality.

Astrologers consider the Moon one of the three most essential elements in any horoscope -- along with the Sun and the Ascendant. To some, the Sun is the most important citizen in the celestial map. Others consider Moon sign information the missing dimension in Sun Sign Astrology -- and that its absence is a big reason why some people say Astrology doesn't work.

But the Sun -- and Sun Sign Astrology -- continues to dominate pop culture, because it IS important and because its sign is usually easy to find.

The Sun stays in a Zodiac sign about a month; its progress through the parade of signs is steady and predictable. With just a birthday, you can pretty well classify anyone according to his Zodiac sign ... or at least come close if he happens to be one of those "born on the cusp."

But those who say not everyone fits neatly inside the traits of to his Sun Sign have a point. People are individuals ... complex, multi-dimensional, and composed of different elements, inner selves, and traits other than those contained in their Sun Sign information.

They can also make choices, or wind up in roles and situations, where their Sun Sign qualities don't have much chance to develop, or where those traits don't serve them well. So they have to turn to other qualities that otherwise might remain in the background, and rely on them more often.

One of the easiest alternate personalities to develop will be the cluster of characteristics represented by their Moon Sign. Moon Sign qualities represent your routines, impulses, "knee-jerk responses," and a personality you were encouraged to develop as a child, in your relationships with family members and in the role you played in your family circle.

If you recognize that you are "a different person" when dealing with family members, family issues and problems, and people you consider close enough to be "like family," there's a good chance you have a Moon Sign whose qualities, strengths, and perspectives differ quite a bit from the essential nature of your Sun Sign's description.

This dual blend may be contradictory, stressful, inconsistent, and unpredictable -- especially when you're frazzled or under pressure. But, like everyone else, you do the best you can, and the result is the personality you've developed from the choices you've made and the things that have happened to you.

The reason your Moon Sign doesn't get nearly as much attention as your Sun Sign in pop culture astrology is because it isn't nearly as convenient to find. The Moon changes signs every 2 1/2 days. This means about ten days out of every month, the Moon will start the day in one sign -- and end it in another.

To keep track of this fast moving celestial citizen and pinpoint where it was at the moment you or anyone else was born, you need a computer program that can cast your horoscope ... or access to several different books of astrological information and the knowledge of how to cast a horoscope by hand. (May I never ever, EVER have to do that again!! It is a tedious, boring, time consuming process!!)

But with your Moon Sign information, you have another dimension of your personal picture to consider ... and access to an essential collection of information about yourself.

It starts to round out the emerging portrait of your character that a full interpretation of your horoscope can provide and may encourage you to explore the mysteries of the character facets the other eight planets and their position in your horoscope can reveal.

If nothing else, an interpretation of your horoscope can help you appreciate the multi-dimensional work of art you truly are ... in all your spiritual and psychological splendor.

Your Moon Sign is, in many ways, "you" without the interference and conditioning of outer world experience ... and as such, it's the inner personality you revert to instinctively when your feelings are involved and your "buttons get pushed."

The Moon represents:

- Your emotional self, your inner self, your moods and intuition
- Your instincts, habits, memories, and automatic reactions
- Your reactions, feelings and "personal responses"
- Your early home environment, family conditioning, heritage
- Your living arrangements, private life concerns
- Qualities developed in your relationship with your mother or early maternal figures
- The way you relate to family members and people you relate to "like family"

When it is comfortable and expressing positively, Moon energy is benevolent, family-oriented, intuitive, sensitive, and compassionate. When it is uncomfortable and stressed, Moon energy is emotionally unbalanced, repressed, resentful, dependent, fearful, and anxious.

Learning your Moon Sign qualities, seeing how you work with them, express them, and reveal them in your attitudes and feelings increases your self-understanding, and helps you better appreciate and know the intricate, multi-faceted being you truly are.

The Celestial Event of the New Moon

In both astronomy and astrology, the celestial phenomenon known as the New Moon occurs at the exact moment the Sun and the Moon occupy precisely the same point in the sky-map of the Zodiac -- the same degree and minute of arc in a particular sign. In Astrology, this aspect of alignment is known as a conjunction.

We often speak colloquially of the New Moon as that tiny sliver of light in the night sky that will progress over the next month to create the bright circle of the Full Moon and then diminish gradually to a tiny sliver of light curving in the opposite direction before the process begins again.

In fact, at the moment of the New Moon, there is no light from the Moon visible in the sky at all. Reflected sunlight from the moon is completely blocked, and everything at that source is at its darkest point. The New Moon, then, forms at the literal moment of transition from light becoming less and less apparent to the instant of change when it starts increasing in availability again.

The Sun takes approximately one month to travel through one sign of the Zodiac. In roughly this same amount of time, the Moon travels through all twelve signs of the Zodiac ... changing signs around every two and a half days, and forming a New Moon in each of the Zodiac signs in turn, again, about once every thirty days throughout the year.

Obviously, the New Moon will always form in the sign where the Sun is at the time. Very rarely there will be two new Moons in a single sign ... one very near the beginning, and the other very near the end.

Interpreting Astrology is basically a process of deciphering the metaphors -- the "meaning" of the planetary energies with regard to their placement within the circle of the Zodiac and to their placement in relationship to one another.

The New Moon represents the unification of Sun energy with Moon energy -- of outer, personal, extroverted, "masculine" energy with inner, subjective, introverted, "feminine" energy.

Another way of saying this is ... it is the bonding of one's basic spiritual expression with one's basic inner emotional center. It is the alignment of one's sense of self with one's capacity for emotional investment, the union of ambition and commitment.

This is why astrologers recommend beginning new projects and enterprises "under the New Moon." There is a focus and solidity to such undertakings that can be extremely valuable in one's progression toward eventual success -- with the coupling of both conscious and subconscious assets as resources in the effort.

In Astrology, the metaphors of the various planet placements at the time of the occurrence describe the experiences, interests and themes of the coming 4+ weeks in everyone's life -- influenced as always by these same placements in a person's Natal Chart, the map of the sky at the time of birth.

This is very like placing a transparency on a picture, and gaining thereby an altered, or perhaps more dimensional, picture of the effect "current life" is having on the "raw materials" of your basic personality. Thus the placement of the New Moon both in the sky and certainly in one's Natal Chart (and the impact it represents there) will forecast the general issues and directions of life in the month ahead.

The metaphor of the New Moon, this monthly "alliance" of the two most individually significant celestial bodies, denotes a renewed alignment of one's sense of personal direction and one's sense of emotional commitment in successive departments or concerns of life as the year progresses through the creative process from new beginnings and initiations in Aries until the dissolution and release of Pisces ... in order to begin again on another level.

Shadows in the Moonlight

The Full Moon and Its Testy Temper

The aspect of the Sun opposing the Moon is the classic celestial phenomenon the rest of the world calls the Full Moon. The Full Moon symbolically highlights tension between two conflicting desires, ambitions, requirements, or sets of values -- each a respected and necessary part of life, and each somehow problematic for the other.

In this situation, as in all oppositions, a compromise of some sort is necessary to meet the requirements of both elements -- in this case, ego desires, personal ambitions, and your wish to feel important and valuable on the one hand and emotional loyalties, private longings, and firmly ingrained habits on the other.

The balancing act, especially in this pattern, is often not an easy one since it places two different systems, personal desires, or inner parts of you in conflict with one another, requiring that new arrangements be found and new bargains struck with yourself about the way you handle life.

Under the Full Moon, according to common wisdom -- and police and health care workers alike -- people go noticeably nuts ... perhaps because there are no conflicts as uncomfortable as those within ourselves.

Usually, however, the energy of oppositions will play out through differing demands, conflicts, problems in your relationships, disagreements between you and a partner, or at the very least, quarrels and clashes between you and someone else in which neither side is right, neither side is wrong, but both sides often go to extremes to get their own way i-- and both sides show their most unattractive features during the "negotiations."

The energy of oppositions works to reintegrate "disowned energy" -- called "projections" by psychologists. This is a complex, confusing, often infuriating, psychological phenomenon in which we see "problems," not in ourselves, but in other people who are mirroring back to us the issues we need to address with the irritations and inconveniences they inject into our lives.

It's extremely easy when dealing with projected energy -- the energy of oppositions -- to blame other people for the problems we're trying to solve, when in the end it really is our problem and only we can make the changes that put it to rest.

Under the Full Moon, old habits collide with new interests, family routines and private life traditions compete with new ambitions and desires, the familiarity of the past yanks hard on the uncertainty (and excitement) of the present and demands attention.

You feel conflicted, confused, ambivalent, "of two minds," and torn between two opposing, mutually exclusive choices. Sometimes you count yourself lucky if it's only two.

The Sun under stress depicts conduct and attitudes that are notoriously arrogant, self-centered, haughty, demanding, and imperious. It inclines you (and everyone!!) to "give orders and want them followed" ... and shows a deep investment in one point of view to the exclusion of others.

The opposing Moon in a Full Moon configuration, however, insists emphatically that its contrary agenda and values be honored!!!

The Moon under stress depicts conduct and attitudes that are complaining, anxious, fretful, "worried," blaming, victimized, and hypersensitive. Already you can see the battle lines taking shape. Afflicted Moon energy feels exploited, scared, mistreated, helpless, and depressed.

Neither of the "inner selves" these two energies describe is in a good position to take care of himself ... or productively press his own views. Nor is either able to win everything it wants. As I said, compromise is essential ... and compromise is uncomfortable.

Depending on the Solar-Lunar positions at a given time, the Full Moon in a sign can occur either before the New Moon for that sign or after. (Right now, the Full Moon is occurring before the New Moon.) The difference between the two cases sets up an interesting but subtle psychological sequence in how you' deal with the conflict.

When the Full Moon occurs first, there is usually a "problem" that arises in your life, something that involves you and other people, a clash between your private life and circumstances in the outside world, or an awareness of divergent needs in you that grows more insistent and irritating as you try to find the "balance" between one set of agendas and its counterpoint.

By definition, these two interests compete with each other. Satisfying one ... means slighting the other.

You wrestle with the two sets of values, the two differing needs, the two incompatible situations for a couple of weeks, making adjustments, seeking a cooperative solution, and paying a lot of attention to the proper balance between the two.

Then, as the New Moon for the sign arrives, you implement decisions that unify your "heart and soul" commitment, your self-interest on both public and private levels. You choose one side of this equation -- and put your energy and loyalties behind whatever life concerns are described by the Sun Sign where the New Moon forms. And life goes on.

When the New Moon forms first, the commitment I just described occurs first ... and then life conspires to show you how you've been too one-sided in that decision. The "competing interests" have more power, hold, and influence than you realized -- and now you need to ease off on your previous choices and take "the other side of the question" more seriously.

Granted it's two different shades of the same pattern as you navigate life's complexities, but understanding what life is asking of you in any particular moment is how you work with the flow of life ... and not against it. It does make things easier. Notice I didn't say "easy." Easier.

Mercury Retrograde

Rethinking Your Present Direction

When Mercury is retrograde (Mercury Rx -- in shorthand), it is a time of rethinking, refocusing and re-communicating. Metaphorically, Mercury represents your use of intellectual energy; your mental focus; the application of your mind's assets; your ability to read, write, study, talk, absorb information and learn new things.

Mercury also symbolizes your communication skills, your use of knowledge, your mind's individual perspective; and your ability to be mobile, to move around, both physically and intellectually.

When it goes Rx, all these things "back up" to be reconsidered, redone, re-directed, aligned and used differently. You will re-think choices, absorb new knowledge, consider alternatives you've not used before, find new solutions to problems and better approaches to goals. And you will focus your thoughts more "inwardly" than usual.

Mercury Rx, for all its aggravations -- and those can be serious -- is an exercise in thinking better by thinking differently ... breaking out of tunnel-vision into more creative possibilities. That's perhaps the best gift of this pesky little phenomenon. It also symbolizes experiences that are not nearly so charming.

Mercury "goes retrograde" two or three times a year and remains so for about three and a half weeks. It goes retrograde more often than any other planet, but stays that way for a shorter time ... each time. Theoretically, I suppose it balances out. In real life, it often doesn't seem that way.

As with all retrograde symbolism, the emphasis is on the "re ..." -- doing something over, doing something again, doing something differently, doing something else.

I said in the opening that as a planetary metaphor, Mercury represents intellectual processes, logical and analytical thinking, communications issues, information and data gathering activities, conversation, all "linguistic exchanges" -- whether written or verbal, and travel.

When Mercury is Rx, these things become snarled and problematic. Decisions pending when Mercury goes Rx are reworked, re-thought, re-defined, and re-considered during the retrograde period. Complications arise; misunderstandings and miscommunications occur.

Unforeseen problems show up and have to be handled somehow. You may change your mind, or re-evaluate issues that previously seemed more clear-cut or settled. The time of Mercury Rx can seem aggravating, confusing, disjointed, stagnant, and frustrating.

Information is not heard or understood correctly; messages go undelivered -- or get mis-routed; mail and other items get lost; people are late for appointments, or have to reschedule, or forget about them entirely; phone calls may not reach the right person the first time -- or the second -- or the third.

Transportation problems occur. Your car may suddenly need repair; traffic jams and lack of parking spaces are more aggravating and inopportune. All things concerning information, communication, thinking, movement, and travel run into problems, mix-ups, and delays.

Naturally, when Mercury "goes direct" again things will start to straighten themselves out, but decisions made in the previous 3 weeks will be changed or reversed, plans will go awry and

have to be fixed, misunderstandings will appear and need explanation, lost items will finally find their proper destination.

There does, in reality, seem to be about a week's lag time to get all this debris cleared away after Mercury Rx goes direct -- and life gets to go on again until the next little hiccup in Mercury's orbit jumbles things up once more.

For practical reasons, it's wise to keep this in mind. After all, forewarned is forearmed -- and Mercury Rx throws sand in the gears of everyone's best laid plans.

Important decisions should be reconsidered but not finalized when Mercury is Rx. Be ready to take in new facts, view new angles, consider previously unseen complications, and handle misunderstandings or incomplete data. Above all -- expect things to take longer than you planned !!!

Keep an open mind -- and keep your options open. You, too, may not have all the information you need to make wise choices, and you too may not understand things correctly -- yet. You may adjust your plans -- perhaps significantly -- after Mercury goes direct.

Travel plans that bridge this time should be re-confirmed both before and after the Rx period -- because things disappear mysteriously off computer screens during a time of retrograde -- and you stand a fair chance of showing up at the airport or hotel to find your much-anticipated reservations missing in action.

The same goes for reconfirming important appointments and other plans, especially during the time of Mercury Rx.

People will write down the appointment on the wrong day of their calendar. Messages will not be properly forwarded. Files get lost. Data doesn't arrive on time. Signatures are missing. People are "unavoidably delayed" ... and meetings have to be cancelled -- often with no warning.

Transportation problems are epidemic -- so give yourself some extra time. People will miss connections, often by minutes or even seconds, but, as they say, a miss is as good as a mile.

Contracts negotiated and / or signed under Mercury Rx inevitably contain glitches and problems -- and have to be reworked, sometimes to the point of throwing them out and starting over. The same holds true for all other promises and agreements. People change their minds ... and formal contracts, to say nothing, of casual understandings ... fall apart.

Purchases made under Mercury Rx often turn out to be unsatisfactory for some reason -- and the more major the purchase, the greater the inconvenience later. For obvious reasons, don't buy communications equipment when Mercury is Rx. Computers, telephones, fax machines, printers all fall in this category.

Also never buy a new car or other transportation when Mercury is Rx. There is a good chance it will cause you nothing but grief --and you will wind up re-doing ... or at least re-gretting your decision.

For the same reasons, NEVER get married when Mercury is Rx. (Give yourself a chance to think it over one last time.)

Forgetfulness, delays and lack of preparation can become positively overwhelming during these three and a half weeks, so plan them into your life.

Don't take anything for granted -- if there is communication or travel of any kind involved. Don't assume all is well on any significant matter. Re- confirm. Get it in writing. Follow up. Be persistent. (Be a pest if that's what it takes ... and the matter is important enough to you.)

Err on the side of conservatism and caution. Be safe instead of sorry whenever possible. Do take care of auto repairs ASAP. That "funny noise" that suddenly appears is not going to go away, but instead could leave you stranded under very unfortunate conditions.

Mercury Rx is not actually God's little joke on the human race -- although it can seem so when you are caught in the middle of it. It is an important time of rethinking, reconsidering, refocusing, turning intellectual and mental energy inward instead of directing it outward.

If you can use it this way, you stay more in flow with the natural direction of the universe -- but yes, the real results of this "re-direction" can range from mildly annoying to positively infuriating.

When Mercury retrogrades, a specific area of your life undergoes all this re-formulation, and benefits in the end from a truly helpful intellectual renewal. If you know where this happening is in your natal chart, you can not only watch the results as they occur ... you can appreciate the construction that's underway ... and maybe even help it along.

That is, indeed, the best use to make of this time when greater self-awareness, introspection, pondering, contemplating, meditating and even praying are legitimate and helpful responses to what is taking place -- all over the world.

A Brief Tour Through the Sun Signs

The Sun in Aries

When the Sun is in Aries, people are more aggressive, direct and competitive. They make choices and take action that is forceful, vigorous and bold. They are interested in self-assertion and in pursuing goals. It's time to make an impression, stir up a ruckus, and "take on the world."

The Sun in Taurus

The Sun in Taurus brings a calmer pace and more interest in easy livin'. When the Sun is in Taurus, people are unusually persistent, practical, purposeful, and determined. Their actions and attitudes are steady, powerful, dependable, and "conserving of energy and resources" -- especially their own. They are more patient, laid-back, and easy-going, but they are also more interested in money and relationships.

The Sun in Gemini

When the Sun is in Gemini, people take up interests that spark new ideas, encourage reading and study, that emphasize "talking things over" and sharing opinions, and provide plenty of variety and entertainment. Attitudes become inquisitive, clever, interested in "novelty," and people are more willing to try something new ... just to see what happens.

The Sun in Cancer

When the Sun is in Cancer, people are sensitive, gentle, and protective. They rely more on emotions than logic ... and their actions and attitudes are colored by caution, intuition, and instinct. The overall outlook turns sentimental, sympathetic, traditional. People focus on security issues, emotional connections, family matters, domestic circumstances, and the conduct of their private lives.

The Sun in Leo

When the Sun is in Leo, people put a lot of work into ego support, activities and interests that nourish their need to be recognized and to "show off." Their actions are dramatic, self-confident, and dignified.

This energy is flamboyant, extroverted, exhibitionistic, showy, attention-grabbing and proud. It focuses on impressive appearances, romantic endeavors, leisure activities, speculative ventures, creative projects, relationships with children and lovers, and gestures designed to gain notice and applause.

The Sun in Virgo

When the Sun is in Virgo, people are logical, rational and precise. Their actions are well-planned and exacting; their attitudes discriminating and efficient. They are industrious, meticulous, methodical, and quality-conscious. They focus on "doing work" -- not just their for-money jobs, but also services for others -- errands, chores, favors, keeping agreements and meeting obligations.

The Sun in Libra

When the Sun is in Libra, people dust off qualities like devotion, compassion, loyalty, and sincerity. They become more considerate, cooperative, and "nice." People try to be pleasant,

diplomatic, refined, and concerned with the needs of partners. (Or at least more so than usual.) They also want to be fair, tactful, courteous, cultured, and sociable. (Or think of themselves as such.) They become concerned with issues like justice and individual rights.

The Sun in Scorpio

When the Sun is in Scorpio, people are passionate, intense and resourceful. Actions and attitudes are probing, focused, and aimed at doing "research" or uncovering unknown information.

People focus on self-improvement, regeneration, and the use of sexual energy as the ultimate creative force. They are especially involved with themes of destruction and rebuilding, management of unearned income and communal money ... such as inheritances and investments.

The Sun in Sagittarius

When the Sun is in Sagittarius, people are charitable, open and honest. Their actions and attitudes are fair, independent, and moral. Their overall outlook is candid and optimistic. This is a sincere, generous sign that encourages expansion and growth. Future plans center around efforts that are educational and concerned with social welfare.

The Sun in Capricorn

When the Sun is in Capricorn, people are conservative, deliberate, dignified and determined. In the Northern Hemisphere, it is winter, after all -- and everyone needs to make it from here to Spring. Consequently, actions and attitudes are frugal, methodical, organized and steady. The mood is serious, practical, responsible, and prudent.

The Sun in Aquarius

When the Sun is in Aquarius, people are concerned with the "rewards" they want from their professional activities, broad issues of "the collective good" and "social welfare," and with the future, in general. This energy focuses its laser lights on abstract concerns like your goals for the future, "making progress," being self-governing and more liberated, advancing humanitarian interests, and dealing with friends and others in your social network.

The Sun in Pisces

When the Sun is in Pisces, the general tone of life is most compassionate and unselfish. Attitudes are more creative, sentimental, and self-sacrificing. This combination supports ideas and choices that are empathetic and generous, and an overall mood that is sensitive and tolerant. This is a highly spiritual energy known for offering unconditional love and a profound charitable understanding in the way it relates to the world -- and the response it encourages.

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Rebecca Brents writes on a wide variety of spiritual and new age subjects, including astrology, tarot, feng shui, alternative health, metaphysics, and self-improvement. She publishes an extensive array of information on her website, [**Enchanted Spirit**](#), and offers new age online videos and classes in these various fields.

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