

# The Psychology of Astrology

## Part III

### Applying the Symbology of the Planets

*Behind the symbols and the archaic language of traditional astrology lays a vast realm of meaning that, when interpreted, enables us to better understand the physical and spiritual dimensions of our experience.*

#### **Toni Gilbert, RN, MA, HNC**

Archetypal consciousness is the primary motivating force in the individual as well as in the whole of creation. Carl Jung thought that this archetypal information was inherent in the psychological layer of life, a sort of psychic substratum that he called the Collective Unconscious. The archetypes are expressed in our thoughts, feeling and behaviors and shows up as human patterns in our art, myths, religion, philosophy and our psychology.

Just as man's oldest understanding of his gods and religions continue to exist in some form, so astrology still exists. This is because man has a need for it that resists attempts to rationalize it out of existence. One theory about why astrology was developed is that people have always needed a pattern of growth and order to guide their lives and to infuse their experiences with meaning.

As we come to understand that we are a part of all creation, we begin to discover our place in the universe. Knowing that we are indeed children of the greater whole empowers us and helps us to live in a more creative and fulfilling way. We learn that the cosmic laws of astrology hold symbolic meanings for each of us and that when we understand the interpretations, we have the keys to greater spiritual growth through heightened awareness of our potentials.

Scholars of astrology are learning to utilize it as a way of understanding our fundamental archetypal nature. The planets in astrology, like the gods of mythology, represent living archetypal forces and principles in the universe and in the lives of each of us. The conclusions drawn from Jung's extensive research into the archetypal foundations of the human mind would lead us to see that astrology provides us with the key to understanding these basic forces and functions in all people by virtue of its being the most comprehensive *language of energy* known.

#### The Archetypal Planets

Astrology is a symbolic language that utilizes the essential archetypal principles inherent in our being. The study our own and other's birth charts is a good way to learn about the archetypal energy and what it means in our lives. When you can observe and feel the archetypes in your own life, they become an enormously valuable tool when working with people of all cultures.

The study of astrology is complex. Entire books have been written about each of the archetypal planetary influences. Each planet has basic characteristics that it carries regardless of which house or constellation (sign) that it appears in. Additionally, the action of each planet varies because its influence blends with the action of the respective sign and house. However, the characteristics of each planet will be strong enough to make itself known in the horoscope chart regardless of the other influences.

The following is a short and simple exploration of the planets and their archetypal expression. I also list the health effects that each transiting planet is thought to have on the body. The effect that each planet has on our bodies depends upon the individual's natal astrology and the current position of the planets. The more you study and understand the nature of each planet (as well as the signs, aspects, and houses) the better you will be at interpretation.

**The Sun**, a masculine archetype, represents our ego or individuality. By its house and sign placement, it represents our ambitions and most apparent character traits. For instance, Sun in Gemini types tend to be talkative, intellectual, and creative. Gemini rules communications like writing, talking, and teaching.

Health: The Sun as an effect on our overall vitality.

**The Moon**, a feminine archetype, represents our emotional character, our moods and subconscious thoughts. Where the moon is in the chart (the house and sign placement) shows what area of life will have fluctuations and changes and where there will be a strong drive for stability. Words often associated with the moon are: emotional, sensitive, imagination, domestic, instinctive, inspiration, visionary psychic powers, flexibility, amorousness, and creativity.

Health: The Moon effects emotions and the menstrual periods in women.

**Mercury** represents the archetype of the communicating mind. Where Mercury is found in a chart indicates how the mind directs its thoughts. For instance, If the natal Mercury is in the fourth house (of home and community) in the sign of Cancer communication would be directed to the home and community at large (such as writing, radio and event organizing). Mercury in Cancer would indicate an ability to empathize and speak from the heart; a very good placement for a counselor.

Health: Mercury has a marginal effect on the nervous system. There could be a slight increase in nervous tension if the planet contacts a heavily afflicted personal planet, but the effect will only last a couple of days.

**Venus** represents the feminine archetype of refinement, harmony, love, beauty, and artistry and shows how you interact with people. The placement of Venus shows where money may be gained and spent and where good luck may appear.

Health: The transiting Venus usually brings a great deal of pleasure to our lives. Sometimes we enjoy ourselves and our food too much and we may put on some weight. The effects are temporary.

**Mars** represents the masculine archetype of action, energy and courage. It also represents our most primitive sexual and aggressive urges. The upper level characteristics of Mars are determination, self-reliance, an aggressive nature, bold and devotion. Some lower level characteristics of the Mars archetype include jealousy, stubbornness, violence, destructive, warlike, and cruel. Mars next to any other planet give a great deal of energy to the action of the other planet.

Health: Transits of Mars to the Sun, Moon, Ascendant and Midheaven may cause us to be over-hasty and accident prone. The effects of the transiting Mars make us feel energetic and very fit. The effect will last for about a week.

**Jupiter** represents the archetype of expansiveness and is sometimes called the greater benefactor because it is associated with good fortune. Some basic characteristics are: optimism, confidence, a generous nature, honorable, a generous nature, inspiration. Lower levels of this archetype include extravagance, pomposity, a tendency towards fanaticism, laziness, conceit and overconfidence. Jupiter also rules books and publishing.

Health: The effects of the transiting Jupiter are much like the affects of Venus but last longer. We can be vulnerable to indigestion when the planet makes negative contact to personal planets. The word expansion, which is associated with Jupiter, applies to weight gain when it conjuncts the Sun or Ascendant, but there will be benefits in other aspects of our life.

**Saturn**, sometimes referred to as the threshold planet, is the archetype of following and also growing past tradition. For example, in our early life we follow traditional values but as we develop ourselves, we step over the threshold and move beyond those values to our own way of doing things. At the higher levels this archetype represents stability, self-discipline, wisdom, thriftiness, patience, endurance and humility. At the lower levels: miserly, narrow-minded, selfish, fearful, pessimistic and rigid. Saturn's placement in a chart shows where that person has the most lessons to learn and where the person has the greatest feeling of inadequacy.

Health: Vitality is affected when Saturn comes into contact with the Ascendant, Sun, Moon or ruling planet by conjunction or negative transiting aspect. You may see depression, colds, flu, aches and pains, and occasionally falls.

**Uranus** represents the archetype of excitement, impulsive and rebellious urges. It is associated with sudden changes and events for which there is no warning. Uranian events can turn your life completely around in an instant. In a horoscope it can represent unconventional genius or chaotic craziness. At the higher levels it is associated with metaphysics, psychic abilities, intuition strength of will, independent thinking, humanitarian ideals, creativity and resourcefulness. Lower levels include: rebelliousness, fanaticism, a dictatorial or radical nature, eccentricity and perversion.

Health: When Uranus comes into contact with the Ascendant, Sun, Moon or ruling planet by conjunction or negative transiting aspect, you may receive a shock but may not notice the physical effects for a few days. During this time, you need to be careful that your circulation doesn't suffer, and should take no risks (especially with dangerous sports).

**Neptune** represents illusion and delusion and the dissolution of old forms. Neptune rules: mysterious events, psychic matters, drugs, poisons, hospitals, institutions, illusions, hypnosis, magic, indecision, secrets, illusive problems, extreme sensitivity. The higher levels of this archetype are spiritual and mystical experiences, psychic, compassionate, understanding, self-sacrificing and idealistic and imaginative. The lower levels are feelings of powerlessness, immorality, sorrows, delusion, misplaced sympathies, and fraudulent conditions.

Health: When Neptune is working for us we work through our illusions and gain an understanding of psychological patterns. If there are negative aspects there may be escapist tendencies and possible drug and alcohol problems.

**Pluto's** discovery was made in 1930. Many things about this planet are not yet known. It takes Pluto 248 years to move through all twelve zodiac signs. We have only been able to study it through the last half of Cancer, and through all of Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio and presently partly through Sagittarius. What is evident is that it affects entire generations of people. However, the house placement and the aspects it makes with other planets are significant in individual natal charts. A strong Pluto placement in a chart generally indicates a nonconformist who brings new developments into the world. Pluto energy breaks down the old and replaces it with the new. Pluto is associated with the most drastic changes and mass movements. The baby boomer generation has Pluto conjunct Saturn the traditionalist.

Health: Pluto is associated with blockages and purging. If we have a psychological problem that we are stuck on, we can usually work through it when Pluto is working positively or in conjunction. It is most powerful when it is in contact with the Sun, Moon or Ascendant. There could be inflammation or discomfort of the genitals when the planet contacts Mars.

**Chiron** is an asteroid that bears mention here because of its association with self healing. Discovered in 1977, Chiron was named after a centaur (half human, half horse) who was a healer and teacher to many gods. When he died he was placed in the sky as the constellation Sagittarius. Chiron appears to rule philosophy and healing and represents the archetypal principle of holistic understanding gained through wounding. In a chart it can indicate an open-minded perspective and the ability to look beyond the limitations of current views. Chiron in my own natal chart is in the 8<sup>th</sup> house of Scorpio, which can be interpreted in terms of healing through knowledge of the esoteric mysteries. Certainly, my healing path has been through the understanding and the application of philosophy and higher learning.

Health: Positive transits from Chiron to the personal planets will encourage your clients towards self healing. A negative Chiron influence will add to a build up of tension and stress.

### Application of Astrology

How shall we apply what we know of the archetypal planets to our health care practices? The answers are varied as many professionals explore astrology's usefulness. I wish to leave you with a sampling of what others are doing and hope that this will encourage you to do your own explorations.

In his article, *Psyche and Cosmos: Holotropic States of Consciousness, Archetypal Psychology, and Transit Astrology* <http://www.altjn.com/archives/6.asp> Stanislav Grof, MD discusses his efforts to discover a method for predicting the reaction to psychedelics and the therapeutic outcomes. After years of frustrating effort he finally found a tool that made such predictions possible, it was more controversial than psychedelics themselves. It was astrology, a discipline that, even after years of studying transpersonal phenomena, he tended to dismiss as a ridiculous pseudoscience. He also realized that astrology could be an invaluable tool in the work with other forms of holotropic states of consciousness, such as those induced by powerful experiential techniques of psychotherapy (primal therapy, rebirthing, and holotropic breathwork) or occurring spontaneously during psychospiritual crises.

The radical change in his attitude toward astrology was the result of cooperation with psychologist and philosopher Richard Tarnas, his close friend and colleague of many years. Rick's major book on the history of the Western worldview, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, is used as a textbook in many universities in the U.S. and abroad. Rick is also a brilliant astrological researcher, who combines in his work impeccable scholarship and deep familiarity with holotropic states of consciousness, the subject of his doctoral dissertation. Rick also brings to his work extraordinary breadth of knowledge concerning human history and culture.

For many years they have been jointly exploring the astrological correlates of mystical experiences, psychospiritual crises, psychotic episodes, psychedelic states, and holotropic breathwork sessions. This work has shown that astrology, particularly the study of planetary transits, can predict both the archetypal content and the timing of holotropic states of consciousness. Our systematic study of the correlations between the nature and content of holotropic states and planetary transits convinced Dr. Grof that a combination of deep experiential therapy with archetypal psychology and transit astrology is the most promising strategy for psychiatry of the future.

Dr. Mitchell E. Gibson is a board-certified forensic psychiatrist, writer, artist, software developer, public speaker, and spiritual teacher. He received his medical degree at the age of 25 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He then completed his residency training at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. Dr. Gibson is a diplomat of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, the American College of Forensic Medicine, and the American Board of Forensic Examiners. He is currently in private practice in Tempe Arizona.

In addition to his expertise in medicine, Gibson is a research member of the American Federation of Astrologers and is a contributing author for *American Astrology* magazine and *Today's Astrologer*. Dr. Gibson recently contributed a chapter to the Llewellyn Sun Signs Annual and is the author of the groundbreaking book *Signs of Mental Illness*, now published in three languages. Dr. Gibson has also completed two software packages based on his work in astrology: "Signs: The Inner Sky" and "Signs: The Spiritual Sky." He has recently completed his second book, *Signs of Psychic and Spiritual Ability*, released in November 2001 by Modern Astrology Publishing. You may view his work on his website [www.spiritualpotential.com](http://www.spiritualpotential.com) and at <http://www.tybro.com/index.html>

Liz Greene is another remarkable astrologer. She is a qualified Jungian analyst whose work has successfully combined Jung's theories with astrology. She is a highly successful author. Her titles include *Saturn, Neptune the Quest for the Redeemer, Relating, Astrology for Lovers, The Outer Planets, The Jupiter/Saturn Conference Lectures* (with Stephen Arroyo), *The Astrology of Fate, The Mythic Tarot* (with Juliet Sharman-Burke), *The Development of the Personality* (four volumes with Howard Sasportas), *Dynamics of the Unconscious* and a number of other works.

Liz Greene is also director of the Centre for Psychological Astrology and a patron of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, Both based in London and runs seminars around the world. For more information you may view her web site at <http://www.astrology.co.uk/LizG.htm>

In my own practice, I use a computerized astrology program from which I can print off individualized astrological charts that show the position of the planets at the time of a client's birth. This circular graph is called the natal chart. Although I am still exploring the possibilities of using this type of tool, I find that it does help me correlate possible archetypal influences and potentials. For instance, if the Sun is positioned in Libra the client almost invariably is indecisive and most likely do not like confrontation.

During the session, I do a systematic analysis of each of the planets and their placement in the natal chart. As with any interpretive process, my interpretation is always verified by them. During this interaction, I can assess a great deal about who they are and what archetypal forces are prominent in their personality.

As a final gift, I leave you with a web site with free horoscopes: <http://www.astro.com/>  
Enjoy.

## References

Hewitt, W.W. (1996) *Astrology for Beginners: An easy guide to understanding and interpreting your chart*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.

Meyer, M.R. (1974, 2000). *A Handbook for the Humanistic Astrologer*. Lincoln, NE: toExcel.

Parker, J. & D. (2001). *Parker's Astrology: The definitive guide to using astrology in every aspect of your life*. New York, NY: DK Publishing.

**Toni Gilbert, RN, MA, HNC** is a holistic nurse with a private practice in transpersonal counseling. She has studied astrology for five years and continues this study with Christine Payne Towler and Robert Volkmann, MD on an ongoing basis. You may reach Toni through her web site [www.tonigilbert.com](http://www.tonigilbert.com)