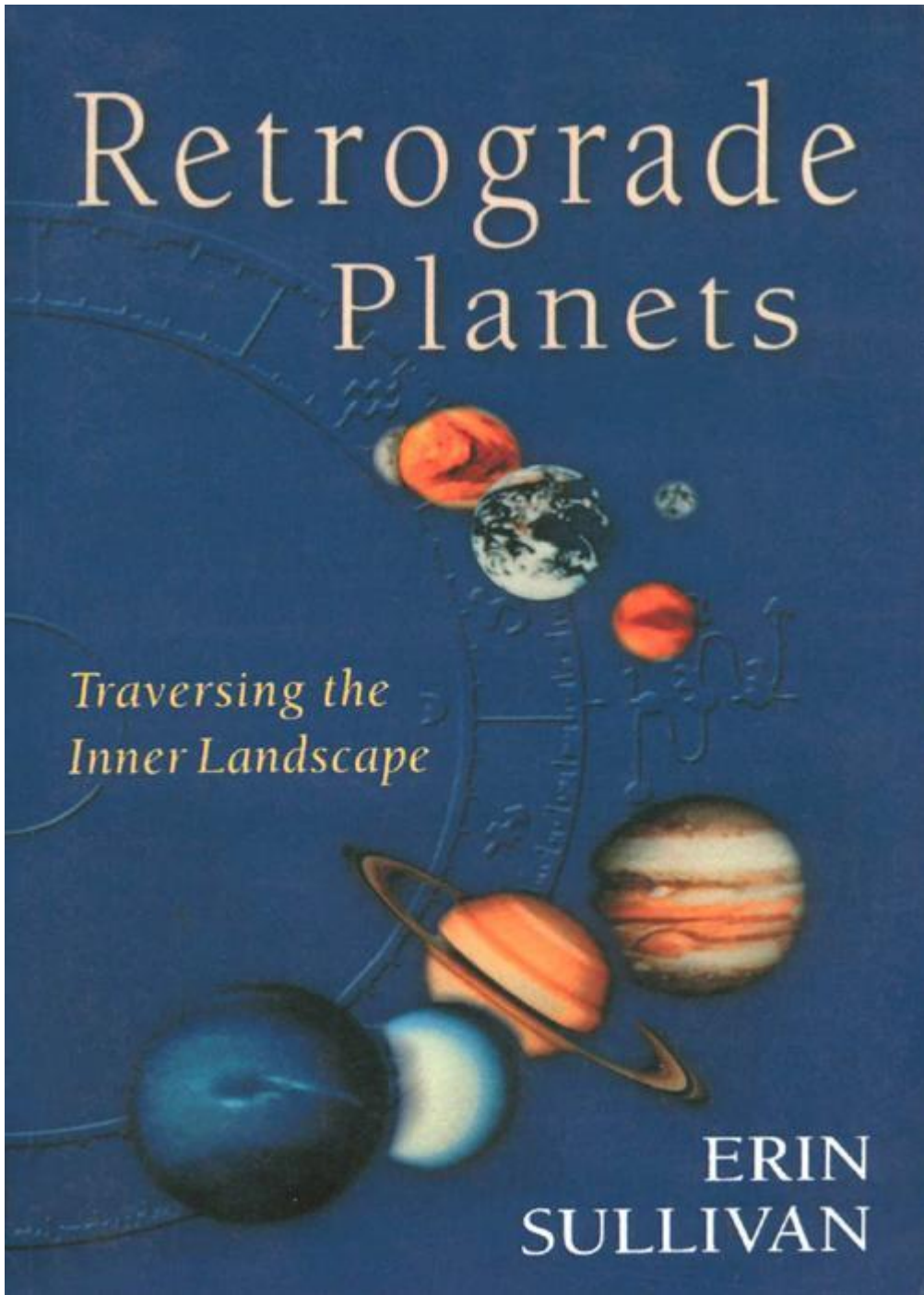


Retrograde Planets

*Traversing the
Inner Landscape*

ERIN
SULLIVAN



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Inner Landscape*

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*Dedicated to the spirit of inquiry
and in loving memory of Howard
1948-1992*

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Quotable Quotes

Introduction

PART ONE:

RETROGRESSION, HOW IT WORKS

- 1 The Mechanics of Retrogression
- 2 The Sun and Natal Retrograde Planets
- 3 Secondary Progression of Planets

PART TWO:

THE INFERIOR PLANETS RETROGRADE NATALLY AND IN TRANSIT

- 4 Mercury, God of Retrogression
- 5 Venus, Dual Goddess

PART THREE:

THE SUPERIOR PLANETS RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

- 6 The Cycle of Superior Planets (incl. retrograde syndromes)
- 7 Natal Mars Retrograde
- 8 Natal Jupiter Retrograde
- 9 Natal Saturn Retrograde
- 10 The Trans-Saturnian Planets
- 11 Natal Uranus Retrograde
- 12 Natal Neptune Retrograde
- 13 Natal Pluto Retrograde
- 14 A Natal Case History: Oscar
- 15 A Mundane Case History: Syphilis

PART FOUR:

THE SUPERIOR PLANETS RETROGRADE IN TRANSIT

- 16 Overview
- 17 Transiting Mars Retrograde
- 18 Transiting Jupiter Retrograde
- 19 Transiting Saturn Retrograde
- 20 Transits of the Trans-Saturnian Planets
- 21 Transiting Uranus Retrograde
- 22 Transiting Neptune Retrograde
- 23 Transiting Pluto Retrograde
- 24 A Case of transiting Retrogrades: Jude

Notes

Bibliography

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QUOTABLE QUOTES

The influence of each planet, however, is strengthened chiefly when it may be oriental, swift and direct in its proper course and motion - for it then has its greatest power: but, on the other hand, it loses strength when occidental and slow in motion or retrograde; as it then acts with smaller effect.

[With regard to predictions and eclipse formation] cities or countries [are] liable to be influenced by particular eclipses, or by occasional continued stations of certain planets, which at times remain for a certain period in one situation. These planets are Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars: and they furnish portentous indications when they are stationary.

Both from Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trans. J. M. Ashmand (c. AD 140)
audaces fortuna juvat timidisque repellit [Fortune favours the brave and spurns the cowardly: A reference to those who make decisions when the planets are in reverse.]

Rhodus of Mareotis, *Disputationes astrologiae* (c. AD 240)
[The retrograde planet] removes a small part of that universal harmony from each of its diurnal periods; and after the passage of some days it will seem . . . to have done the equator a serious injury.

John Dee (1527–1608), *Propaedeumata Aphoristica*
In Astrology [the retrograde planet] is considered as a debility, and it is my personal experience that aspects, whether radical or directional, that are thrown to a retrograde planet rob that promittor of its efficacy, all that it promises falling short of end.

Sepharial, *New Dictionary of Astrology* (1921)

Retrograde planets never give all that is expected.

Charles Carter, *Horary Astrology* (1942)

Not only do Retrogrades cause the individual to regress back to yesterday, last month and last year, but they also induce regression back to former lives whose memories carry strongly into the present incarnation.

These memories represent specific events or individuals that were meaningful enough in another life to still have a hold on the person now.

Martin Schulman, *Karmic Astrology: Retrogrades and Reincarnation* (1977)

Nonetheless, people who aspire to public positions or who are already prominent in their community, because they are reacting more personally to the needs and trends of their time, are more often affected at the time of a change in the direction of these planets. Although it is impossible to establish a rule, experience has shown that it is just *before* a planet turns retrograde or direct that things come to a head.

Alexander Ruperti, *Cycles of Becoming* (1978)

If a transiting planet is stationary while in exact aspect with a birth horoscope planet, the power of any resultant event is increased.

Tad Mann, *The Round Art* (1979)

To ancient pre-Copernican astrologer-astronomers, [retrogression] was a most perplexing occurrence that could only be plotted and perhaps predicted on the basis of past observation, but it could not really be explained.

The key, we cannot stress enough, is to understand that retrogradation occurs at a particular phase of each planet's cyclic relationship to the Sun when seen from Earth.

Both from Dane Rudhyar and Leyla Rael, *Astrological Aspects* (1980)

It might be rewarding to consider that understanding retrogradation manifestation has less to do with apparent 'backward' movement and more to do with the fact that the planet, after going direct again, will *cover the same ground over which it apparently back-tracked*.

Noel Tyl, *The Horoscope as Identity* (1980)

My observations suggest, however, that a retrograde planet is not so much stronger as it is closer to a person's centre . . . *much more work needs to be done concerning retrograde planets and their effects*.

Robert Hand, *Horoscope Symbols* (1981)

I think that any retrograde planet tends to interiorise the expression of the planet. It operates on a more subjective and covert level. The meaning of a planet doesn't change, but the capacity for extroverted expression is altered.

Liz Greene, *The Outer Planets and Their Cycles* (1983)

The phenomenon of retrograde motion is a perfectly natural occurrence, and it has no real meaning astrologically, except when a planet becomes stationary, slows down and 'hovers' on a critical point in the chart. Then it does have significance, and should be considered.

John and Peter Filbey, *Astronomy for Astrologers* (1984)

In traditional astrological interpretation a planet which was retrograde carried a somewhat sinister connotation, though the tendency is for modern astrologers to either entirely dismiss the idea that retrogradation should influence the significance of planets, or to greatly amend the sinister reputation attached to the ancient interpretation.

Fred Gettings, *The Arkana Dictionary of Astrology* (1985)

The most common interpretations seem to collect around the notion that if the planet is retrograde then its energy is somewhat inhibited and turned in upon itself. I suspect much of this is deduced from a straight translation of the word 'backward' and I think this is to shortchange the whole issue of retrogression in a way it doesn't deserve.

Fiona Griffiths, 'The Astrological Journal' (1986)

INTRODUCTION

And there shall be a great confusion about things, what those things are, and where all those little things lieth.

Life of Brian

The first talk I ever gave on astrology was to a group of about eight associates who were the unwitting core of what was to become the British Columbia Astrological Society. To this small coterie, in 1973, I presented ideas on retrograde planets. My foray into astrology in 1964 had been induced by Dane Rudhyar's *The Lunation Cycle*, followed by C. E. O. Carter's *Aspects* and numerous pamphlets, tomes and motley reading, so you can see it was a strange and disconnected beginning. My true companions were the Rosicrucian decade ephemerides, which I pored over incessantly, teaching myself to cast horoscopes and studying planetary motion. I was always intrigued by the apparent backward motion of the planets, signified by the mysterious 'R' in the columns of figures. Nowhere did I read or hear about that 'R' until a few years later, in 1968, I attended a Theosophical gathering in Los Angeles to hear a lecture by Manly Palmer Hall. At some

point in the evening retrograde motion was mentioned and I had every hope that the mysterious 'R' was finally to be explained. Upon asking, however, I was told it meant nothing, and to disregard it in natal astrology.

To suggest to a Scorpio that *something means nothing* is as inflammatory as a red rag to a bull, its opposite sign, and I could not accept this interpretation. To disregard this eccentric motion seemed very odd indeed, especially since it was already becoming apparent to me that it was a cyclic phenomenon, with each planet quite regularly going through phases of apparently 'meaningless' backward motion. I first noticed the regularity of the motion of Mercury retrograde early in the seventies but did not publish anything on it until 1983, when RKM Tape Club distributed a set of my taped lectures on Mercury retrograde.

I could see that the inferior planets might be a problem to any ancient sky-watcher because of their proximity to the Sun and the long-standing belief in geocentricity. As for the superior planets, however, I could not understand why greater mention had not been made of their import when they were retrograde, since they would have been viewed in the night sky when the Sun was opposed to them. When I finally surveyed some ancient sources, there were a few mentions of retrograde planets but primarily in the context of dire warnings about their stations and the terrible afflictions which they portended!

It has been said by many philosophers that what separates humankind from the rest of the animal kingdom are our ability to reason and foreknowledge of our own death. Others have said it is our capacity for humour. I think one of the qualities of humanity which set us apart is the capacity for denial. In the face of the obvious, we can say it doesn't exist or, if it does, it is irrelevant! With respect to retrograde planets, astrologers have alternately laden them with far too much importance, thus making themselves look ridiculous, or ignored them, thus appearing equally foolish. Both of these problems have arisen because we have tried to understand the retrograde planet alone, not the planet in relation to its system. Remove an individual from his relationship to his system, whether that is the family, the society, the culture or the epoch, and we see only an isolated and possibly irrelevant mote. When the individual is included *within* that system, much more begins to fall into place. I believe that this is part of what has happened with regard to retrograde planets.

One of the main arguments against taking retrogression into consideration as a philosophical underpinning of astrology is that the perceived backward motion of the planets is only 'apparent'. This borders on the absurd - if what we see is not a valid perception, then we are lost. The 'apparentness' of retrograde motion is a reality in itself, and if we perceive a planet in retrograde motion then it *is* in retrograde motion, from the viewpoint of the observer. Given that we live on Earth and conduct our affairs (or perceive ourselves to conduct our apparent affairs) taking note of various things from both a subjective and objective view, then it stands to reason that we might not only 'see' retrogression objectively, but also might be involved with it in a subjective sense, that is, experience it as something different from direct motion.

Perhaps the problem of retrogression lies not in the planets themselves but in our understanding of the system of planets gathered about our Sun, and the relationship that the planets have with the Sun as seen from our geocentric viewpoint. Part of my own confusion in getting my mind around retrograde planets was clearly reflected in the traditional teachings to which we have all been exposed, indeed indoctrinated. My inability to grasp the 'problem of retrogrades' lay in my received understanding of planets in signs in houses. Although these specifications are valid and rich with meaning, it seems that another approach is necessary to comprehend fully the retrograde planet.

You may notice a lack of emphasis on house position and sign placement in all sections delineating retrograde planets. This is deliberate for two reasons. First, the most significant power of a retrograde planet lies in the fact that it is retrograde, and, therefore, is implicitly in aspect to the Sun. Secondly, the power of a retrograde planet is dependent upon its place in the gestalt of the horoscope, that is, dependent on whether it has an exact aspect with the Sun; whether it is a singleton; or whether it is otherwise segregated from the main body of planets in the rest of the chart.

To catalogue interpretations for retrograde planets singly by house and sign would not only be erroneous and misleading, it would not work consistently. The reader is expected to synthesize his or her own knowledge of signs and houses with knowledge of aspects to or from retrograde planets to other planets, thereby coming to an understanding of what retrograde energy contributes within the context of the whole horoscope.

After pondering and researching the motion of all planets, I realized absolutely that retrogression must be seen in the context of a whole system - the very system that produces the phenomenon. It is, therefore, essential to read this book from beginning to end, rather than picking out individual chapters for delineations

of some of the characteristics of each planet in retrograde - natively and in transit. In reading from cover to cover, it will become clear that there is an elegant system at work, and its complex simplicity has a rhythm and resonance which is virtually decimated in isolated interpretations.

The rhythms, sequences, waves and patterns with respect to the retrogression and direct motion of the planets is symphonic in its holistic entirety. It is many voices singing together. As Shakespeare had Lorenzo say in *The Merchant of Venice*:

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls . . .

Penetrating the veil of mystery behind which retrogression has lurked found me occasionally maddened by Pythagoras' 'music of the spheres'. Scipio Africanus the Elder says of it to his grandson in *Cicero's Scipio's Dream*. 'Now to this melody the stopped ears of men have become deaf.' Well might we be metaphorically deafened by such things as harmonic resonances which accord with planetary motion, especially since the basis of the mystery school of the Pythagoreans was rooted in geocentrism. However, Cicero's visionary ending to his *Republic* in the form of Scipio the Younger's dream is really intended to portray the nature of the Universe based on the central power of the Sun, and on the harmonies generated by the revolution of spheres in which individual planets were embedded. The eight spheres are made distinct from the planets (which resided in the spheres), each of which was in concert with other spheres, all held in check by the envelope of the ninth Great Celestial Sphere, the choreographer, so to speak. The archetypal tone was originated in the planet, but the resultant harmony resonated through the sphere, and the spheres collectively produced the symphony, or 'music'. This distinction is important: the planet is portrayed as an archetypal tone and the sphere as an agency which resonates this tone according to the placement of the planet with respect to other planets. The planet then is *not* independent, indeed might be quite ineffectual alone.

The ancient view of planets embedded in heavenly spheres is a lovely metaphor for the interactive relationship between the planets in the system of the horoscope. It is the inextricable bond between the planets and their orbits, and their relationship with the Sun -the great organizing principle, or the conductor of the symphony -which is the foundation of my work in this book.

In the course of grappling with the intricacy of multiple cycles within cycles and with the interactions of paradigms, each of which in turn has a 'prototype' - a fundamental basis for subsequent patterns - I discovered an exquisite system which can be applied in all areas of astrology - natal, mundane, transit and theoretical. It is my hope that much work and observation shall be the outcome of this book. Although the interpretative values are characteristically mine, the system is not; the system is true, only our perceptions of it are relative and subject to bias.

As reader, therefore, you will need to divest yourself of all preconceived notions about signs and houses, and concentrate wholly on planetary motion and position relative to the Sun. In doing so you will soon realize that inherent within our little cosmos is a divine order of things. And the confusion about 'where all those little things lieth' shall be considerably reduced.

PART ONE

RETROGRESSIO: HOW IT WORKS

1

THE MECHANICS OF RETROGRESSION

Throughout the book we will be reminded constantly that retrograde motion is peculiar to our earth-based viewpoint. We look both inward to the Sun and the two 'inferior' planets, and outward at the 'superior' planets towards the boundary of the solar system. The inferior planets whose orbits lie inside the orbit of our Earth—Moon system are Mercury and Venus; those beyond our orbit - Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto - are the superior planets. Of the superior planets, astrologers have come to know the first three as the 'social' planets and the outermost three as the 'transpersonal' or, more accurately, 'trans-Saturnian' planets.

Retrogression is the period of time during which a planet in our solar system appears to be moving backward as we see it against the fixed backdrop of the stars. The phenomenon is entirely due to our Earth-based perspective and was well known to the ancient astronomers.

The ancient sky-watchers were, however, in some confusion about the cycles of the inferior planets - retrogression in particular - because they thought that Mercury and Venus were both two different bodies. This was because they can be both morning and evening 'stars' at different times in their cycle of orbital revolution and retrogression. The confusion is quite understandable, because when we look towards Mercury and Venus it appears as if they are passing back and forth across - rather than orbiting around - the Sun. Because of their orbital proximity to the Sun they are clearly observable only when at their most distant from the Sun in zodiacal longitude. This visibility occurs for two short periods of time, as Mercury and Venus head 'towards' us in their orbits to form an inferior conjunction with the Sun, and as they head 'away from' us,

continuing in their respective orbits around the Sun to the superior conjunction.

The social planets - Mars, Jupiter and Saturn - are most clearly visible when they are moving in the opposite part of the sky to the Sun - in the night sky - and are retrograde for much of the time when in this zodiacal zone. This same Sun-planet opposition principle applies also to Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, but they are invisible to the unaided eye.

The primary difference, therefore, between inferior planets and superior planets retrograde is that:

1. Superior planets only appear to turn retrograde when they are about to oppose the Sun. Earth is then posited between the Sun and the planet in its orbit.
2. Inferior planets only appear to turn retrograde when they are about to conjoin the Sun. The planet is posited between Earth and the Sun.

The point in common between all planets is that they are closest to Earth when retrograde. With these facts in mind, let us examine the cycles of inferior and superior retrogression.

RETROGRADE CYCLE OF INFERIOR PLANETS

From a geocentric viewpoint Mercury and Venus can make two kinds of conjunction with the Sun:

1. Inferior: when the planet is between Earth and the Sun, and the planet is retrograde.
2. Superior: when the planet is on the other side (from Earth) of the Sun, and the planet is direct.

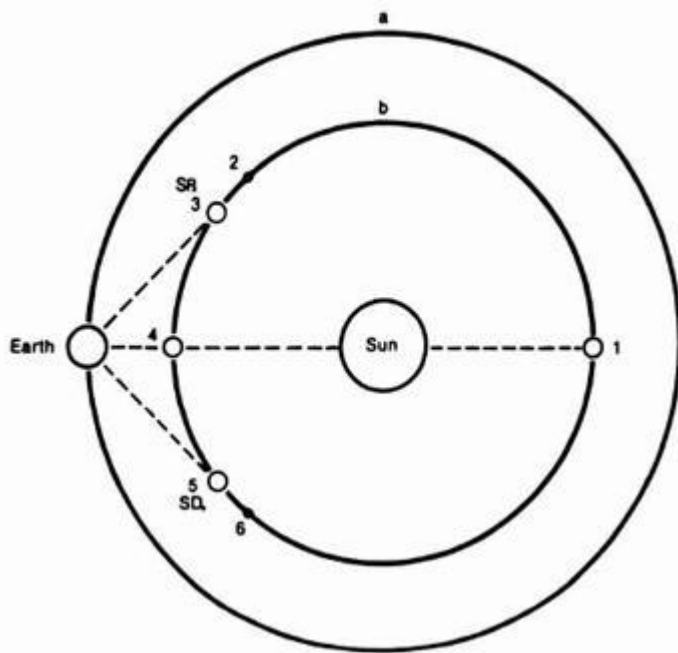
Both Mercury and Venus orbit the Sun in shorter periods than the Earth. Mercury goes around the Sun once every 88 days, and Venus about every 225 days (Earth's orbital period is 365¼ days). As the Earth and inferior planets orbit the Sun in their respective periods, occasionally they are all found on the same side of the Sun, occasionally on opposite sides of the Sun. Sometimes they are running alongside each other, sometimes not. When an inferior planet moves around the Sun and 'catches up' with and passes the Earth, the planet appears to move backwards against the zodiac. At that point it is in close proximity to the Sun in zodiacal longitude (in the ephemeris), and is then retrograde. From a heliocentric viewpoint, it is an Earth-Mercury or Earth-Venus conjunction.

For Mercury this retrograde motion occurs three times approximately every thirteen or so months; the planet catches up with Earth at the inferior conjunction with the Sun every 116 days. Venus - which orbits the Sun every 225 days - passes through the inferior conjunction with the Sun about every 584 days and is therefore seen retrograde only once approximately every eighteen months. Though the times of Mercury's and Venus' retrograde cycles are considerably different, the system operates in precisely the same way.

At superior conjunction (point 1 in [fig. 1.1](#), p. 6) the Earth is looking *beyond* the Sun to the inferior planet, which is trotting along in direct motion round the Sun. At a certain point the inferior planet begins to head around in its orbit again towards the Earth and passes *between* the Sun and Earth. When the planet is between the superior conjunction (point 1) and Greatest Eastern Elongation (point 2), it is direct in motion. It begins to decelerate just before point 2 and stations, turning retrograde at point 3, after which time it appears to move backward against the zodiac for a period of time (an average of twenty-two days for Mercury and forty-two for Venus). At the midpoint of the retrograde period, the planet will have moved back to conjoin the Sun at inferior conjunction (point 4). Some days after the inferior conjunction (for Mercury this is about ten days and Venus about twenty-one days), the planet will appear to slow again, stop and then begin forward motion (point 5), heading towards the superior conjunction (point 1) on the other side of the Sun.

The points before the station-retrograde and after the station-direct (points 2 and 6) are when the inferior planet is clearly visible to us on Earth. These points are called Greatest Elongation: the inferior planet is then as distant from the Sun in zodiacal longitude as it can be. For Mercury, the maximum distance is 28° on either side of the Sun, and for Venus 48°. At the stationary-retrograde, point, the inferior planet has been at its greatest eastern elongation, sets just after the Sun and is called the evening star; when it is at its

stationary-direct point, it will soon rise ahead of the Sun as the morning star and is then at its greatest western elongation.



- a. Earth's orbit
- b. Inferior planet's orbit
- 1. Superior conjunction
- 2. Greatest eastern elongation
- 3. Station-retrograde
- 4. Inferior conjunction
- 5. Station-direct
- 6. Greatest western elongation

Fig. 1.1 Heliocentric view of inferior planet cycles

Both Mercury and Venus perform this oscillation and both, at different times in each of their cycles, appear as morning and evening star. At certain rare periods, when Mercury and Venus are both together on the same side of the Sun they can present themselves as morning or evening star simultaneously, with Venus, the more distant of the two from the Sun, lingering longer in the horizon than Mercury at evening, or rising ahead of Mercury, heralding the dawn.

Summary

Direct [superior] conjunction [point 1 in fig. 1.1]: When Mercury or Venus is on the other side of the Sun from Earth, and reaches the same degree as the Sun in zodiacal longitude. This marks the time when the planet begins the advance towards greatest eastern elongation.

Greatest eastern elongation [point 2]: For Mercury this is around 28° ahead of the Sun and for Venus 48° ahead of the Sun in zodiacal longitude. This is when the planet appears on the horizon after sunset as the evening star, during which time the Sun appears to gain on it in longitude. Venus is called Hesperos when it is the evening star, literally meaning 'evening' or 'western' in Greek, whereas this phase of Mercury is called Epimethean, after the Greek god Epimetheus.

Station-retrograde [point 3]: The planet appears to stop and reverse its motion as seen against the zodiac. The Sun advances and Mercury or Venus will retrogress back in the zodiac to meet at:

Retrograde [inferior] conjunction [point 4]: Mercury or Venus now begins to fall behind the Sun in longitudinal degree. This is the midpoint of the retrograde cycle and marks a new phase in the evolution of the Sun-inferior planet.

Station-direct [point 5]: For both Mercury and Venus this occurs just prior to their becoming visible - and marks the return to forward motion of the inferior planet, as it heads towards:

Greatest western elongation [point 6]. This occurs during the time when Mercury or Venus is the morning star and they are,

respectively, 28° or 48° behind the Sun in zodiacal longitude. In this period the planet will reach again, while in direct motion, the degree at which it was conjunct the Sun while in retrograde motion. At this point the inferior planet begins its longest direct cycle, as it heads back around the Sun, 'away' from Earth, towards the superior conjunction. When Venus is in this position, it is commonly called Lucifer, or 'lightbearer' in Latin, but it might well be Phosphoros, in keeping with the Greek Hesperos. In this phase Mercury is called Promethean, after the Greek god Prometheus, the fire-thief.

RETROGRADE CYCLE OF SUPERIOR PLANETS

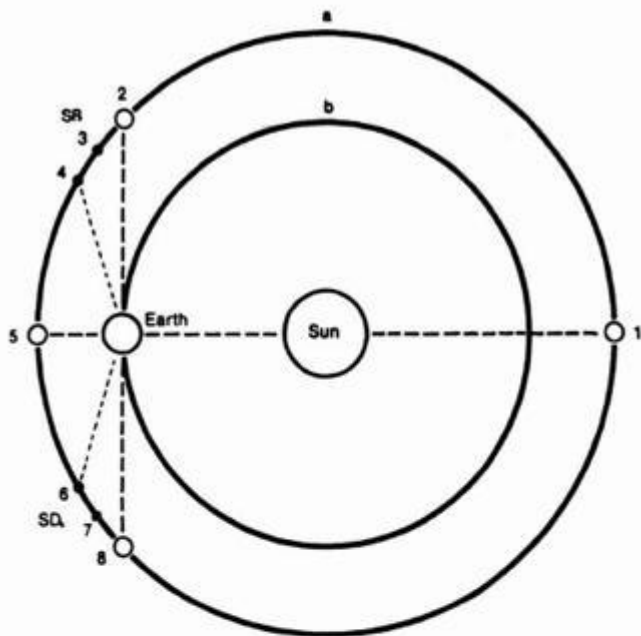
Heliocentric view

From the heliocentric viewpoint the Earth and the superior planets all orbit the Sun, but because the revolution period of the Earth is shorter and its proximity to the Sun closer, Earth gradually overtakes each superior planet in the course of its annual revolution.

Referring to [fig. 1.2](#), point 1 is the conjunction of the superior planet and the Sun: as the Earth comes round to meet the superior planet in its orbit it begins to move between the planet and the Sun and passes the planet. As it does so, the planet appears to slow, stop and reverse its motion as we see it against the backdrop of the zodiac. Although each planet has its own period of direct and retrograde motion according to its position in the zodiac relative to the Sun, the principle is exactly the same for all of them. At point 5 the Earth is positioned exactly between the Sun and the planet, appearing from our view as a Sun-planet opposition, but from the Sun as an Earth-planet conjunction. When the superior planet has moved along in its orbit to point 7, the planet will station and turn direct in apparent motion again. (This diagram also clearly shows quadrature and the 'retrograde trine' zone.)

Geocentric view

The cycles as depicted in the heliocentric diagram ([fig. 1.2](#)) correspond exactly to those in [fig. 1.3](#). [Fig. 1.3](#), however, is an astrological representation, illustrating how on an annual basis the Sun *appears* to transit the signs of the zodiac and its position as seen from the Earth and in relation to the superior planet.



- a. Superior planet's orbit
- b. Earth's orbit
- 1. Conjunction of Sun and superior planet
- 2. Quadrature (Sun square superior planet)
- 3. Station-retrograde
- 4. Stationary-retrograde trine from Sun to planet
- 5. Opposition of Sun and superior planet
- 6. Stationary-direct trine from Sun to planet
- 7. Station-direct
- 8. Quadrature (Sun square superior planet)

Fig. 1.2 Heliocentric view of superior planet cycles

When a superior planet is in zodiacal conjunction with the Sun, its apparent motion is at its quickest, although we cannot see it because it is obliterated by the brightness of the solar rays. However, after the conjunction the Sun continues to move at approximately 1° per day and appears to leave the planet behind. By the time the Sun has reached the first quarter square aspect to the superior planet (point 2 in [fig. 1.3](#)), the apparent motion of that planet begins to slow; by the time the Sun is in a trine to it (point 4), it has stationed and turned retrograde (point 3) some days beforehand, causing it to appear to move backward against the zodiac, and is visible in the night sky (with the sole exception of Mars which is trined by the Sun *before* it stations-retrograde).

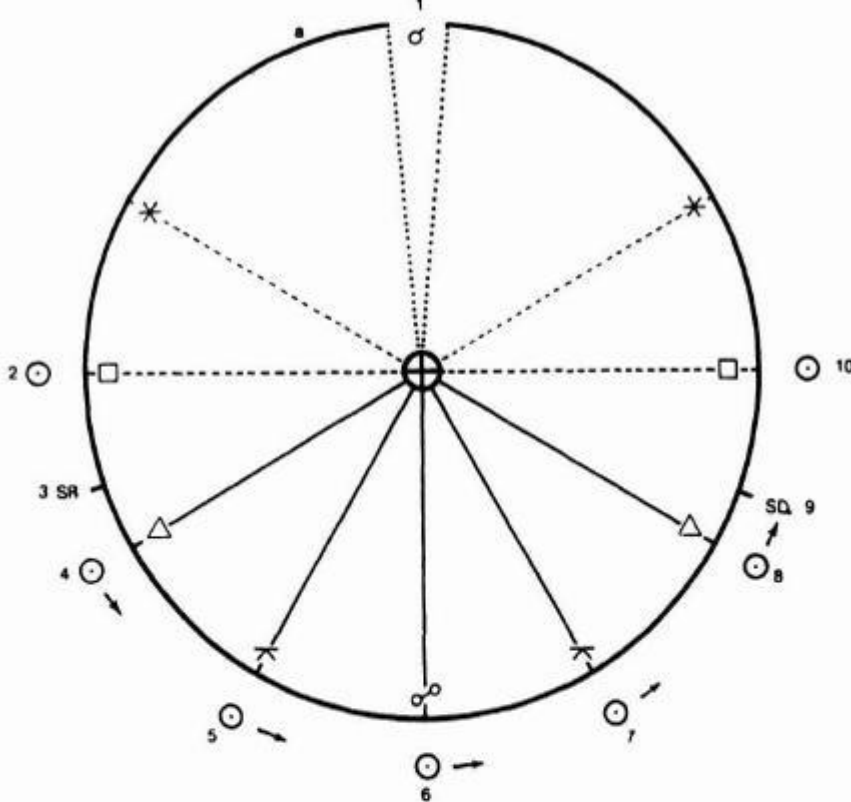
This phenomenon has been best illustrated by the analogy of the fast-moving car passing the slow-moving car: even though both are moving, the speed of the faster car as seen against the background makes the slower car appear to be moving backward. With this in mind, let us look at the periods consistent with superior planetary retrogression.

Summary

Conjunction with the Sun [point 1 in [fig. 1.3](#)]: This point originates the cycle, with the planet's apparent motion at its quickest. The Earth is on the opposite side of the Sun to the superior planet, so we look towards both of them, 'seeing' them together against the backdrop of the zodiac. (In actual fact, we cannot of course see it because it is in the day sky.)

First quarter square [point 2]: This occurs when the Earth has moved to such a position that the Sun appears three signs ahead in the zodiac, and the superior planet has begun to slow down in apparent motion in preparation for station-retrogression. In fact, the Earth is now beginning to come between the Sun and the superior planet in its orbit, heralding the advent of the stationary-retrograde point.

Station-retrograde [point 3]: The superior planet appears to have stopped in the sky. This is caused by the Earth having moved to the point in its orbit where it will overtake the superior planet and pass it by, giving the appearance of the planet moving backward for a period of time (from two and a half to five and a half months, depending on the planet - see next section for the days between the Sun trine to the superior planet and either station).



- a. Apparent position of Sun relative to geocentric view with point 1 (σ) as the stationary and/or retrograde planet
1. Conjunction of Sun and superior planet
2. Quadrature
3. Sun's position as the planet stations-retrograde
4. Sun trine following station-retrograde
5. Sun quincunx retrograde planet
6. Sun opposition to retrograde planet
7. Sun quincunx retrograde planet
8. Sun trine heralding station-direct
9. Sun's position as planet stations-direct
10. Quadrature

Fig. 1.3 Geocentric view of Sun's apparent motion relative to the zodiac placement of a superior planet

Stationary-retrograde Sun trine to superior planet [point 4]: This configuration occurs some days after the stationary-retrograde point - the number of days also differs with each planet.

Accelerating quincunx [point 5]: The Sun forms a quincunx to the superior planet as it begins to quicken.

Opposition point of Sun to superior planet [point 6]: This is the midpoint in the synodic cycle of the planet and Sun, but is geocentrically the time when the Earth is exactly between the Sun and the superior planet, appearing as an opposition in the horoscope. The superior planet is in its quickest phase of retrograde motion, about two thirds as fast as when it is conjunct the Sun in direct motion.

Decelerating quincunx [point 7]: The Sun is now in a quincunx to the retrograde superior planet, which is 'slowing' in apparent motion.

Stationary-direct Sun trine to superior planet [point 8]: The trine after the opposition heralds the stationary-direct point, which follows some days after the Sun trine. The Earth has now moved to such a point in its

orbit that it is heading around to the opposite side of the Sun from where it was when the first trine occurred (point 4), and the superior planet prepares for:

Stationary-direct [point 9]: The Earth has moved ahead in its orbit to complete its passage past the superior planet. The superior planet now appears to stop, then slowly begins to move forward again in the zodiac, completing the retrograde phase.

Last quarter square [point 10]: Now the superior planet ‘picks up speed’ as the Sun moves back towards the conjunction with it, and is three zodiacal signs behind it. The Earth has gone around in its orbit to begin travelling on the opposite side of the Sun to the superior planet; it will be exactly opposite at the solar conjunction back at point 1.

Timing of Sun trines to superior planets

Sun-Mars: The formation of the trine aspect is quite irregular in regard to number of days before and after the stations, but it is different from all the other superior planets in that it occurs anywhere from thirteen to twenty-two days *before* it stations and turns retrograde and anywhere from thirteen to twenty-two days *after* it stations and turns direct. This means that a Sun-Mars trine is too far out of orb for Mars to be retrograde and in trine at the same time (it is however at its slowest motion). Mars’ pattern is unique among superior planets in that it is *not* retrograde when the Sun is trine to it.

Sun-Jupiter. The Sun is very close (within orb) to the exact trine to Jupiter for both its stations. The Sun trines Jupiter between four and seven days after the station-retrograde and trines it again between four and seven days before the station-direct.

Sun-Saturn: The Sun trines Saturn ten to twelve days after the station-retrograde and again ten to twelve days before it stations and turns direct.

Sun-Uranus: The Sun trines Uranus fifteen to twenty days after the station-retrograde and fifteen to twenty days before it stations-direct.

Sun-Neptune: The Sun trines Neptune twenty to twenty-two days after the station-retrograde and twenty to twenty-two days before it stations-direct.

Sun-Pluto: The Sun trines Pluto nineteen to twenty-three days after the station-retrograde and nineteen to twenty-three days before it stations-direct.

Duration of retrograde period of superior planets

Because all planets revolve around the Sun in the same direction, and their orbital periods are all calculated relative to Earth time, we can measure successive conjunctions and oppositions between the planets according to Earth-view (see [fig. 1.4](#), p. 14; this figure shows graphically the ratio of direct to retrograde planetary motion). The superior planets’ periods are all much greater than the Earth year and, therefore, each of their conjunctions or oppositions to the Sun will occur a bit later each year. These contacts, usually applied

to successive conjunctions, are termed ‘synodic’. The more distant a planet is from the Sun, the slower is its motion, thus a slightly longer period of time passes between each successive conjunction or opposition. Since this is all taking place from Earth-view, we are looking at synodic cycles of the Sun and superior planets.

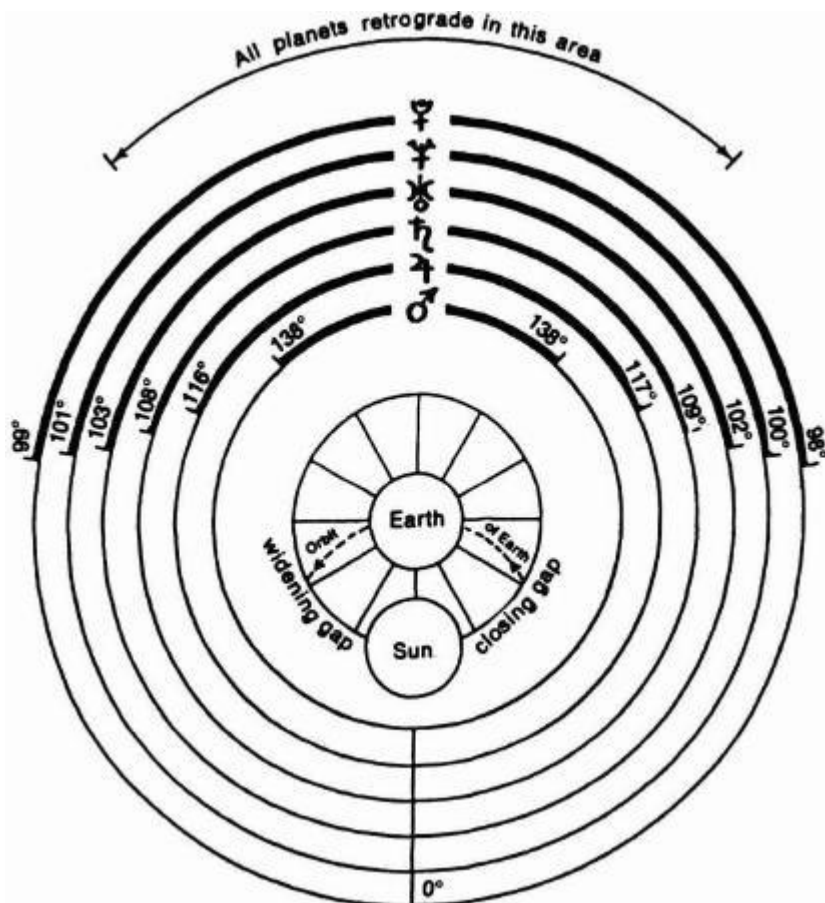


Fig. 1.4 Geocentric view of superior planets. This diagram illustrates the distance by degrees that the Sun is from a superior planet at the planet's station-points. It also serves to show how many degrees the Sun transits while each planet is retrograde. For example, the Sun transits 138° of the zodiac while Mars is retrograde. (A version of this diagram appears in Dane Rudhyar and Leyla Rael, 'Astrological Aspects', 1980)

As we are dealing with retrograde planets, we shall talk about successive opposition points. These opposition points always occur some days later each year, again because of the slow forward movement of each superior planet.

Mars: Of the superior planets, Mars is the only one that breaks the pattern, because its orbital period is slightly less than twice that of Earth. Mars orbits the Sun once every 687 days, while the Earth does so in 365¼ days. Its opposition cycles relative to the Sun are not annual, as are the cycles of all the other superior planets, but do occur regularly, approximately every two years and two months. Successive conjunctions with the Sun indicate a mean synodic period of 780 days. It is retrograde for approximately 9 per cent of its cycle, which amounts to about sixty to eighty days every twenty-six or so months. (Mars is the second least retrograde planet, Venus being the rarest at 7 per cent of the time.)

Jupiter: Jupiter orbits the Sun once every twelve years and its annual motion (increment along the ecliptic) is about 30°. Its opposition cycle, therefore, occurs about thirty days later each year. Jupiter is retrograde about 30 per cent of the time, or for approximately 110 days per year. Its mean synodic period is 398.9 days.

Saturn: Saturn's orbital period is about twenty-nine and a half years and its oppositions to the Sun are about twelve to thirteen days later each year. Saturn is retrograde for about 36 per cent of its cycle, or about 135 days per year. Its mean synodic period is 378.1 days.

Uranus: Uranus goes around the Sun once every eighty-four years and its oppositions to the Sun occur approximately four or five days later each year. Uranus is retrograde for about 41 per cent of the time, or approximately 150 days a year. Its mean synodic period is 369.7 days.

Neptune: Neptune's orbital period is about 165 years and its successive oppositions occur only two days later each year. It is retrograde for approximately 43 per cent of its annual cycle, or about 157 days. Its mean synodic period is 367.5 days.

Pluto: Pluto takes 248 years to circle the Sun and also has a high inclination to the plane of the ecliptic - about 17°. Pluto's orbit is eccentric as well, resulting in great variations in the time it spends in each sign. It spends thirty-two years in Taurus, but in its opposite sign, Scorpio, it spends only about eleven and a half

years. Even so, its successive oppositions are only one day later each year and it is retrograde for about 44 per cent of the time, 156–61 days per year. Its mean synodic period is 366.7 days.

2

THE SUN AND NATAL RETROGRADE PLANETS

In a higher world it is otherwise; but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.

John Henry Newman

When considering any retrograde planet, whether inferior or superior, it must be borne in mind that it is owing to our geocentric viewpoint and the particular planet's relationship to the Sun that it appears retrograde at certain predictable times. At first glance that may appear a simple statement, but the implications are profound when we think of each of those planets and its alliance with the Sun - a symbol for the development and expression of the ego.

Though it is a foregone conclusion that we observe the planets from a geocentric viewpoint, it is still necessary to emphasize that point when speaking of retrogression because the Sun always keeps its direct motion, plodding steadily on in its course. It is that forward motion that determines the retrograde cycle of any specific planet. Astrologically the Sun has been variously described as vitality, will, personality, mythic story, libido, animus, the ego as a vehicle for the Self, the core Self, the heroic principle and the father archetype. These terms do not describe character traits, personal demeanour or type of individual but are intrinsically human qualities that are expressed in uncountable ways. Psychologically the symbol of the Sun provides a vehicle through which one might explore different aspects of one's nature, finally expressing those traits through the Sun's astrological sign and position. Because ultimately the Sun is the determining factor in retrogression, this book is implicitly about the Sun and explicitly about planetary motion and the planets' relationships with the Sun.

Is the Sun a god, Phoebus Apollo, lord of the ninth temple, Theos? Or a planet with clearly defined 'attitudes', characteristics and persona? Or, perhaps, an organizing principle within which lie the mysteries of the formation of our planetary system? Perhaps it is a datasphere, both originator and thesaurus of Akashic records. It most certainly is an animating force, which those who came long before us recognized in various ways, calling it 'the soul of the Universe'. Prior to conclusions about the Sun's properties we must explore its symbolism, both intrinsically and astrologically, before going on to examine the qualities of retrograde planets and, in turn, some of the specific characteristics that each planet embodies when in various modes of retrogression.

GOD, PLANET, LENS OR FOCUS?

A certain popular element in astrology feels that statistics do not a psychological astrologer make. Nevertheless, they add considerable substance to all astrological work. The relentless researcher Michel Gauquelin, having thoroughly done his homework on ancient, medieval, Renaissance and modern planetary keywords, says in *Neo-Astrology*: 'I noted all the traits of character relating to each planet and thus collected 1,500 cases of Renaissance birth data. I then tested the validity of this material.'

1 In Françoise Gauquelin's book *Psychology of the Planets*, also published in 1982, she makes note of the fact that in her and Michel's joint researches no significant personality traits were indicated for the Sun or Mercury according to their position in the 'plus zones', now commonly referred to as the Gauquelin sectors. That is, the angular placement in the latter part of cadent houses produced no occupational or character traits *as they are signified by ancient or modern astrologers*.

2

Michel Gauquelin then goes on to state (my italic):

Firstly, the results were positive for Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus and the Moon. *For the Sun and Mercury temperaments, they were negative*. This was where Renaissance astrologers erred in attributing astral influences, like their colleagues in antiquity. Let me here remind the reader that in my work on the relation between occupations and traits of character, *I have never been able to find evidence of the Sun or Mercury exerting any kind of astrological influence*. There is a disturbing paradox here. How can we explain the 'absence' of these two planets in my work, when the temperaments attributed to them are historically as old and as specific as that of the others? It is a mystery.

3

Empirical results are fascinating for what they reveal. However, I would certainly postulate an alternative explanation to what at first glance appears to be the Sun's insignificance as a vocational or personality

indicator. (On Mercury, see pages 45–76). The Gauquelin findings are deeply significant in light of what the astrological Sun actually does in the horoscope. As a regulating core or an operating principle within the whole horoscope, the Sun ‘controls’, defines and accents characterization of the other planets; it is not itself classifiable in the same terms. That the ancient and Renaissance astrologers attributed traits to the Sun is understandable -that we should continue to do so now may be erroneous. The early work of both the Gauquelins merely established statistically that solar properties, as defined by all astrologers, do not come across as key indicators for occupations, when they are posited in the Gauquelin sectors.

Perhaps we should not go so far as to say that ancient and Renaissance astrologers erred, but should propose instead that the Sun does not impose itself or hold definitive properties, but animates and enhances life-force, thereby intensifying otherwise low-key characteristics. Rather than finding the statistical evidence discouraging I find it exciting, because it proves the lack of identifiable characteristics embodied in the solar symbol, both psychologically and astrologically, from ancient times to the present day.

The Sun is clearly a complex symbol. It is not only passive, acting as a lens through which life is viewed subjectively, but also active, in that the solar principle contains and animates one's inner impulses and unconscious intent and externalizes these psychic motivations, which manifest in observable behaviour patterns. The Sun is the focus of the planetary system, which is beholden to it for its very existence. It might be viewed in two ways.

1. The Sun in and of itself - as a pure symbol devoid of any projection on it, untainted and unpolluted by aspects, zodiacal placement or locus in the horoscope - might be said to represent the greater Self.

2. The Sun as we see it personalized through the individual horoscope - replete with zodiacal degrees, aspects to other planets and house positions - might be said to be the vehicle for self-identity, or the lens through which the ego focuses and manifests itself, changing and adapting to life's circumstances.

The deeper Self, according to Jungian psychology, is the psychic impetus to grow and become more of oneself, the mysterious incentive to continue to develop as many facets as possible of one's inherent nature. The Self comprises the entirety of our being, both conscious and unconscious, containing hidden or nascent aspects of what we call our personality. Because self-unfoldment and the integration of one's psychic parts into a unified whole - the process which Jung termed individuation - is unique to each individual, no model exists for that process.

Jung's idea of the Self was that it comprised both the centre and the circumference. Similarly we see the Sun also symbolizes both.

1. Sun as the centre in its pure symbolic form - SELF.

2. Sun as the circumference in its individuated, astrological and psychological form - the EGO, the ability to say, ‘I am.’

So, the Sun symbolizes not only the objectively expressed individualistic state but also the undifferentiated state of pure will, the fundamental survival instinct. All of this leads to a hypothetical conclusion: that if the Sun is the hub, the centre around which all planets including the Earth revolve, and if we also see it geocentrically as the definition of the ecliptic, the zodiac, the measurer of all things, then it is indeed both centre and circumference. From a heliocentric viewpoint, of course, the retrograde phenomenon does not exist, but then it is on Earth that the function of incarnation and its attendant experiences are weathered, including the development of the necessary ego. We might play anagrams with this idea and say that *geocentricity* is *egocentricity*.

In the horoscope each planet's relationship with the Sun accords with our Earth-based view of the Sun against the confines of the ecliptic-zodiac. Therefore, the position of the planets and their retrograde cycles are directly relative to the Sun and Earth, which implies a relationship to the development of the ego and its expression through personality. In this light, a retrograde planet in the horoscope is as active and dynamic as any aspect to the Sun. It describes the individual's need of expression and the individual's ability to realize his or her ‘greater purpose’ - the intent of the Self. That is, it describes the impulse from within to externalize as much of the contents of the unconscious as possible, thereby expanding the circumference of personal experience and expression.

The Sun symbolizes reason, mind, intellect, projection and firelight (as opposed to the Moon which is soul, intuition, reception and womb-dark), all of which combine to establish one's sense of uniqueness and individuality. Solar qualities, unrefined and in the ideal state, are qualities of undifferentiated power and expression in their most primitive form.

Aspects to planets from the Sun qualify, modify and enhance (in some cases obscure and debilitate) solar features, so that solar expression, through the limits of individual and horoscopic definition, is never pure - the sign that the Sun is in is never expressed in its pure form. This is why experienced astrologers are acutely aware of the limitations of describing an individual through the Sun sign alone. There may be fundamental archetypal themes, but they are redefined through the infinitely variable lenses of astrological configuration and personal psychology.

The essence of the zodiac sign in which we find the Sun is constant and indicates a particular bias. But the fact that the Sun is positioned there (this applies to any planet) colours the pure experience of the sign and requires that the basic characteristic of the sign be lived out in a manner peculiar to the demands of the solar principle. The Sun in a sign simply means that one must find ways of self-discovery and self-expression that conform to the archetype of the sign. American astrologer Jeff Jawer once said to me that he would probably understand Taurus better if his Sun wasn't there. This was a perceptive remark about distortion of perception by planets in signs.

Solarization of consciousness is the process of separating oneself from the collective identity and finding methods of expression that

are completely one's own. This process of differentiating what is truly one's own from that which is acquired, or superimposed on one's feeling of core Selfness, is what Jung called individuation. The term means literally 'a process of getting down to the indivisible'; separating that which is 'not me' from that which is 'me' creates a state of inner unification. Whatever we term the process of continuing to become oneself, it involves constant avoidance of prescribed modes of 'being' and an acceptance of who one is, regardless of what one's society or family consider to be normal. Both unconscious and consciously spoken dynamics of the family feed into one's inherent traits, becoming intertwined and enmeshed. At certain turning-points in life, one finds oneself untangling this web and singling out threads which are more appropriate in current time. This process of individuation is an ongoing intention; it is never complete and identifies one as mortal, leaving one yearning for wholeness and continually seeking new avenues of self-expression.

Coming into selfhood is like the alchemical opus in which the stated goal is the refinement of the base material of lead into gold. In becoming one's Sun, in the process of unfoldment and development of the ego, one is really taking part in a work that might well be called the *opus continuum*. The longing for completion, for fulfilment and wholeness, is the impetus to grow and experiment, thus becoming more of who one is with each new phase of life. It is the endless quest for the gold of the Sun which is the work of life; endless, for though it was the idealized completion phase for the alchemists, it is never complete for the individual because solar identity - I-am-ness - is not finite.

Consider how difficult it is to describe yourself to someone you have never met before. Where do you begin? Who are you now? Who were you in the past? Is that 'past person' your current persona, or merely a part of who you are still becoming? What would be important for that particular person to know about you - is it possible, in fact, to describe yourself articulately at all? How would it be done? In manifest terms?

Psychological terms? Financially speaking? Or creatively? Not only are you who you are, but you are also who you were and who you will become. We are made up as much from our future as we are by our past. It is with this

protean, fluid frame of reference that we should begin to approach the subject of retrograde planets.

THE SUN, RETROGRESSION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EGO

Understanding retrograde planets in the context of the developing ego may help in sorting out the confusion about what a retrograde planet itself 'means'. For instance, aspects from the Sun to the various planets are indicators of what kind of involvement the Sun has with the realms of those planets. Solar aspects are traditionally interpreted as influences upon or tendencies towards different means of Self- or ego-expression. This suggests that we work through, around or with that planet to express solar energy; that is, to individuate further or become more of ourselves, and to develop our ego with respect to that planet.

When any planet is retrograde, very often what is expected is not what is met. The ego needs to run up against something concrete in order for the individual to appreciate fully what it is that must be incorporated or shed. A challenge met is always necessary for a flourishing ego. If the test is too great then the ego structure can crumble, but if sufficiently stretching, then the ego expands to encompass new dimensions of

self-expression. However, if there is no meeting at all with the expected or the needed thing, then a psychological withdrawal and interiorization of feeling relative to the retrograde planet ensues.

When a planet is retrograde in a sign it predisposes the individual to experience not only the Sun in a particular way but also the retrograde planet and, importantly, the sign it is in. The individual is predisposed to experience the natal retrograde planet as if it were a subordinate and this, depending on one's age, cycle of life, energy level and so on, creates a sense of frustration and anxiety around openly expressing feelings in that planetary realm.

For example, when Mercury is retrograde in a natal chart it is situated between Earth and the Sun in its orbit, symbolically 'blinded' by solar power. The struggle between the will and the mind is intense and constant, though not always consciously so.

Rather than weakening the mind, the mind becomes a powerful resource of analytic stamina because it is inherently necessary for the individual to reason everything out. This can be exhausting at times and the retrograde Mercury will periodically collapse into a fugue state where it becomes subject to indiscriminate invasions of psychic forces. Because of this constant vacillation between ego control and subservience the mind actually is exercised more, and can become a very potent tool. Often Mercury retrograde people have great mental endurance and the stamina for long and arduous projects involving research and inquiry.

The Sun is the primary masculine principle, needing external expression, and as such desires complete psychological dominion over all other planetary principles. When the Earth moves into such a position in its orbit that it overtakes another planet's orbit, and that planet appears to move backwards against the zodiac, then symbolically the Sun has engaged the planet in combat and a struggle for supremacy ensues.

The interior world does not always meet its expectations of the outside comfortably because there are always adjustments to be made between what we feel inside and what we experience outside, but retrogression magnifies and localizes the interior experience. All this adjustment is necessary in discovering just exactly who we are, irrespective of the environmental mirror. I-am-ness is the Self declaring its ego parameters through actions, experimentation and growth.

THE RETROGRADE AS MAVERICK

In and of itself no single planet is more powerful than another. Each has a unique property that must be made manifest, and a retrograde planet is no different. Planets could be viewed as individual members of a family system - the solar system - each performing its unique function, synthesized and focused through the paternal Sun. Each planet has a personality and a role, which contribute to the integrity of the whole 'family' - the horoscope.

A retrograde planet does not seem to be weaker or more repressed, neither do retrogrades in themselves have to do with

consciousness or unconsciousness. Retrogrades alone do not indicate introversion (or extraversion) as a dominant personality type. Yet retrogression does seem to indicate a degree of internalization around the principles of the retrograde planet. With respect to introversion and extraversion, some comparisons might be made between retrograde planets and direct planets and how one experiences their energies as they interact in the horoscope to catalyse stages of evolution in the ever-changing personality. In *Boundaries of the Soul* June Singer talks about these two psychological types.

The introverted nature is Platonic in that it is mystical, spiritualized, and perceives in symbolic forms, while the extraverted nature is Aristotelian in that it is practical, a builder of a solid system from the Platonic ideal. The introvert is directed primarily toward an understanding of what he perceives, while the extravert naturally seeks means of expression and communication. In the introvert, the subject, his own being, is the center of every interest and the importance of the object lies in the way in which it affects the subject. The introvert's interest in self-knowledge prevents him from being overpowered by the influence of his objective surroundings. The extravert has a tendency to abandon concern for himself to his interest in others. Hence the concern of the introvert is in the direction of development of his individual potential while that of the extravert is more socially oriented. The introvert tends to set himself and subjective psychic processes above achievement in the public domain, while the extravert seeks the recognition of others as a predominant value.

4

If we substitute for 'introvert' the term 'retrograde planet', and for 'extravert' 'direct planet', we come closer to understanding how a retrograde planet operates as an individual within its society. Thinking in terms of planets as individuals in a family or social system, a retrograde planet operates as an introvert. Whereas a direct planet interacts with the other planets, demanding recognition, expecting and delivering

challenge, relating and accommodating, adjusting and compromising, the retrograde planet operates in a sphere of its own, either so alienated from (in the case of the superior planets) or so fused with (in the case of the inferiors) the solar agent, that it has no perspective beyond its own integrity; it requires greater, conscious effort to prevent the dilution of its energies with undifferentiated cosmic, rather than personal, meaning.

A retrograde planet develops according to some mysterious inner principle, completely disregarding the social rules established by the other members of the solar system. It can, therefore, deviate widely from what the consensus of the psyche deems socially correct, acting, say, as a maverick energy, not cooperating with the totality in the process of self-consciousness, erupting or imploding erratically because its development is not contingent upon the development of the other planets or upon the integrity of the whole horoscope.

If the individual is an extraverted type, and the horoscope as a whole has lots of fire, or angularity, or upper hemispheric dominance with strong cardinality, a single retrograde planet can cause more of a psychological split. It can encapsulate the energy of the planet more than if the weight of the horoscope lies with Earth or Water, or the majority of planets are in fixed or cadent houses, all of which support a more introverted world-view. For example, an otherwise highly social and extraverted person with only Mars retrograde might find it very difficult to focus on achieving practical ends, instead feeling rather undirected except when faced with an absolute or a concrete purpose. The ego as an agent for self-expression is a system in itself, made up of all the planets and their interaction, but in this case, Mars retrograde (*contra* the Sun) acts like an introvert, that is, not feeling compelled to dramatize itself within the family of planets, acting in a renegade fashion, and distancing itself from the gestalt, which might result in specific types of antisocial behaviour. In doing this, Mars fails to assist the ego by integrating itself with the rest of the planets. Mars is absorbed primarily in the job of sorting out its priorities in relation to the Sun, and secondarily in cringing from aspects it receives from other planets. Inherently its retrograde position discourages participation in the process of firing up other planets into action or experiencing moderation through their influences.

Inadvertently much of individuals' undifferentiated retrograde Mars energy may be fobbed off on to others - partners, friends, lovers - who may 'carry' it for them either by actually doing things for them or by representing their anger or drive.

Conversely, an introverted type with no retrograde planets would find his or her environment very mysterious indeed, and might

develop a philosophy of observation and analysis to assist in understanding the hidden meaning behind overt behaviour. In a case like this, having no retrograde planets is the cause of a split between what the individual knows to be true subjectively and what he or she sees in action objectively. Until a natal planet turns retrograde by secondary progression it might be difficult for the person to find a proper vehicle through which to develop and express his or her unique values or insight. Those introverted insights may remain unexpressed until such time as retrogression supports the personality-type as a whole.

Howard Sasportas links the Sun and ego development with the father, and in many ways I agree.

5 A father's participation with his child shows the child how the world-out-there will respond when his or her ego is in action. The unconscious predisposition towards father is shown by the Sun's position, aspects, sign, and so on; how closely it parallels the actual father's behaviour as perceived by the child is crucial in the development of the ego. Solarization of consciousness begins actively when the infant first recognizes its own body (playing attentively with hands and feet), usually around age six months, but only fully begins to externalize in active behaviour development around age two or three, when the infant becomes an assertive toddler. This is when baby stops being part of mother and begins to head towards father, psychologically and literally. How 'Dad' is perceived may not accord with the child's interior celestial-father archetype.

For example, if the natal Sun is trine Jupiter, Jupiter therefore being retrograde, one is predisposed to expect a jovial, supportive and outgoing relationship with one's father. What if the father is in reality none of these things? What if he is not there at all — maybe he died or was at sea or was never home? What if he *is* there and is violent towards the child, or an alcoholic or drug addict? What happens? In contrast, the father may well be fair-minded, helpful and open, but will the retrograde Jupiter person actually see that? Will there still be a fantasy about a celestial father who dispenses favours and justice all round? Can any real father actually live up to this interior vision? Will that person's ego development be along realistic lines, or will self-expression be exaggerated, the ego having become overblown, inflated, distorted? These are questions that arise with regard to retrograde planets.

I have heard repeatedly that, 'Saturn retrograde means that the father is absent'. Saturn is retrograde for five months out of the year, so it should not be suggested that all people born in that time will have non-present

fathers. However, their expectation of father has been shown to be very different from the reality, present or not. There are implications that retrograde planets are more attached to the archetypal realm, wherein one finds the imaginal, fantastical or celestial parents. We are all aware, to some degree, of an attachment to the nurturing Great Mother or to the all-powerful Rescuing Father. For example, in times of deep existential loneliness or grief one can reach primal levels of sadness or pain, crying out for someone who will nurse one and give tender love and care. What one is really crying out for is the Great Mother, the one who unstintingly provides, and not usually 'Mum'. The child in us longs to be rescued from the ills of the world, to be transported to a place where we are unequivocally supported, promoted and handed the recognition that we all deserve. Dad is unlikely to be able to do this for us, but the Celestial Father might.

These archetypal parent images are not all benevolent. An adolescent girl who has a psychotic breakdown (total submersion of the ego into the unconscious) might falsely imagine her father to be a sorcerer or murderer. He might, however, be a devourer of her creativity resulting in a subsequent loss of ego, a breakdown in solar consciousness and return to lunar (womb) consciousness.

The interior world of the retrograde planet is neither good nor bad, healthy nor unhealthy, sane nor neurotic. It is a way of seeing life in an intensely personal and self-creative way. The ego system that contains retrograde planets does not develop according to the dictates of family or, later, society, but in its own time and in its own way. Of course to some degree this can be said about any individual's development, but in the case of retrogression there is an inherent protective device, a regulating mechanism which attempts to keep the retrograde planet isolated. The ego finds a way to support the planet, rather than the other way round, protecting it from invasion or attack, and because of this a great deal of unconscious energy is invested in defence rather than development. This phenomenon creates social difficulties for retrograde people because they might feel awkward and out of place, not having the same internal sense of timing, or the reference points and landmarks for behaviour that non-retrograde people have. This is especially so in the cases of Venus and Mars, being the least frequently retrograde, and of Jupiter and Saturn, being primarily involved in the development of ego, super-ego and socialized personality in the first half of life.

Having a retrograde planet or planets requires securing a certain amount of objectivity about the impact that one makes on one's environment - upon other people and in one's own sphere of activity. When a planet is retrograde, that objectivity is often lost, symbolically obscured by the Sun's power - through distance or proximity - and the individual experiences the principles of the retrograde planet wholly subjectively, often expressing those principles socially in an uncertain or awkward fashion until a degree of maturity and confidence is attained.

This returns us to the importance of self-confidence and self-knowledge in regard to the emotional and psychological thrust of the planet's principles. One of the problems of a retrograde planet is that it has less chance than a direct planet to achieve maturity, partly because of its acute subjectivity and lack of worldly experience, partly because of its inherent rebellion against the 'system', whether that is the horoscopic solar system or the cultural system. The symbolic struggle with the Sun is highly internal and until much of the conflict is resolved consciously the function of the planet remains primarily an interior affair.

The inherent principles of a retrograde planet can remain unborn or infantile either until the planet stations-direct by secondary progression or until such time as one becomes conscious of its counterpoint to the ego. The planet might play devil's advocate until it is more fully integrated into the whole system by finding an area of speciality associated with its domain. Just as an introverted person needs to be cautiously drawn into interaction, so does the retrograde planet need care and respect for its 'type'.

The solar-ego energy flows inward to the retrograde planet, which is overshadowed by its direct brothers and sisters, splitting the energy into two different forms; this is what frequently creates inner episodes of alienation from the world at large and, until maturity, experience or progressions (or all of the above) lead the

retrograde planet into social contribution, its function remains dormant.

Parents who have children with retrograde planets should be encouraged to help them become more self-aware and self-confident in the psychological areas which the respective planets would normally stimulate. That there is little impetus - in fact a certain lack of desire - to explore the needs of a retrograde planet in a social manner is largely because of the symbolic dominance of the Sun over that planet. One might then assume that the solar principle would result in an extraversion of some kind, but the opposite tends to happen and the result is inversion of energy and internal struggle.

Often, it is not until a degree of worldly experience and maturity is achieved that an individual becomes aware that he or she might be viewing a particular area of life with an unduly selective eye and an exclusively self-centred bias, assuming that others experience it in exactly the same way. It is not until faced with evidence to the contrary, through sharing feelings, experiences and ideas with others, that the retrograde person actually becomes aware of being isolated in that area. Although to some degree this is true of most people, it is extreme in the instance of retrograde planetary experience.

That all the planets - both inferior and superior - are closest to the Earth when they are retrograde is also symbolic of subjectivity. Since the retrograde planet is closer to the Earth, it is closer to the individual, intensifying the personal experience rather than weakening it. In *Horoscope Symbols* Rob Hand says, 'I feel that its closeness to Earth symbolizes the person's lack of distance or lack of perspective in dealing with what that planet stands for. Someone with a retrograde planet is less able to be objective about that planet's energies.'

6 Further, he states, 'I do suspect that retrograde energies are harder to experience as separate from oneself.' This is the case in my findings. It is rather as if the planet remains subordinate to the paternal-parent-Sun, never really maturing to separate itself from the rest of the personality and to function autonomously and objectively when it is necessary to do so. The planet function can remain childlike and primitive, considering its own experience to be the collective experience without taking into account its own subjectivity,

until an episode from the outside warrants an awakening of some kind. In essence, the retrograde planet remains closer to its archetypal nature because of the psyche's resistance to the overlay of social bias. The retrograde planet's contribution to the whole personality might not be as assertive as the direct planet, remaining naïve, but this does not mean that it is not as authoritative or influential.

What a retrograde planet needs is a good obsession. I have repeatedly found that the frustration engendered by a retrograde planet is primarily due to a person's lack of interest in something that drives and compels. There is such stigma around the expression of individual needs in most societies that the individual with a retrograde planet often feels insecure and hesitant about externalizing his or her interest in that area, hiding it or sending it 'away' somewhere, hence the labels slow, introverted, regressive, late-bloomer, anti-social, eccentric (acentric would be more appropriate), just to name a few. There may well be antisocial behaviour and accentricity associated with the nature of the planet, but is that really so terrible? Only when personal needs are so deeply buried and atrophied that they begin to fester and poison the gestalt of the Self does life become unhealthy and problematic. When a personal characteristic is understood, integrated and accepted as part of one's nature there is nothing antisocial about it. It is the feeling of inferiority and discomfort due to lack of experience and expression that creates the antisocial aspect, emphatically not the nature of the retrograde planet.

It might seem curious that we can feel inferior to ourselves (rather than to others), but that is what often occurs with respect to the retrograde planet. In the case of the inferior planets, Mercury and Venus, their *proximity* to the Sun-Earth relationship is so close that they are overwhelmed. In the case of the outer planets it is the *distance* from the Earth-Sun that creates the sense of separation and the isolation of the planetary characteristics from the integrity of the rest of the horoscope. Though the distinction between these two categories (made in depth in [chapter 1](#)) does exist, the theory is the same for both: the paternal and heroic nature of the Sun is so overwhelming that greater conscious attention to the needs specified by the retrograde planet must be actively developed. The inner battle must

be fought with awareness, which then allows a more equitable relationship between the internal Sun-father and the nascent energies of the planet that it is attempting to control. We will see several examples of retrograde planets acting out unconsciously, inadvertently asserting themselves and surfacing spontaneously, overriding conscious will and coinciding with events, awakenings and psychological experiences, especially during the years when retrogression (or direction) occurs in the natal horoscope in secondary progressions and by retrograde transit to natal planets.

Anger is another feature of retrogression, which if not recognized for what it is becomes debilitating and exhausting. There is a natural rage inherent in the retrograde planet, which needs to become 'outrage'. The feelings of depression or dissociation identified with a natal retrograde planet are directly related to the feelings of relinquishment and powerlessness that one has in the sphere of energy symbolized by the planet. Because of the lack of participation by retrograde planets within the whole planetary experience, it is difficult for this anger to be constellated into a specific form and it often permeates the psyche, possibly irrupting into non-related areas of life and in turn creating confusion about its source.

I have often found in consultations that by concentrating on the analysis of the functions of the planet in question (*not* taking into account its retrograde presence) a chord is struck in the person and he or she begins to recognize the source of the discontent, alienation and sadness. It then becomes apparent that there is no difference between a retrograde planet and a direct planet, except in how it is perceived by the individual. Whether or not that person is thinking in planetary terms or in psychological terms is of no importance. When the maverick returns to contribute to the family, he often comes bearing unique and exotic tales, delicious foreign tastes, with a broader, less egocentric view of the world which he has seen. He may return triumphant, having conquered dragons, rescued maidens or acquired magical cups, or he may crawl back, beaten and cowed. Either way, the retrograde planet must always return to its home, only to depart again in search of a new and distant, but highly subjective, horizon.

3

SECONDARY PROGRESSION OF PLANETS

Because the Sun's apparent motion determines whether or not there is a retrograde planet in the natal chart, the Secondary Method - the 'day for a year' method - of progressing the horoscope is the most effective. The same laws of retrograde motion apply to both transits and secondary progressions because secondary-progressed motion is directly proportionate to transiting motion. Secondary progression is a technique based on the philosophy that the diurnal twenty-four hours of Earth's axial rotation are a microcosm of the 365 days of Earth's revolution around the Sun: one day in the life is symbolically representative of one year. For example, if one was born sixteen days before Uranus stationed-direct, then, in one's sixteenth year, progressed Uranus actually stations and turns direct in the chart. Secondary progression is extremely important when considering natal retrogrades, because through it we see the continuing motion of the Sun and its influence on the stationing-retrograde or direction of a planet, demonstrating dramatic shifts in inner perspective.

1

Considering that a progressed planetary aspect is effective for a year or so, it usually reveals itself as a powerful subtext, accounting for the underlying mood of the time, and creates a theme that weaves its way throughout the many experiences which occur during its year. Progressions are frequently subtle, not manifesting as concretely as transits. The progression serves as a backdrop to the many more obvious life experiences, infusing one's inner development with a mood or tone which is often not externalized until a conspiracy of significant transits triggers experiences which illuminate the interior episode. In this book we will be focusing primarily on three areas; on the progressed Sun and its implicit influence in the stations of planets; on the progressed aspects that form between

the Sun and retrograde planets; and on the movement of progressed planets as they pertain to retrogression. When there are retrograde planets in the natal chart it is essential to check if and when those planets will station and turn direct by secondary progression in the course of the individual's life. Natal Mercury retrograde is very likely to turn direct, because twenty days is equivalent to twenty progressed years. Venus retrograde is highly probable, being retrograde from forty to forty-four days, while Mars is only possible, depending on whether or not the natal Sun is past the opposition to Mars. With Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto the same principle as for Mars applies because they are retrograde from four to five months per year and may therefore never change direction by progression, although they may receive significant aspects from the progressed Sun.

Likewise, it is important to determine whether a direct natal planet will station-retrograde in the course of an individual's life, for this too marks a turning-point in the relationship between the Sun and the planet, resulting in a subtle change in the planet's participation in the horoscope as a whole system. Solar directions should also prove to be dramatic with respect to stations.

PROGRESSED CYCLE OF NATAL SUPERIOR PLANETS

Progressed station-retrograde: When a natal planet stations and turns retrograde by secondary progression, a subtle introversion of the planet's energy begins to occur in the year of the station. The principles symbolized by the planet and its participation in the horoscope are changed; the previously externalized action of the planet is removed, distanced or internalized. Again, unless the year in which a progressed planet stations-retrograde is also marked by outstanding life-changing transits, the station itself may not precipitate or be reflected in an event in the course of that year. At the very least, however, it operates as a backdrop for new perspectives and, upon reflection, signifies a watershed year. In most cases

that I have seen, something tangible does happen to or within the person and he or she is consciously aware of the process.

The first planet to station-retrograde indicates where the individual needs to become more retentive and internal, and where he or she may have been incapable of properly interiorizing and personalizing the energy associated with that planet. A protective shell begins to form around the energies of the stationing planet, isolating it from other planets in the chart for the year or two following the station.

In the case of the superior planets, the first to retrogress will be the one on the 'outside' or the edge of the planetary gestalt, being earlier by zodiacal sign than the Sun. The progressed station-retrograde of a superior planet - with the exception of Mars - is followed a few years later by the trine of the progressed Sun to the natal planet as follows:

Jupiter: four to six days equals the same number of progressed years

Saturn: eleven to thirteen days/progressed years

Uranus: seventeen to twenty days/progressed years

Neptune: twenty to twenty-one days/progressed years

Pluto: eighteen to twenty-two days/progressed years.

Usually the retrogression year is the time in which a chrysalis is formed around the area in the psyche symbolized by the stationing planet. The chrysalis serves to protect the individual's ego from further external influence in that planetary sphere until the progressed Sun moves into the trine to the retrogressing planet some years later. The encapsulation of the inherent traits of the planet draws it away from the integrity of the horoscope, and it begins to redevelop independently and acentrically. The act of retrogression may function as a buffer against further invasion, and the planet gradually becomes a hidden, but tender, spot, incubating a new way of using the energies associated with it.

This creates inordinate power, for the stationing planet then begins to act as an increasingly refined lens through which creative, intellectual or physical capabilities are sharply focused, becoming brilliant in some special way. The isolation and inversion of the planet's energies can establish the basis for an area of expertise which consummates in or around the year in which the progressed Sun trines the retrogressed planet. This is particularly the case when an individual has no natal retrograde planets in the horoscope and only one planet stationing-retrograde in the developmental years of life. In this kind of chart, that planet is likely to be a singleton, occupying one quadrant or hemisphere alone.

A cycle of internal development is initiated at some point in the year of the progressed station-retrograde of the planet, coming to full fruition at the progressed Sun trine to it. Very often that which was inverted and interiorized at the time of the progressed station is illuminated by a feeling of release, marking a stage of completion. The initial inversion is often precipitated by a wound or shock concurrent with the station, resulting in an internal rebellion and the determination to create a unique position in the world. The stationing planet will not support the ego in a conventional way and refuses to subordinate its energies, talents or creativity either to an internal or to an external status quo.

The station-retrograde can also initiate a complex which will insinuate itself into all other aspects of the chart, especially if only one planet stations-retrograde in the course of the life, or if that station occurs during the early years of development. If the planet is a significant one, accented by its prominence in the chart, then the turning establishes a new pattern of inner development. A significant planet is one which is conjunct an angle; is a singleton; is ruler of the chart; disposes the Sun or Moon; or, is the first in a sequence of planets in a stellium all of which will station-retrograde at some point. The station-retrograde is often the experience that alters the course of one's life. The difficulty with life-changing moments is that one often fails to recognize them until many years later.

In the case of Donald (see [chapter 9](#)), Saturn stationed and turned retrograde when he was nine; his beloved father died that year. For Donald, that station began a time of emotional withdrawal and isolation. Partly because of his age he unconsciously erected barriers against his own and others' feelings, arresting his emotional development well into maturity. (Also in the month of the accidental death, Donald's natal Moon in Capricorn was opposed by transiting Uranus, stationing-retrograde in the sky, exacerbating an already loaded condition.) However, the story was not complete. When the progressed Sun formed a trine to Saturn eleven years later at the age of twenty, the denouement of the progressed Saturn station occurred: Donald discovered he was an adopted child. The loss of his father, defined by the progressed Saturn station-retrograde and amplified by the transiting impact of Uranus to his Capricorn Moon served to isolate Donald's psychological Saturn and Moon experiences for forty years, only to be released volcanically by the transit of Uranus conjunct his natal Moon.

Progressed station-direct: Natal retrograde planets are segregated from the 'normal' interaction of planets in the horoscope, psychologically lending them an element of autonomy which can manifest in both rebelliousness and naïvety. The isolation can result in entire areas of the planet's energies remaining embryonic until such time as it stations and turns direct. The retrograde planet's participation in the system of the horoscope is frequently sporadic and out of time. When it does peek out of its shell, it often finds a very strange world, one which is ticking along in another harmony, and has to work hard to come into the same rhythm. This condition can actually create a much stronger, more individualistic streak in character. The planet's innocence remains inherent natively, but the progressed station-direct breaks the womb-like shell around it, delivering it for further maturation.

That the retrograde planet has remained encapsulated and largely alien, not responding to external reference points and shying away from interaction within the horoscope itself, contributes to the explosion when it turns direct. The direction of a retrograde planet by progression is more demonstrably active than the progressed station-retrograde, marking a pivot upon which inner perspective turns to meet the outer world. The nature of the effect of the progressed station-direct of a planet is entirely contingent upon the planet itself, the natal condition of the planet, its degree of power in the planetary gestalt and the psychological make-up of the individual and his or her age, status and lifestyle. If the station occurs very early in life, then there is less difficulty incorporating the new perspective. The immediate effect is more climactic the older one is, simply because one's ingrained habits of interiorizing the planetary energies are normally more rigid. Certain astrological conditions also indicate whether or not the direction of a planet is going to affect overtly the psychological

responses of an individual. The direct motion of a planet will register more actively and consciously if the planet is a significant one, i.e. is a singleton; or conjunct an angle; is the chart ruler; disposes the Sun or Moon; or is the first of a sequence of planets to turn direct in a stellium of retrograde planets.

With the station-direct the planet is initiated into more active participation in the horoscopic system, and by extension into the psychic system of the individual. This implies its taking greater responsibility in the planetary gestalt as a participant in and contributor to the overall function of the horoscope. The station-direct frequently manifests as a 'coming out', the emergence and conscious recognition of a long-repressed inner need whose activation is essential to the continuing development of the ego. The station-direct of a natal retrograde is like a dam bursting, releasing a flood of contained inner feelings, inundating the individual with a strong sense of purpose and direction, where before there had been uncertainty and insecurity.

Another possible outcome may be the emergence of anxious, chaotic feelings and unrealistic expectations in the course of the year of station. Both time and effort are necessary to enfold and integrate newly released energy into the whole system. It is quite likely that it will not be incorporated into a working order within the year, but with time, transits and life experience, the new impetus will become synthesized with one's consciousness.

Although events and experiences vary tremendously, the turning-points are distinct - the astrologer can state absolutely that *something* has happened or is happening to release pent-up energy. Whenever a progressed planet stations it has been virtually stationary for a few years, and much unconscious preparation has been done in readiness for the moment. Looking back one might be able to discern a pattern in the two years prior to the station - a pattern of suspension, quiescence and withdrawal from usually hectic lifestyles. This is a case where the 'meaning' of the station depends entirely on what is actually happening in the individual's life.

Depending on how long the planet has been retrograde and when it directs (in effect, how old the individual is), the release will be expressed accordingly. The longer it has been retrograde, the higher the charge which will have been created and the more conscious the

individual will be of its liberation. For example, Drew had been in a legal firm for twenty-five years and resigned to do *pro bono* work in the year his progressed singleton Jupiter stationed and turned direct. He felt he needed to pay a debt to the collective by working on environmental issues, thus propitiating his Jupiter, which had earned him a great deal of wealth in the course of his professional career. He needed to 'release' his Jupiter to new horizons and to explore less traditional ways of expressing it.

Progressed solar aspects: The only classical aspects that can be formed by the progressed Sun to a natal retrograde superior planet are the trine (with the exception of Mars), the quincunx, the sesquiquadrate and the opposition (see [fig. 1.3](#), p. 11). In the case of the most distant planets this progression year is most important to watch for, as they may never station and change direction in the course of a lifetime.

Solar progressions serve to illustrate the slow, subtle, intensely private work of developing one's ego. As the Sun progresses, it gathers about it new experiences which are enfolded into the ego structure. The ego gains inner maturity and experience and one becomes increasingly oneself. The process of ego development is never complete, nor is it an accomplishment — it is never 'done'. However, there are marked times where peak experiences do occur, albeit often interior and inexplicable. The years marked by solar progressed aspects to natal retrograde planets are peak experiences which always manifest as notable turning-points. When the progressed Sun makes an exact aspect the year is always significant, particularly the year of opposition. The greatest psychological difficulty in retrograde superior planets is their distance from the identity trinity of Sun-Mercury-Venus as the separation symbolically splits the function of the retrograde planet or planets from the whole of one's identity. The year a contact is made from the Sun is marked by the beginning of conscious awareness of what the retrograde planet has to offer one's life, and initiates the integration of the foreign trait into the whole of oneself. The outside world begins to take on more significance, and internal experiences are mirrored in the environment - sometimes rather explosively or dramatically.

PROGRESSED CYCLE OF NATAL INFERIOR PLANETS

The two inferior planets, Mercury and Venus, have completely different stations and retrograde cycles from those of the superior planets. Both Mercury and Venus share a similar pattern in that both are retrograde when they begin to approach inferior conjunction with the Sun (whereas the superior planets turn retrograde as they move towards the opposition from the Sun), but their timing and sequence are somewhat different. For the sake of interpretation, however, the principles are the same. That is, the progressed retrogression of Mercury or Venus internalizes the planet's energy, incubating a new way of expression, while the progressed station-direct liberates and externalizes the energy. The following example illustrates what one man discovered during a progressed Mercury cycle.

A Scorpio with natal Mercury retrograde in Scorpio was severely traumatized by the divorce of his parents and enforced separation from his father in the year his progressed Mercury station-direct at the age of six. His natal Mercury was 6° from the square to Pluto but retrogressing further away until the station-direct, where it was 9° apart. When the progressed-direct Mercury passed *back* over the natal place at age thirteen, his mother remarried. When progressed-direct Mercury finally reached the exact square to natal Pluto at age eighteen, he made a serious attempt at suicide.

There were three technical agents at work:

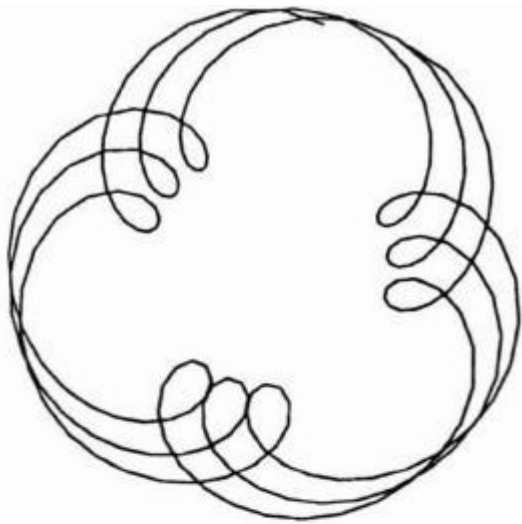
1. The natal retrograde Mercury progressed away from exact aspect to Pluto and station-direct. He was forcefully alerted to the end of his dream-world (Mercury natively in the twelfth house). The event of divorce and separation marked the planetary turning-point.
2. The progressed-direct Mercury returned to its natal place. His mother remarried and had another child. He was made redundant yet again.
3. The promised aspect of progressed-direct Mercury square natal Pluto recalled all the anxieties and previously suppressed feelings of worthlessness to a climax, and he tried to kill himself. Within the context of that progression, his progressed Sun had moved to

conjoin his natal Venus that year as well, illuminating his need of close relationships, which he was incapable of having at the time. Also in that year transiting Neptune was conjunct his Scorpio Sun -the dissolution of his ego and inability to contain his anxiety was the external catalyst of his death-wish. A less pathological example is of a young woman with Venus retrograde natively. When it station-direct and turned direct at the age of eighteen, she defied her academically minded parents and enrolled in art college, finally externalizing her private passion for art. She said she felt freed from the values of her parents, at last capable of stepping outside the bounds of familial and social influence, and of acting out her own inner values.

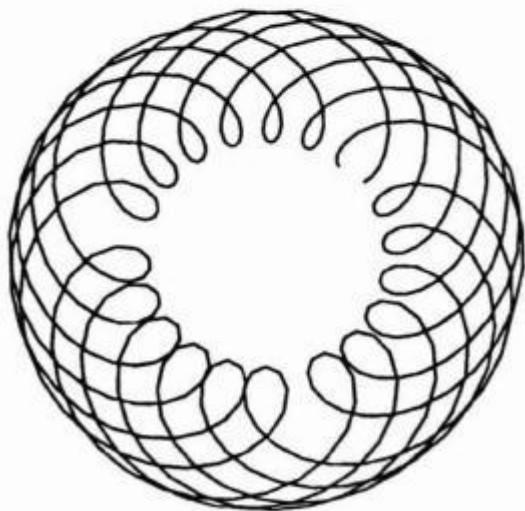
These two inferior-planet progressions illustrate a release of a kind that is relative to the stationing planet. In the case of the man who wanted to die, the release was through Mercury, a mental agent; in the case of the young artist it was through Venus, which released repressed, but inherent, values.

PART TWO

THE INFERIOR PLANETS RETROGRADE NATALLY AND IN TRANSIT



21 June 1931 to 16 May 1934



11 May 1931 to 14 May 1937

Fig. 4.1 Mercury orbits

4

MERCURY, GOD OF RETROGRESSION

1

THE MYTHOLOGICAL MERCURY

Theos

Modern astrological terms, particularly our planetary names, are an English takeover of a Latin translation of a Greek rendition of a Babylonian nomenclature. An ancient mythology and religious system based on origin myths and lineage, descended from the Chaldeans and Babylonians and reflected in the Egyptian pantheon, was incorporated wholesale by the Greeks into their existing cultural religion. Strictly speaking, astrology as we know it today did not exist for the philosophers of Hellas, the Greeks of the sixth and fifth centuries BC. They did, however, give the visible planets the names of their Olympic gods, replacing the Babylonian/Egyptian names.

2

Hermes was named by the Greeks to replace the Babylonian sidereal divinity Nebo, and in turn the Romans rendered him as Mercurius, the Mercury of our current astrology. As a god, he is an amalgam of many

deities, images and domains. There is historical evidence that Hermes was associated with fertility in ancient Greece, and indeed his Egyptian antecedent, Thoth, was very much a fertility figure, associated with the intercalary days set aside for festivals worshipping the five god-offspring of Nut (sky goddess) and Geb (earth god). Thoth acted as a sort of inseminator/midwife of their children, Osiris, Horus, Typhon (Set), Isis and Nephthys, and his role as author of the alchemical writings is featured in the work of Manetho, an Egyptian who wrote in Greek about Egyptian religion in the third century BC. The assimilation of Thoth, Hermes and Mercurius into the composite figure was the foreshadowing of our astrological Mercury, ruler of magical transformation, god of transition and transmitter of information. The astrological Mercury embodies all the symbolism collected over time, and is one of the most complex archetypes of the astrological pantheon.

The Greek god Hermes and his role in the classical works offer much to think about when we are dealing with Mercury in the astrological realm. Of the earliest Greek literature on Hermes, we find that Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, along with the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, IV, are replete with information about the nature of this fascinating god.

In the *Homeric Hymns* we read of the birth of Hermes: 'He was born at dawn, by midday he was playing the lyre, and in the evening he stole the cattle of far-shooting Apollo.

3 This shows him to be a trickster *par excellence*, as well as having great charm: to make and play the lyre he inveigled a tortoise out of its own shell. The story went that Hermes, restless after his birth, set off in search of the cattle of his brother Apollo, and *en route* happened upon a tortoise. With great charm he told the hapless tortoise he would make a good dinner companion. Indeed he did, because Hermes promptly ate him for dinner! Hermes also promised the tortoise that he would make beautiful music when he was dead. The tortoise's shell was to become the prototype lyre which Hermes eventually gave to Apollo to appease him for the theft of the cattle.

This cattle theft has a most remarkable aspect. Hermes 'made their hoofs go backward, the front ones last and the back ones first; he himself walked straight ahead.

4 This is the literary origin of the dualistic path and deceptive brilliance of Hermes the Trickster, and is the first hint of his retrograde characteristic. Only minutes before, he had been happily playing his new lyre, but 'his heart was set on other pursuits'.

5 Versatile, wily, double-edged Hermes, doing one thing while planning another. The hiding of the cattle in the cave of the Sun god Apollo is an apt metaphor for the retrogression of Mercury as it trots 'back' towards the Sun, hiding from Earth view, only to re-emerge later as the redeemed morning star.

The *Hymn* celebrates the charming youth, the *puer aeternus* component, of Hermes; indeed, he summons his babyhood as a defence when questioned about the cattle theft. He commits a crime which would not be found amusing if done by another, and even impresses Zeus, a normally wrathful god, with his hubris. Not only is Zeus impressed, he is even amused! That instant of recognition of perspective that occurs spontaneously and with no forewarning, resulting in a gust of pure laughter, is precisely what Hermes Trickster is all about.

A strong Mercury with a twist will enhance the horoscope of the humorist, as though the archetype of Hermes lives through the individual, able to bring sudden perspective to a situation that could otherwise be dull, or, without the charm of Hermes, perhaps even terrifying. The comedian is a healer, bringing into sharp relief priorities hitherto unconsidered - a new reality, so to speak - the shock of which spurs laughter.

For all the attributes of youth, humour, grace and prankishness, there are serious facets to Hermes. His rare appearances in the *Iliad* are in clear contrast to his strong presence in the *Odyssey*. Perhaps it is more appropriate to his nature that Hermes should appear so frequently and prominently in a tale that deals primarily with a journey, rather than with the nature of heroic acts in war. In the *Iliad* Hermes is sent to lead Priam to Achilles; he acts as a protective guide and 'mazes the eyes of those mortals whose eyes he would maze',

6 in order to allow the mourning father to pass through the guards at Achilles' gates unscathed. This act of leading Priam to the body of his slain son Hector is a foreshadowing of Hermes' function as a soul guide — the *psychopompos*.

It is also in the *Iliad* that Hermes is designated by Zeus himself to be the companion of man. This is symbolic of Mercury's role in the horoscope, as the translator of all sensory data as they are assimilated into the conscious mind. Mercury might be the single most important planet in the horoscope since it is through Mercury that we not only absorb but also disseminate all of our perceptions. In the course of retrograde cycles our perceptions often shift drastically as we contact information in new ways and process it

unconsciously. Hermes, the god, is the guide through all retrograde cycles and plays a strong role in the lives of those who have many retrograde planets. As the summoner and translator of unconscious or obscure knowledge, his patronage during all cycles of retrogression seems natural. In *Hermes: Guide of Souls* Karl Kerényi writes:

It is not without good reason that Hermes was supposed to be the inventor of language. It belongs to the Hermetic wisdom of the Greek language itself, to one of its most ingenious chance hits, that the word for the simplest mute stone monument, *herma*, from which the name of the God stems, corresponds phonetically to the Latin *sermo*, 'speech' or any verbal 'exposition'. The word *herma*, which in the Greek does not have this meaning, does however form the basic verbal root for *hermeneia*, 'explanation'. Hermes is *hermeneus* ('interpreter'), a linguistic mediator, and this is not merely on verbal grounds.

7

As previously mentioned, one of Hermes' more sombre facets is as patron of the journeyer. The distinction between journeying and travelling needs to be emphasized. A traveller has a point of departure and a destination, whereas a journeyer is simply somewhere in between, in a kind of liminal place with no parameters. A traveller has an itinerary, a past, and a known future to which he heads with a sense of direction. A journeyer has left from some secure place and heads out willy-nilly into unknown territory, to arrive at an unanticipated place in the unknown future. It is with that in mind that we recognize Hermes as the guide of those liminal souls. Essentially, he lives on the threshold of existence, on the *limen* of experience. Whenever we are in a state of personal transition we can expect Hermes to appear with messages from the unconscious. The experience of retrogression is just such a transitional experience. Mercury oversees the creative process which occurs spontaneously when one is trying to evolve an idea or a plan. In doing so, one employs both the conscious and the unconscious mind simultaneously; while creating the structure of the idea on a conscious level, the unconscious is processing the information in a non-linear fashion. It is this phenomenon that results in the apparently spontaneous emergence of the so-called brilliant idea. In this connection Hermes' relationship with Hades/Pluto is important. Of all the gods, Hermes was the only one to travel at will to Hades and return. He escorted both the dead and the living to the world of the shades either as permanent residents or as visitors. His going and froing from Hades symbolizes Mercury's ability to descend into the unconscious and transfer information or material to the conscious mind for processing

in a linear fashion. The most hidden, recessive and suppressed contents of the psyche are thereby brought to light. Conversely, we are able to suppress a conscious wish or desire to the realm of the unconscious for processing in a non-linear fashion. This can serve as a process of refinement by the greater intelligence of our unconscious, resulting later in a creative manifestation of will. This is also where Hermes/Mercury acts as a fertility function, as an animator of seminal thought. The apocryphal story of Archimedes of Syracuse, who was an adviser to King Hiero II and was purportedly trying to determine the contents of the king's crown - whether it was pure gold or alloyed with silver - illustrates this phenomenon beautifully.

Archimedes (we assume) exhausted his intellect with the puzzle. In fatigue, he drew himself a bath and sank into it, relieving himself of the pressures of analytical, logical thought. As he submerged himself, the truth emerged from his unconscious and he leaped up, crying, '*Heureka!*' ('I've found it!'), having discovered the principle of displacement. The key word here is 'discover'.

The lateral shift from the left to the right hemisphere of the brain, resulting in the inspirational instant of knowledge, can be likened to an alchemical transformation. In other words, the preparation for discovery is long and arduous and takes place 'above ground', but all the while the 'underground' is processing the information in a holistic, non-linear fashion, which is only transferred across the boundary in a time of disengagement from the intellect. Though this is not always the way in discovery or creation, frequently it is so.

8

It is Mercury who assists the artist in his discovery and travels into the unconscious to bring the results of subliminal conclusions to the conscious mind for articulation. The process of insemination and active waiting, putting an idea or plan of action on the 'back burner' for incubation and maturation, is an attribute of all retrograde cycles.

The Hermes of the *Odyssey* is Hermes in all of his facets, and the hero Odysseus, with his guile, wit and luck, seems the personification of him. Odysseus, too, is a journeyer. He had left Troy and was heading home to Ithaca. His planned three-week return trip in fact took ten years and involved numerous unexpected turns and

adventures. Essentially, Odysseus left the known world of the hero and entered a supernatural realm of monsters, witches and enchanted scenarios. Hermes acts as trickster, teacher and psychopompos (theos) in the epic, thus fulfilling his nature in its entirety. As a messenger of the gods he often appears as a last resort, or a last retort! Hermes tells Odysseus how to counter the sorceress Circe's charms and gives him the antidote, the moly root, which he drinks and thus escapes being turned into a swine like his crewmen. Zeus sends Hermes to Ogygia, where Odysseus is dallying with Calypso, the beautiful goddess who promises him immortality and eternal youth if he will only stay with her. Hermes goes immediately to warn Calypso that Zeus wants Odysseus to be on his way, and she should not detain him any longer. In this episode he is called Hermes the Wayfinder. He also appears at the opening of the last book of the *Odyssey*, when he leads the suitors' ghosts away after they have been slaughtered by Odysseus:

Meanwhile the suitors' ghosts were called away
by Hermes of Cyllene, bearing the golden wand
with which he charms the eyes of men or wakens
whom he wills.

He waved them on, all squeaking
as bats will in a cavern's underworld,
all flitting, flitting criss-cross in the dark
if one falls and the rock-hung chain is broken.
So with faint cries the shades trailed after Hermes,
pure Deliverer.

9

The key word here is 'pure'. It denotes the absolute neutrality of Hermes, his role as a non-partisan mediator, mere messenger of the gods, guileless guide of souls - god of retrograde motion.

By Mercury's rule over liminality and transitional space, boundaries and crossroads, we shall see the planet's influence in all retrograde cycles. The sense of suspense and anticipation associated with retrograde cycles mirrors the movements and cycles of Mercury. The dip into the unconscious, the mysterious alchemical transformation which occurs deep in the recesses of the psyche, and the often surprising outcome, are all part of the natural two-steps-forward, one-step-back motion of retrogression.

Trickster

As a god of accidental happenings Mercury is underestimated by traditional astrology. His role as the communicator and the educator is not always exercised by conventional means, as we shall see. His affinity with Hades of the underworld sheds an interesting light on the function of Mercury in bringing up the contents of the unconscious at surprising times, not only in retrograde cycles but also in natural cycles of change, hence his association with the trickster figure.

Carl Jung has pointed out the subtlety and variety in the motifs of the trickster figures, for instance in 'the alchemical figure of Mercurius . . . his fondness for sly jokes and malicious pranks, his powers as a shape-shifter, his dual nature, half animal, half divine, his exposure to all kinds of tortures, and - last but not least - his approximation to the figure of a saviour.

10 He then goes on to say that these trickster figures manage to 'achieve through their stupidity what others fail to accomplish with their best efforts.

11 How fitting for the astrological Mercury! It is certain that Jung did not have the transit of Mercury retrograde in mind when he wrote those words, but he did understand how these motifs arose spontaneously from the unconscious of the individual, with particular reference to the conscious life. As a messenger, Mercury brings to the conscious mind unevolved information stored deep in the wellspring of the unconscious, and often delivers his messages in a surprise form.

The trickster motif does not crop up only in its mythical form but appears just as naïvely and authentically in the unsuspecting modern man - whenever, in fact, he feels himself at the mercy of annoying 'accidents' which thwart his will and his actions with apparently malicious intent. He then speaks of 'hoodoos' and 'jinxes' or of the 'mischievousness of the object'. Here the trickster is represented by counter-tendencies in the unconscious, and in certain cases by a sort of *second personality* [my italic] of a puerile and inferior character, not unlike the personalities who announce themselves at spiritualistic seances and cause all those ineffably childish phenomena so typical of poltergeists.

12

I have emphasized the second personality in order to suggest that

the phenomenon of channelling 'entities' is a function of Mercury bringing to consciousness various personalities that lie in the unconscious of the individual, unknown and undeveloped. Mercury's role in the surfacing of this information is paramount, and people who claim to channel entities are, in fact, highly susceptible to the trickster function. Information that is considered to be channelled may or may not have value, but it should be looked at for potential negative trickster energy. Conversely, it may have the healing function available to it, for, as indicated previously, the trickster can appear as a saviour.

The trickster is the essence of serendipity. The finding of a lost article at an unlikely time, the emergence of a piece of information that completes an inquiry, or the extraordinary coincidence are the more playful and harmless pranks of the trickster at work. More serious is the shaman energy, which is also trickster energy - the wounded healer is a fine example. This aspect of healing comes from knowing the wound. One must actually incorporate the disease to expel it and this is not always successful in the healing process, whether it be psychological or somatic. Hence the healer, the psychoanalyst, the astrologer or whatever, is particularly susceptible to the dangers of trickster energy. This is not to say that Mercury retrograde is *the* signature of the trickster/healer, but it is to say that the essence of Mercury cannot be controlled by the will, and when we think we are smugly in control we are most likely to experience the trickster in all his magnificent glory.

Teacher

In his book *Synchronicity* David Peat introduces a simple, yet undeniably profound concept regarding the twofold aspect of perception, which illustrates the attitudes of Mercury direct and Mercury retrograde. He speaks of a 'selfless place' in which there is a kind of 'full void', which Jung called the *pleroma*, and in this place reside the seeds of all origins. He then distinguishes between 'awareness' and 'attention'. These two terms can be applied to the periods of direct planetary motion (attention) and retrograde planetary motion (awareness).

Awareness is defined as a state in which the self is undifferentiated from the environment - there is no separation between the observer and the observed - essentially a divine state of unconsciousness. Attention is defined as acute separation resulting in definitive focusing on details that give rise to conscious participation in and relationship with the environment. Peat states: While awareness without attention gives rise to an overall sense of meaning, it cannot provide a differentiated understanding of the details of particular explicate [i.e. external] objects and their behaviour. On the other hand, attention without awareness would consist of isolated, explicate forms without any sense of their overall context or meaning.

13

This is a rather pedantic way of saying that we need both a divine and a profane state of being wholly to appreciate our nature and its relationships. The cycle of Mercury as receiver and disseminator clearly supports this. I perceive the Mercury direct phase as the 'cycle of attention', and the Mercury retrograde phase as the 'cycle of awareness'. The natural rhythm of the entire cycle allows for both to be incorporated into our lives and provides us with a graphic outline of the timing for creative participation in our world. The difficulty inherent in Mercury retrograde - and within all retrograde cycles - lies not in the nature of retrogression but in our unwillingness to accept it as a teaching device. It is common to blame fate or external circumstances when things go wrong. Normally we think that the conscious mind should be in control, but this is not what retrogression teaches us. If we are to use the astrological model to its full potential, then we must listen to what it says. In particular, when Mercury is retrograde, then something important is calling for awareness, and that particular 'something' will emerge from the unconscious through the agency of Mercury. In the retrograde phase of Mercury's cycle - like that of all subsequent retrograde cycles - we discover that life, like art, is discovery not design. As Jung says, 'The disastrous idea that everything comes to the human psyche from outside and that it is born *a tabula rasa* is responsible for the erroneous belief that under normal circumstances the individual is in perfect order.'

14

Why then invoke Murphy's law - anything that can go wrong, will go wrong - when Mercury is retrograde? Why insist that all

will fall apart and then be magically righted when Mercury returns to its direct motion? Largely because we are not consciously conditioned to the cyclic adjustment necessary to alternate from an immersed consciousness to a participating one, from *awareness* to *attention* and back again. The emergence of mercurial information is a positive step forward in civilizing undeveloped aspects of our psyche, one of which is the shadow function.

The trickster has all the hallmarks of the shadow that stands between the Jungian Self and the persona, and if one's ego expression through the personality does not ring true, or denies expression of the Self, then often the shadow externalizes itself through an event or circumstance which then forces the individual to come to terms with his or her more primitive, undeveloped side. The experience is peculiarly recognizable because it conforms perfectly to the person and his or her needs in development. Mercury assists the shadow function to the fore in order that repressed unconscious material may be more fully expressed.

The Greek Hades, where all souls went after death, was a place to which one crossed exactly as one was at the time of one's death. Chiron went there still with his wound; Odysseus discovered that Menelaus, whose wife Helen had run off to Troy with Paris, was still jealous of his brother Agamemnon, because *he* had a faithful wife. Indeed, one took to Hades the sum and total of one's life for all eternity. It would seem, therefore, that we do not really improve anything in the unconscious; we do not really correct any situation until it is brought to consciousness for repair. When we achieve awareness we then need to give it some attention.

Mercury acts as an agent for recollection - anamnesis - and for the curing of the soul through illumination. Any information, event, fact or awareness that Mercury surfaces with in the course of the retrograde cycle is completely within character and totally relevant to the needs of the individual. In this way, Mercury acts as a civilizing agent.

Traditionally, the retrogression of a planet has been interpreted as an inversion or reversion principle, turning the world upside down; in the case of a natal retrograde planet, rendering it decidedly negative. But the natural introspective and interior experience is one

way we can come to terms with the fascination with our dark side. The lessons that are learned from the transit of Mercury retrograde are multi-levelled, but for the sake of simplicity and for the sake of an astrological guideline, let us say that they are dual. Because Mercury has the most frequent cycles of retrogression - three a year - it establishes a paradigm of responses and interpretation for all retrograde cycles.

On one level are the generic trends, where the entire globe is experiencing transiting Mercury retrograde in a particular element. On the personal level, individuals experience Mercury retrograde in their own horoscope, which in turn will affect the series of houses in the chart that are occupied by the signs that are of the element; in [table 4.1](#) (see pp. 68–9) you will notice that there are extensive periods during which Mercury is retrograde in a particular element. Note that this table reveals one of Mercury's peculiar traits. Despite apparent forward motion on one level, i.e. the planet does move forward through the zodiac, it gradually slips back through the elements in a precessional fashion, rather like the hooves of Apollo's cattle as they headed into the cave. This motion is explained more fully later.

THE CYCLE OF MERCURY RETROGRADE

When interpreting Mercury retrograde cycles in the horoscope, keep in mind that the process being defined is multifaceted. We are analysing not only the ability to receive information but also what is done with that information once it is assimilated. Mercury, then, represents the human mind's capacity to symbolize reality and, conversely, to translate symbols into reality. The regularity of sunrise and sunset, apparent seasonal changes and the measurement of time and space are all a result of our observation of the Sun. In the same manner, the direct and retrograde phases of Mercury are our geocentric references for both conscious and unconscious perceptions, and for the mind as it faces inner questions about outer challenges.

Natally, Mercury symbolizes the ability to formulate and articulate ideas that originate in an abstract pattern. It is the ability to use

words as symbols of what is seen, touched, smelled, heard or tasted; in other words to translate sensory perceptions into concepts. As the planet of communication, Mercury functions as the 'teller of the tale', and relates the inner perceptions to another individual's Mercury, which then becomes the 'hearer of the tale'. John Lilly says communication is, 'the creation of information in one mind by means of signals from another mind. The second mind acknowledges the reception of the signals and the formation of the information by feeding back other signals to the first mind, which then creates new information.'

15 As you may well imagine, much can be lost in the translation!

When Mercury is direct, as it is 80 per cent of the time, the mind operates on a very functional level. There is little time for retrospection, and energy is expended in productive action. Our contemplative side is virtually on hold. This is a natural rhythm. The period of time that Mercury is retrograde will give rise to issues that have lain dormant for the three months prior. This is the time when much of the unconscious

information that has been absorbed and stored will begin to surface in a fashion specific to the needs of the person and his or her own timing.

The retrogression of Mercury is the instinctive mental 'down time'. It is associated with much re-doing, re-thinking, re-organizing, re-associating; anything that can be prefaced with *re-* will define this rest period. It is very much like the lateral shift that needs to take place for the emergence of a seed idea into a formulated concept. This process is as natural as sleep is to waking. Imagine the state your mind would be in if it did not recognize the need for unconsciousness and dream time. If we ignore signals for sleep, then within a matter of days the unconscious and the conscious mind begin to fraternize and cause no end of confusion and difficulty in discerning real from imagined.

Mercury is the guide during the journeys we make between 'awake' and 'asleep' and between consciousness and unconsciousness. The Mercury retrograde cycle is the natural rhythm of the space between here and there, the liminal space of the journeyer on his way to discovery.

Just as we recognize days, years, seasons, time zones, clocks and all regulatory mechanisms, so we should recognize the ordering

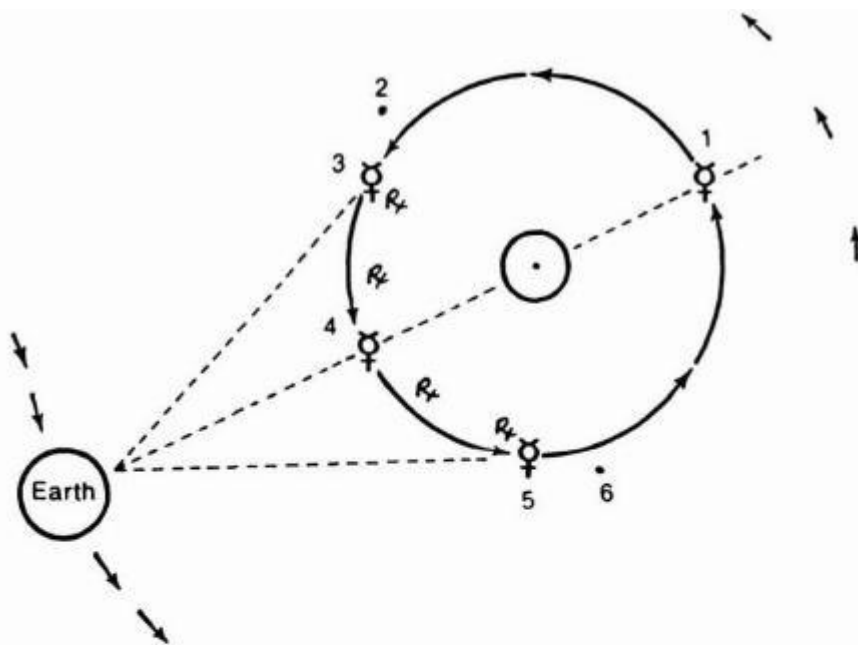
mechanism of Mercury retrograde. Natural states of rest are to our advantage. To be able to predict and utilize these states is a powerful aid to greater consciousness. Again, the organic and holistic viewpoint in astrology is sensible: if we are aware of a system that is reflected in many other systems, then it could be used as a valuable tool for development. It is through this approach that an expanded psychology aids us in a greater sense of wholeness and, indeed, stimulates a more active emergence of latent or suppressed characteristics for conscious development.

We have, over aeons, out of our conscious and unconscious need to eliminate chaos, organized our lives to a minute degree. The prison of culture, the oppression of civilization, has essentially desecralized the world, and we now experience a drastic separation of nature from culture. This is an age-old dichotomy, but in modern culture we experience not just disenchantment but extreme alienation. Astrology hopes consciously to reconnect nature and culture by including a cosmic paradigm for earthly activity. Recognizing astrological timing, and incorporating it into our cultural ethos, allows the individual to re-engage his or her timing mechanism in organic accord with a macrocosmic system. It allows the individual to reclaim power that has been subordinated to the organized, external world timing. We then acknowledge both awareness and attention.

The relationship between the conscious and the unconscious mind is so often reflected by or projected on to the screen of social trends that the individual loses any sense of personal relationship with nature and natural cycles. The use of the Mercury retrograde cycles as they relate to the personal horoscope is an important factor in the reconnection of the individual with the cosmic rhythm.

Mercury's stations always occur around the time when it is farthest from the Sun in longitude, either in the east or west (see [fig. 4.2](#), p. 58). When it appears in its station, it is either travelling towards Earth in its orbit, or directly away.

When Mercury is at its greatest eastern elongation it is appearing in the sky as the evening star and is at its stationary-retrograde point. It is about to pass between the Earth and the Sun in its orbit, symbolically 'bringing home the knowledge of experience'. When in this position it is called Epimetheus. The Epimethean phases demand careful consideration and retrospection, especially in relation to society.



1. Superior conjunction with Sun (direct)
2. Greatest eastern elongation (evening star)
3. Station-retrograde
4. Inferior conjunction with Sun (retrograde)
5. Station-direct
6. Greatest western elongation (morning star)

Note: from point 1 to point 4 is the Epimethean phase and from point 4 back to point 1 is the Promethean phase.

Fig. 4.2 Mercury cycle

When Mercury is at its greatest western elongation it stations and begins, once again, the direct motion, rising ahead of the Sun and moving away from Earth in its orbit. As herald of the dawn it is named Prometheus. The Promethean phase of the entire cycle (from inferior conjunction to superior conjunction) is the time in the cycle when risk and adventure is the primary motivating force. It is at those points of greatest elongation - farthest distance from the Sun - that Mercury's symbol is at a solstice of sorts; the symbol of mind is as far from the symbol of reality as it can be. This is especially important in understanding the process of Mercury retrograde. Mercury does not remain visible in its points of elongation for long (in contrast to Venus, the other inferior planet, whose position as evening or morning star can last for weeks, or a couple of months, at a time) and usually reaches greatest eastern elongation (evening star) a week or so *before* its retrogression. In contrast, the greatest western elongation of Mercury (morning star) occurs a week or so *after* its station and direction.

Both of the main phases of Mercury's orbit as seen from Earth, the Promethean and Epimethean, have a direct and a retrograde period. Mercury has its phases as seen from Earth: a waxing phase from the inferior (retrograde) conjunction to the superior conjunction; and a waning phase after superior (direct) conjunction back to the inferior conjunction. As mentioned in chapter I, we only *see* Mercury in its crescent phases, as it appears to swing back and forth across the Sun or 'behind' it as it heads towards superior conjunction. So, with visibility occurring only at the elongation points, we literally can only comprehend Mercury when it is distant from the Sun. The astronomical fact is a distinct symbol of the proposition that distance is perspective.

The Epimethean phase of Mercury, from superior conjunction to inferior conjunction, is a time of reaping results. We often only perceive our results on reflection, and the first half of the retrograde phase is especially introspective. In contrast, the second half of the retrograde phase, after the inferior conjunction (Promethean phase), is infused with the urgency to move away from introspection and forward to possibly reckless experimentation, based entirely upon inner guidelines.

In Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days* we find the sources of the terms Promethean and Epimethean. Prometheus and Epimetheus were brothers of Atlas and Menoitios, offspring of Ocean and Iapetos. Hesiod describes them as, 'Prometheus brilliant and shifty, Epimetheus the foolish one'.

17 Prometheus tricked Zeus out of his

portion of sacrificial meat and Zeus was well aware of the deceit. For this transgression Prometheus was chained and bound, and punished by having his liver picked out each day by an eagle, only to have it regenerate by night. He was unbound by Heracles and traded his immortality for Chiron's. In further retribution for Prometheus' foolhardy act, Zeus had withheld fire from mankind. Upon his release from the rock Prometheus, still deeply afflicted with hubris, audaciously stole the fire and fled with it, presenting it to mankind. Fire theft, universal among cultural mythologies, is a clear analogy with mankind gaining the essential powers of reason, but through trickery! Therefore, Prometheus stands for independent forthright action that is based on the internal thought or idea.

Roused to action, Zeus sent a gift to Prometheus' brother. Though Epimetheus had been warned about accepting gifts from Zeus, he took it. The gift was woman, Pandora, who peeked in the amphora of pains and evils, allowing all the contents to fly out except blind hope. Epimetheus is portrayed as having foolishly beset us all with the various woes that come to us when we go beyond ourselves and overreach our natural boundaries. The one feature common to the latter half of all retrograde cycles is hope for the future.

Prometheus translates as 'forethought' and Epimetheus as 'afterthought'. Fundamentally the Promethean cycles of Mercury are times of gathering resources and information, exercising skills, implementing action with direct confrontation, while the Epimethean cycles are for reaping the rewards of experience, researching ideas, comprehending meaning and refining raw materials.

Although the following delineation of the cycles is written primarily for the transit of Mercury, it will also offer insight into the natal phase of Mercury as found in a horoscope. Keeping the myth in mind, we will examine the cycle of Mercury and its phases. Since each point along a circular, cyclical model is simultaneously a beginning and an end, I will arbitrarily begin with the station of Mercury in the east as it is about to turn retrograde, which is still in the Epimethean phase.

Epimethean retrograde: At the time of Mercury's station, an opportunity to curtail direct action arises, allowing the results of the last month and a half of activity to surface of their own accord. Mercury's station often halts plan-making, and events seem to have a life of their own. Signals from the environment begin to alert one to inner conditions that need reflection. The degree to which we force results is the degree to which the initial phase of the retrograde cycle is frustrating. There is always an encounter with opposites at any transition point, and the 'threshold struggle' during the initial stage of the retrograde cycle can be profound. The resistance that the psyche has towards change is no different from what you or I might have if told that we must move our entire household across the country within the next few days! The liminal phase begins with the station, a time of suspense and uncertainty, during which the unconscious is given greater range of participation in the whole of the psyche. The mind embarks on a journey which has no specific itinerary, and what is discovered cannot be impeded by design. With the retrograde phase begins a time of submerged attention, which then becomes an overall awareness - non-verbal, non-linear and very feminine in its function. Lessons learned during the Mercury retrograde period are directly related to our capacity to be and remain flexible even in the face of productive and unswerving activity. This is a gift from Hermes - Hermes the Wayfinder - a gift that might come disguised in many forms, including trickster activities and frustration. Learning to let go can result in a creative surge of power. By allowing the horizons of possibility to expand, new information can come in that had been previously sublimated.

The most significant characteristic of the Epimethean retrograde phase, which lasts for approximately eleven days, is the forced review of environmental conditions. The reflection upon the inner landscape is equally intense, though not as externally dramatic. If that time is fraught with frustrations, then it is almost certain that those disconcerting events are a direct signal to learn more about reading the signs that one has been too occupied to notice. A review of personal motivation and perspective becomes necessary.

The entire retrograde phase is transitional. It is likely that one needs to uncover issues directly related to the house that Mercury is transiting during this phase. Check with [table 4.1](#) (pp. 68–9) to see where the transit of Mercury retrograde is in your chart, and the element that is resonating in a trinity around the chart. The bits of information that surface, or the dramatic confrontations with unresolved issues, are like gifts from Hermes. That they frequently take the form of trickster jokes is simply a technique that our unconscious frequently employs to attract attention.

The Epimethean phase of retrograde is the initial stage of the journey, and our reference points are unfamiliar. It is the descent phase, the early cycle of reflection. Essentially, the beginning of the retrograde phase is marked by an abrupt departure from the com-monday experience and is frequently disorientating. There is a tendency to reject the signals that indicate that one would be best suited by ceasing forced activity and reflecting upon it instead.

Flowing with this brief journey into the unconscious and allowing its messages to surface in the form of symbols, images and signals heightens intuitive powers, resulting in greater freedom of choice. Ideally, this should be the time when a concerted effort is made to engage in reflection and review. A form of loosening is taking place, a solution to a stuck situation which disengages one from what was in order to prepare one for what will be. What is, remains to be seen.

Inferior conjunction: Mercury is metaphorically coming home to check on its status as it approaches the inferior conjunction to the Sun. Sandals backward, the god Hermes is making a valiant effort to consort with Phoebus Apollo, to make amends for the cattle theft. Apollo is a solar figure, and Mercury's relationship with him is not only fraternal but equal.

As Mercury moves between Earth and the Sun, slowly reconnecting with the will of the solar energy, a seed is planted at this dark time. This is a 'new' Mercury phase.

18 It marks a time to rest and recuperate, scaling down initiatory action and allowing the unconscious to work. Progress is only measured by reflection on its worth, and by looking back one sees how far one has come.

From a heliocentric perspective, this is an Earth-Mercury conjunction. A fertilization occurs at the end of the Epimethean phase (inferior conjunction) which gestates throughout the last half of the retrograde cycle, birthing shortly after Mercury stations to turn direct about ten days later. What is revealed at the conjunction is appropriate to the new beginning which emerges at the stationary-direction point.

The process of editing out extraneous components in work, or thought, or lifestyle leaves room for the more currently relevant material that begins to surface in the next phases of Mercury's cycle. The retrograde journey is half over at this stage and the re-orienting process is about to begin, slowly and unconsciously at first.

Promethean retrograde: This phase of the journey is less unfamiliar because the retrograde phase is now well established and the psyche more comfortable with the lack of known boundaries. The adventure of liminality is more apparent, which is appropriate for a Promethean phase. One feels more impatient at this stage, but hastening the process simply will not work. It seems ironic that the birth of the Promethean phase occurs in a retrograde position. It is, however, possible to be both forward and backward at the same time, that is, experimental yet cautious. One can actively lay the groundwork for the future by being passively receptive to the current conditions.

The traditional approach to the retrograde Mercury cycle, for instance not signing contracts or initiating new enterprises or making major purchases, still stands. In fact it is reinforced by this viewpoint. Because the Epimethean retrograde is a stimulus to let go of the past, and the Promethean is a stimulus to begin to gather new resources, a conflict arises in mid-cycle. Symbolically, there are opposing forces at work that operate somewhat like driving with the emergency brake on - the exciting energy of new beginnings combined with a sense of restraint creates inner tension.

Ultimately one needs to engage in a dialogue with these apparent dichotomies and to develop a kind of dialectic with which to birth a new idea. That idea can only come from gathering new information, testing new territory and exploring fresh alternatives. Over the ten or eleven days between the inferior conjunction and the station-direct, one should allow some latitude for new potentials, options and opportunities to develop. By not making major decisions, and resisting the impulse to wade in, Prometheus-like, seizing power and executing action, one contains one's anxiety and builds a more appropriate method of operation. The frequent repercussions from Promethean impetuosity have given Mercury retrograde a bad name.

During the Promethean retrograde, Mercury gradually slips behind the Sun in zodiacal longitude, eventually to rise just slightly before the Sun in the morning, close to the horizon as a herald of the dawn. The symbol for mind is gradually acquiring the information and perspective that the will should exercise when the direct cycle begins after the station-direct. It is a time for surveying the scene and scanning the horizon for new tools that might be useful in the near future, hence the association of this phase with research. The unconscious is busy acquiring input that will surface in a more concrete way during direct phase.

The awareness referred to earlier is ripening now, and will be of great assistance to the type of attention that will necessarily occupy the greater part of the direct cycle. This final phase of retrograde Mercury is a profoundly educational time, and intensely creative in an embryonic way. Because it remains a time of holding back full power of executive action, yet is still highly stimulating in a developmental fashion, the phase might be experienced as frustration due to the inability to formulate fully matured ideas or situations. This is where trust and letting go become profound lessons.

When circumstances demand that something must be completed during this phase, it is wise to insert a 'provisional change codicil' to obviate serious planning flaws. If one is prepared for change, though the details of the change are unknown, then flexibility becomes an asset. In this way the Mercury retrograde cycle acts like a Zen master - the flow of the *tao* can easily be likened to allowing the liminality of Mercury retrograde to teach graceful movement through a course of cosmic obstacles. After all, the rocks are part of the path.

Promethean direct: The station-direct of Mercury is the scene of another threshold struggle. All planetary stations are loaded with potential and power, but Mercury direct is particularly tense. If one has been in synch with the cycle, then the alterations necessary during the early stages of the direction will have been anticipated and prepared for. Then they can be incorporated into the psyche and the environment. The direction of Mercury is the indicator that it is time to engage in observation and begin to pay attention.

As Prometheus did, we can now fly headlong towards accomplishment with little introspection. The forty-seven or so days of the Promethean direct phase are a time to act on instinct, with little regard for the results that will manifest in the environment. The inner urge is the primary motivator, the excitement of freedom is Prometheus unbound - the mind now has full control and the powers of observation and action are heightening. Action precedes thought and, though mental activity is at a peak, consequences are not necessarily taken into account. It is the perfect time to test the untried and to market the idea or product of the retrograde reflection. The fruits of the introspective period manifest during the superior conjunction of Mercury with the Sun at the close of the Promethean stage, so this forward thrust is the opportunity to allow full creative freedom, seizing all possible circumstances for growth and expansion - personally, professionally and creatively.

As the cycle approaches the 'full Mercury' phase, and enters into a more sophisticated period of direct motion, there is a cautionary note: during the superior conjunction the full implications of the inferior retrograde conjunction are actualized. Astronomically, Mercury is as far from Earth as it gets, and is on the opposite side of the Sun from us. Heliocentrically the position is an Earth-Mercury opposition, and it is possible to be blinded by will and ego force and not rationally guided. Conversely, it is also possible to be struck by the pure genius of one's own actions.

In retrospect, the *results* that are apparent during the superior conjunction are a reflection of the *action* taken at the Promethean direction, based on the *contemplation* that was engaged in during the preceding retrograde phase. This-all sounds very convoluted, and I myself think at times that this way lies madness, but if the recognition of these apparently complicated machinations comes from within, with awareness, then paying some attention to them prepares one for the inevitable fluxes in life.

The Promethean direct phase is an experimental phase of action, a time when one can fly in the face of convention, but eventually one's ideas or actions must be tested against experience. The superior conjunction marks the end of the Promethean phase and there now begins a new mode of direct Mercury as we move to the Epimethean phase.

Epimethean direct: The Epimethean phase begins at 'full Mercury' - at the planet's fastest motion, at superior conjunction and in full-blown maturity. The cycle immediately begins to decay, entering the period of introspection and social responsibility. It is still, however, in full attention. Though fully engaged in forward motion, there is an unconscious impulse to pull back and reserve energy, and focus on the product of the last forty-seven or so days of initiatory action. To all outward appearances nothing has changed, but the unconscious processes begin to prepare for the appearance of Mercury on the horizon just after sunset, which signals that Mercury is about to station in the sky and begin its twenty-two-day sojourn of apparent backward motion. The forty-seven days approximate between the superior conjunction and the station-retrograde are when a 'completion of action' stage dominates.

The maturity of projects, ideas and actions has arrived and the Epimethean direct phase is an opportune time to reap the full rewards available. Though still a forward-moving time, it is a thoughtful time too, one which requires more deliberation before initiation. Mercury is now travelling very quickly and will move ahead of

the Sun in zodiacal longitude and set after the Sun as the evening star, symbolizing the afterthought of Epimetheus. The ego is no longer subordinate to wild and pure mind, as it was in the Promethean cycles, since bursts of creativity are more likely to be checked against a measure of practicality. The mind is more pragmatic, even in experimental areas, and thus more rational, logical and organized. Epimetheus presented mankind with limitations, but left us with hope.

Gradually, Mercury moves to its most distant position from the Sun in the east. During the period of greatest eastern elongation the mind has full awareness of the progress that was made in the months since the station-direct, and particularly since the time of the superior conjunction. Mercury has now raced ahead of the Sun in zodiacal longitude, and is in fact anywhere from 20° to 28° ahead of the Sun. This is an apparent paradox in symbolic interpretation. We call the planet Epimetheus because it follows the Sun in its apparent rising and setting, but zodiacally it is ahead in longitude.

At the station-retrograde it becomes apparent that much of what has transpired over the last couple of months could use some review. Often, the Mercury retrograde cycle will either slow processes down or halt them altogether, not as punishment from the gods but as a natural part of cyclic evolution.

MERCURY RETROGRADE THROUGH THE ELEMENTS

Every four months, Mercury stations and turns retrograde, remaining so for approximately twenty-two days. By studying [table 4.1](#) (pp. 68–9) according to the movement through the elements you will note a fascinating occurrence.

The retrograde cycles occur in consecutive zodiacal order as the calendar year progresses, yet the overall cycle indicates a subtle sub-cycle of a gradual precession of Mercury backwards through the elements. This is because Mercury stations-retrograde in each of the signs at an earlier degree each time, gradually dropping back into the previous element. In doing so, it traverses the three signs of each element - the trigrams - each station connecting a loose grand trine over a full cycle of three stations of Mercury in the course of thirteen months. If you look at [fig. 4.1](#) (p. 44) you will see how the cycles of three retrograde loops appear over a period of one year, and how they 'back up' over time.

19

Though the elements progress from Fire to Earth to Air to Water in the natural order of evolution, the successive retrogressions accent those elements in the reverse order. Recall the cattle theft and the reversal of the hooves! Although the cattle moved forward, their hooves appeared to have them retrogressing.

There are repeated discrepancies within the regularity of the scheme. In 1971–2, for example, the Fire sign element is very briefly transited, and also in 1976–7 the Earth trigon is only transited once, but in both of these situations there was a brief transit from the next element back into the previous one - as if something may have been left undone and required an extra prod.

On the personal level, note that each station and retrogression cycle will emphasize a particular elemental trigon in the natal

horoscope. For instance, over a period of twenty months between February 1988 and September 1989 the position of Mercury's retrogression emphasized the Air trigon. Wherever the houses that Air signs occupy are, the areas in one's life that need repeated reflection at that time, the retrogression of Mercury twice in each of those houses over a period of about two years ensures that attention is paid and, ideally, understanding achieved.

Year	Date	Sign	Element
'73	March 4	28° ♋	Water
'73	July 6	3° ♌	Fire
'73	Oct. 30	26° ♍	Water
'74	Feb. 15	12° ♋	Water
'74	June 17	13° ♌	Water
'74	Oct. 13	10° ♍	Water
'75	Jan. 30	25° ♎	Air
'75	May 29	23° ♏	Air
'75	Sept. 26	24° ♐	Air
'76	Jan. 14	9° ♎	Air
'76	May 9	4° ♏	Air
'76	Sept. 8	8° ♐	Air
'76	Dec. 28	23° ♑	Earth
'77	April 20	14° ♒	Earth
'77	Aug. 22	21° ♓	Earth
'77	Dec. 12	7° ♑	Earth
'78	April 1	26° ♏	Fire
'78	Aug. 4	3° ♐	Earth
'78	Nov. 26	21° ♑	Fire
'79	March 15	8° ♏	Fire
'79	July 17	14° ♌	Fire
'79	Nov. 8	6° ♑	Fire
'80	Feb. 26	21° ♋	Water
'80	June 28	25° ♌	Water
'80	Oct. 23	20° ♍	Water
'81	Feb. 8	5° ♋	Water
'81	June 9	5° ♌	Water
'81	Oct. 5	4° ♍	Water
'82	Jan. 23	18° ♎	Air
'82	May 21	15° ♏	Air
'82	Sept. 19	17° ♐	Air
'83	Jan. 7	2° ♎	Air
'83	May 1	25° ♒	Earth
'83	Sept. 2	1° ♐	Air
'83	Dec. 22	16° ♑	Earth
'84	April 11	6° ♒	Earth
'84	Aug. 14	13° ♓	Earth
'84	Dec. 5	1° ♑	Earth
'85	March 24	18° ♏	Fire
'85	July 28	25° ♌	Fire
'85	Nov. 18	15° ♑	Fire
'86	March 7	1° ♏	Fire
'86	July 9	6° ♌	Fire

*A full cycle of all the elements
as seen in precession through the
zodiac.*

*Notice that Mercury goes
retrograde three times every
12 months.*

Year	Date	Sign	Element
'86	Nov. 2	29° ♊	Water
'87	Feb. 18	14° ♋	Water
'87	June 21	17° ♌	Water
'87	Oct. 16	13° ♍	Water
'88	Feb. 2	28° ♎	Air
'88	May 31	27° ♏	Air
'88	Sept. 28	27° ♐	Air
'89	Jan. 16	12° ♑	Air
'89	May 12	7° ♒	Air
'89	Sept. 11	10° ♓	Air
'89	Dec. 30	26° ♈	Earth
'90	April 23	17° ♉	Earth
'90	Aug. 25	23° ♊	Earth
'90	Dec. 14	10° ♋	Earth
'91	April 4	29° ♌	Fire
'91	Aug. 7	6° ♍	Earth
'91	Nov. 28	24° ♎	Fire
'92	March 16	11° ♏	Fire
'92	July 20	17° ♐	Fire
'92	Nov. 11	8° ♑	Fire
'93	Feb. 27	24° ♋	Water
'93	July 1	28° ♌	Water
'93	Oct. 25	22° ♍	Water
'94	Feb. 11	7° ♎	Water
'94	June 12	8° ♏	Water
'94	Oct. 9	6° ♐	Water
'95	Jan. 26	4° ♑	Air
'95	May 24	18° ♒	Air
'95	Sept. 22	20° ♓	Air
'96	Jan. 9	5° ♈	Air
'96	May 3	28° ♉	Earth
'96	Sept. 4	3° ♊	Air
'96	Dec. 23	19° ♋	Earth
'97	April 15	9° ♌	Earth
'97	Aug. 17	16° ♍	Earth
'97	Dec. 7	3° ♎	Earth
'98	March 27	21° ♏	Fire
'98	July 31	28° ♐	Fire
'98	Nov. 21	17° ♑	Fire
'99	March 10	4° ♒	Fire
'99	July 12	9° ♓	Fire
'99	Nov. 5	2° ♈	Fire

Approximately every six years this triangulation cycle returns.

Year	Date	Sign	Element
2000			
'00	Feb. 21	17° ♋	Water
'00	June 23	20° ♌	Water
'00	Oct. 18	16° ♍	Water
'01	Feb. 4	0° ♎	Water
'01	June 4	29° ♏	Air
'01	Oct. 1	29° ♐	Air
'02	Jan. 18	14° ♑	Air
'02	May 15	10° ♒	Air
'02	Oct. 1	0° ♓	Air
'03	Jan. 2	28° ♈	Earth
'03	April 26	20° ♉	Earth
'03	Aug. 28	26° ♊	Earth
'03	Dec. 17	12° ♋	Earth
'04	April 6	2° ♌	Earth
'04	Aug. 10	9° ♍	Earth
'04	Dec. 1	26° ♎	Fire
'05	March 20	14° ♏	Fire
'05	July 20	20° ♐	Fire
'05	Nov. 14	11° ♑	Fire

Table 4.1 Mercury retrograde cycles

The use of this cycle alerts us to the unconscious rhythms of reflection, and attunes us to our inner clock by dint of knowing where concentration and introspection are most needed. When to consider and reconsider ideas, projects, relationships and lifestyle according to one's own unique timing is the greater purpose of Mercury retrograde.

The entire cycle of elemental focus is repeated approximately every six or seven years. For example, the Fire trigon is highlighted beginning in 1978 and then again in 1985 and so on through each of the elements over a period of eighteen months to two years - a long-term cycle that repeats that elemental/natal house focus every seven or so years.

The cycle indicates that our entire planet, the collective, experiences retrogression according to the element, but that the individual brings it into personal focus through the lens of his or her own chart and refines the experience within the houses that contain those elements.

In this way, Hermes/Mercury is a teacher. Within the subtle movements of the retrograde cycle we can learn much from this tricky god, but we too have to play the game. The retrograde cycle is part of the archetypal journey from a known place, or from a set of values which are suddenly thrown into question. Then follows the transition from that place of certainty down into the place of the unknown, where we battle with unseen

or strange forces. It is in this liminal place that the wisdom of the unconscious is allowed to loosen and float to the surface giving instruction from that most intelligent source, the intuition.

When we struggle against the inevitable, or strive to alter the unavoidable timing of Mercury, we oppose the *tao* of existence. Therefore, understanding the principles of transiting Mercury retrograde as it moves through the elements maximizes potential within

a natural rhythm. That rhythm is best expressed in a question form, and as each element in your horoscope is highlighted, a question arises that can act as a meditation guide.

Water: What is the quality of my life? Mercury turning retrograde in Water signs is an opportunity to rethink old habit patterns and emotional responses to life challenges. The desire to retreat is strongest when Water is the element that is being emphasized over the two-year period. There will be between three and six opportunities over the next couple of years to experience interior reflex responses and to comprehend them consciously.

The unconscious mind constantly influences daily life; visceral responses are body-memories of the early home environment, many of which are pre-verbal. Mercury retrograde in Water is the best time to analyse patterns based on inherited psychological traits. The houses that contain the three Water signs will present situations in which one finds oneself needing to resist overreacting to moods, feelings and free-floating anxiety. Subliminal messages in the environment signal what requires attention, and often one becomes more sensitive to the psyche/soma balance. One's psychological needs and their physiological manifestations are particularly in synchrony during the years of the Water retrogression cycle.

Dream analysis and journal writing is particularly effective over this time. By noting closely the symbols that arise spontaneously from the unconscious, one can become aware of emotional issues that remain unresolved. Water represents the greatest depths and also the stagnant ponds of our most sensitive, private places. One's emotional needs in relationships with others could also probably use some revising, though only through time will the complex web unfold.

Retrogression in Water signs activates the feeling function, and our ability to trust the intrinsic value assigned to our life. If this aspect of our nature has been ignored, it will now demand attention.

Circumstances arise in life in relation to the house transited by Mercury that require careful examination for their contribution to the quality of life. The last retrograde cycle of Fire did not allow for much introspection into the nature of feelings.

Emotional and mental balance are challenged. Forthrightness in relationships is recommended because if one attempts to escape from emotional responsibilities during this time, they surface later with increased complications. Out of the past may come old associations, representing who one was in the past, provoking an evaluation of emotional growth and change. This is one of the best times for self-evaluation. Emotional and spiritual growth become pressing issues, though they may be disguised as practical matters. If one probes deeply enough, it becomes apparent that the source is deep within and related to the submerged past. This will be the time in a six-year period when this particular overhaul can be performed in synchronous balance with one's own inner timing.

When Mercury turns direct, these issues may be left behind for a few months, but any unfinished business will resurface for continued work three months hence. All the Water sign houses will be focused on several times in the course of the full cycle, bringing more to the surface each time.

Air: What is the meaning of the relationships in my life? This can be one of the most amusing *and* frustrating cycles of the retrograde. The houses in which the Air trigon is located in the birthchart are where reassessment of priorities will now be focused for the duration of the long-term cycle. The thinking function is associated with Air, and the next year and a half or two years allows opportunities to focus on the meaning of the relationships in one's life. One may find oneself deeply absorbed in the minutiae of activities. The Air trigon retrograde cycle emphasizes the techniques that are habitually employed in managing relationships.

Although the emphasis is on how one relates, this is not a particularly emotional cycle, concentrating instead on the patterns in relationships. By paying close attention to how one creates and develops associations with people, one finds a deeper awareness of the importance of relating. Of all times, this is when acute dissatisfaction within the social milieu can arise. The overall tone is one of assessment of one's input and returns in all matters pertaining to relationships. It may be that over the last three months relationships have not been very clear. By airing old problems and thinking through involvements with friends, family and other associations, unconscious stress is relieved.

The minor irritations that arise most often during the Air cycle are: unkept appointments, lost documents, faulty machinery, broken promises, well-intentioned but misleading information, and so on. These are the traditional signals to let go and pay attention to a greater message. The message is likely to be about time-management and clarity of communication. Now is the opportunity to assess priorities and productivity in any given situation; coupled with revising long-term goals this inner search enriches mere existence. As Socrates said in his defence speech to the Athenian jury, the unexamined life is not worth living. There are times, however, when any thinking person doubts even this simple profundity, and the examined life can become a nightmare of doubt.

As in traditional astrology, this is probably the worst possible time to buy machinery such as cars, typewriters, computers, telephones, answering machines, or anything that might be regarded as a mechanical extension of one's mind or communication network. However, it is a good time to research what is needed in the way of mechanical devices: upon Mercury turning direct, one will find what one needs. Also, the old warning: try to avoid either contractual or tacit agreements unless you are prepared to accept an alternative to the original plan or even a reversal of events upon Mercury's direction!

This cycle is best used for clearing the decks of complications and listing long-range goals. Having done so, space should be left to receive important signals from the most intelligent source - the unconscious. So often, what we expect is not what transpires at the end of the retrograde cycle, but it is precisely what is needed at the time. Implementing the necessary changes usually results in fewer complications when Mercury turns direct.

Earth: What are the tangible results of my life? Security matters, practical concerns and the most basic needs come to the fore in this phase. This is a time when you may find fault with your surroundings, whether this is home, job, country or your body! Do not: move, quit your job, emigrate or spend a lot of money. However, Do: look for the new opportunities and keep tabs on possibilities that could be more satisfying for you on the ego level.

On the personal level, you may find that you are being excessively self-critical. A critique is okay, but a shredding of the ego is not. You are undoubtedly needing to reassess your contact with the world of practical reality, but it is unwise to invalidate the past, which has probably done just fine up until now. Rather, look at your assets and liabilities as if they were someone else's and go over the kind of advice that you would give them. It is imperative that objectivity be maintained in this particular cycle, when Earth is being accented in your chart.

Because the Earth trigon is related to the houses that pertain to all facets of worth, including money, self-esteem, working conditions, health, and so on, contributory factors to your function as a human being in the practical world of form, it is important to become aware of the deepest value of those resources. The trigon's message is that if changes need to be made in those areas, and they are often the areas with the greatest resistance to change, then make them, or those changes will be thrust upon you. Naturally, this will affect the way you relate to your body and its needs, your job and its capacity to satisfy you, and your attitudes towards resources of all kinds, particularly financial.

Becoming more organized in the very bases of your life will, paradoxically, liberate your spontaneity. It will also alleviate any guilt you may feel about not attending to the fundamental details of life. The spirit is encased in the flesh, so attend to the flesh. This is not a particularly inspiring time, but much can be accomplished during the retrograde period that will result in very important practical returns. By concentrating on the necessities of life, you will be making more room for the perks. By dealing with the practical issues during this Earthy retrograde, you will find it easier to determine what is truly happening in your life because it will not be cluttered with unfinished business.

Fire: How can my inspiration create my future? Fire symbolism in astrology is very much to do with the relationship between psyche and soma, soul and body. As the body is the vehicle for the soul, the inspired soul is the very anima for creative issue. It is the inspirational force of the Fire function that closely resembles the Jungian intuitive function. Intuition in this particular instance and in this context does not mean psychic ability, rather it addresses the capacity to see the past, the present and the future of possibilities in all things. In this way we create the future. We are made up not only of our pasts but also of our futures.

The apparent lack of direction that often accompanies a repeated transit of the Fire trigon in your chart is Mercury's way of breaking up old patterns of expectations of your creative function. When Mercury is retrograde in the Fire element you may make a lot of haphazard attempts to 'start something', a poor substitute for true inspiration. This angst about the future is necessary for creativity. Reaching a 'stuck'

place in development brings pressure to bursting-point, forcing growth and allowing undeveloped potential to flow from the unconscious. It is essential to recognize that there are times when one has to go through a period of spiritual entropy to alert oneself to a need for change in creative production.

Also, our cultural attitude towards play is not very healthy. It is a fairly well-accepted notion that creativity and play are closely aligned. Schiller says that man is at his highest level only when he plays, when there is no conscious purpose, when the inner urge is not tempered by the 'civilizing agent' of externally imposed controls. This can be very evident in the period associated with the Fire retrograde. Your need for play, creativity and spontaneity may have been preceded by a depression, and the retrogression can be the opportunity to descend into the awareness level of the mind, with no ego consciousness; out of this will emerge true inspiration. In her book *Creation Myths* Marie Louise Von Franz deals extensively with this concept of play. She states that the unconscious intent underlying depression is to bring the consciousness down into the nigredo, into the darkness of the unconscious, in order to release the creative spirit.

When Mercury's retrograde cycle is in the Fire trignon, it may well indicate that you are going through a transition of your creative focus in an outward direction. This is highlighted during the twenty-two-day periods of retrogression. It means that you will have to relearn how to play and how that adds a dimension of creativity to your life. Creativity, more than just painting, music and the other fine arts, is a lifestyle. How do you respond to crisis, for example? With anger and resistance? Or with an increased awareness of the continual necessity to shift gears or look at life with renewed vision? This Fire retrograde will test your ability to respond to life with spontaneous energy, and to be more creative with your decisions for change.

On a practical level, your awareness of sedentary habits may provoke a fitness urge. Psychosomatic illnesses can arise that point specifically to the area of the psyche that is cramped or underactive. If you are in the artistic world, then a 'block' may be the very symptom that indicates the need for a change in technique or style. Ultimately this retrograde cycle will accent the need to experiment with new forms of being, new forms of thinking of yourself and new ways of relating to your sources of inspiration.

By assessing the houses that the Fire trignon occupies you will find some hints about the source of the restlessness. The revision of creative focus in your life over the next couple of years can drastically alter your future direction and in a way more appropriate to the new emerging you. And, for your own sake, find ways to relax and enjoy life's pleasures.

5

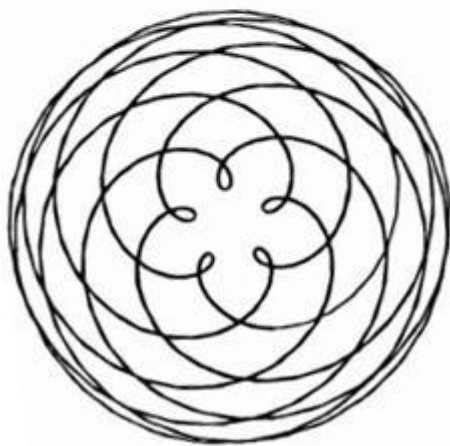
VENUS, DUAL GODDESS THE MYTHOLOGICAL VENUS

Our astrological Venus is a complex figure comprising many ancient goddesses entwined into one Greek and later Roman version. The Greek Aphrodite alone is rich in dualistic symbolism and explains some of our inherent and socially imposed feelings around this intricate and sometimes enigmatic planet. Aphrodite was the last born of the archetypal parents Gaia and Ouranos. She was inadvertently midwived by Kronos/Saturn when he castrated his father Ouranos at the request of his mother Gaia. Aphrodite/Venus rose full grown from the sea, generated from the semen which fell into the ocean. She was immediately attended by Eros (love) and Himeros (desire), which she herself later personified in the Greek myths.

According to an older origin myth she was the daughter of Zeus and Dione, and from the duality of character suggested in the double tradition of Aphrodite's birth come two epithets (and possibly the concept of two goddesses): Aphrodite Urania - meaning celestial or heavenly - her father's child; and Aphrodite Pandemos -of the common people - her mother's child. In Plato's *Symposium* Pausanias claimed 'love was double', that the elder of the two goddesses, Urania, was intelligent and spiritual, knitting souls together, while the younger, Pandemos, born from male and female union, was concerned primarily with sexual, sensual and physical union. Both aspects of the goddess must be propitiated, it would seem, as the revenge of Aphrodite unlauded proves to be a cruel fate, illustrated many times over in myth. This distinction between sacred and profane love is one of the most potent archetypes in the history of civilization, and plays a tremendous role in the development of inner harmony in individual psychology.



11 May 1931 to 30 March 1939



11 May 1931 to 26 February 1947

Fig 5.1 *Venus Orbits*

The astrological Venus rules over two signs, Taurus and Libra, accenting the duality inherent in its domain. The Taurean Venus can be likened to the earthy, sensual Pandemos and the Libran Venus to Urania: refined, idealized, cerebral and wholly socialized. The sensual and primitive function of Taurus is innate and holds memories of the womb, the tactile, visceral and sensate aspects of our nature which trigger our instinctual responses to stimuli in 'gut reactions' and 'feelings' about sensory perceptions. The Libran Uranian reaction to instinctual response is invariably overlaid with socially acquired concerns about morality, social acceptability, politeness or properness. That is, Urania slips in to judge whether these automatic responses of the body are 'nice' or not. For instance, if we are instantly repelled by a meeting with someone, an inner voice might say, 'Oh, now that is not very nice, give the person the benefit of the doubt' - in other words, ignore the animal instinct of danger. We may also subordinate our deepest, truest needs for love and affection with the same Uranian mechanism, by overlaying rationalized and socially acceptable mores upon what is really our own individual need.

In becoming a rounded individual we must be in touch with our senses and our bodies, the sensate, earthy, Taurean Venus. However, the Libran side of Venus, being refined and socially inclined, and having the intellectual qualities of air and reason, is our attempt to distance ourselves from the physical and instinctual demands of the body. This natural ambivalence can be intertwined, producing guilt, or it can split, resulting in dichotomies and frozen or polarized 'Venus complexes' (for example the split-anima Madonna-Magdalene complex in men, found in Moon-Venus oppositions and squares frequently combined with Pluto, or the Aphrodite-Hera complex in women, also a Venus-Moon-Pluto combination). Ideally, Urania and Pandemos might be incorporated and integrated, deepening and enriching not only our instinctual values but enhancing both our personal and social relationships, ultimately offering the most creative resolution.

As Aphrodite continued to evolve and become assimilated into the Roman theocracy she became Venus Genetrix, mother of the founder of Rome, Aeneas. Julius Caesar claimed to be a direct descendant of Venus through Aeneas' son, Iulus, and dedicated a temple to her in 46 BC. Though she remained the goddess of love, and still capable of inciting Eros and Himeros at will, she was softened somewhat by the passage of time and came to personify culture, art and civilization. Although she underwent this transformation through cultural assimilation, the underpinnings of her Greek-goddess potency remain active today in the lives of those who unwittingly enrage her or invoke her powers.

Aphrodite herself was indiscriminate in her relationships, loving both mortals and gods. Unlike Zeus she actually fell in love and experienced pain, grief and mourning when love was lost or unattainable to her. She was even victim of her own power in the case of her passionate love for Adonis. She had blessed Pygmalion's faithful worship of her Uranian aspect by bringing to life his marble statue, Galatea, whom he then could marry. They later had a child, Paphos, who in turn had a son, Cinyras, whose own daughter, Myrrha, fell in love with him. She became pregnant by Cinyras and had a son, Adonis, with whom Aphrodite herself fell desperately in love. He spurned her warning to avoid a certain boar-hunt, was killed and, according to Ovid, she metamorphosed his blood into the anemone, a delicate flower always doomed to be destroyed by the winds. The temporality of love is depicted in this 'wind flower'. The spring rites around the descent and rebirth of Adonis are closely related to another death-rebirth cycle we will read of later.

Aphrodite's marriage to Hephaistos the lame smithy god (the Roman Vulcan), son of Zeus and Hera, was the classic union of beauty and the beast. Aphrodite was never sexually attracted to her consort and lusted instead after Ares, her male counterpart. They became lovers and, in the famous tale told in the *Odyssey*, Hephaistos wove a golden net in which they were trapped *in flagrante delicto*, much to the collective amusement of the gods summoned to witness the event. In this ribald scene, Hermes is the only one who categorically states that he would not be at all ashamed to be caught in such a trap with Aphrodite, and indeed they do mate at some point, their union producing Hermaphroditus, the personification of androgyny. We shall see this androgynous trait surface in the Mesoamerican myths, as well as its psychological manifestation through the agency of the implicit Golden Section.

The duality inherent in the Greek and Roman Venus mirrors our own ambivalence when caught in an ethical dilemma. Those born during the retrograde cycle, the darkening of Venus when her power is obliterated by the Sun, experience more intensely the conflict between inner values and the learned rituals of society. Venus retrograde people seem closer to their Pandemic nature, to the instinctual side, and are caught in interior struggles between the need to be solar and socially extraverted and the urge to be secretive, internal and reflective. Venus, when retrograde, resonates with the hidden, primal aspects of human motivation and contains innate knowledge of the mysteries and arcana of life itself. The dip into the unconscious when Venus is retrograde can issue forth a mandate for war - on the senses, on attitudes to love and on old, dead values. Aphrodite's Adonis is symbolic of the dip into the underworld, for this is where he spends part of his time as the dying vegetation god, to be reborn, clean and fresh, in the spring. This allegory is paralleled by Aphrodite's Phrygian counterpart Cybele (and Attis), whose spring rites were notoriously bloody, violent and warlike in their celebration, and the Corybantes, who were accustomed to 'leap bloodstained in a war dance', according to the Roman poet Lucretius.

We know that the dark side of passionate and romantic love can engender its opposite: hatred of the once loved object if it is removed or appears to change form. This is the love that philosophers hope to shun, the love that turns to reveal its shadow side in all its underworld characteristics. Shakespeare appears to contradict himself in two sonnets on love, but perhaps is only experiencing the philosophical dichotomy between the Platonic ideal of Urania and the more readily attained Pandemos, when he states in Sonnet 116: love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.

And further:

Love alters not with his [Time's] brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

However, in Sonnet 64 he reviews the natural ebb and flow of life forces, the wind flower of love, and the wearing down by the elements and ultimately Time and Death and he despairs:

Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare -

That Time will come and take my love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose

But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

The 'remover', of course, can be Death. Shakespeare knew that love in its Uranian ideal alters not, and remains unpolluted by human emotion and nature's 'removal', but love in its natural, and terribly human, Pandemic form can be altered and transformed by the elements of nature and the quality of time.

VENUS, THE SUN AND THE EGO

Like Mercury, Venus is never far from the Sun, reaching a distance of about 48° at its greatest separation. So, in the horoscope we see Venus as a personal attendant to our life force. It operates as one of the two satellites which flank the radiant power of the Sun and translate the raw power into human values. Venus' function is to sift the sacred from the profane, the primitive from the cultured aspects of one's energy and power. It acts as a filter through which one finds a sense of enjoyment in life, screening out unpleasant stimuli and discriminating against that which will not serve the whole.

There are early conditions which act as precedents for Venusian development and the most important one is how mother touched and handled us. Though we generally say that the extraversion of the ego begins to activate sometime after the age of two and a half, it is actually in development from the instant of birth, though not discernible in the way we define 'ego' in the infant stages. An infant has a more viscerally sensitive Venus (and Mercury) even than the older child, and it is infinitely more impressionable and susceptible than the Venus of the adult person. That is to say, the baby's sensate Taurean Venus is more in the forefront, while its Libran Venus is dependent on a myriad of stimuli and sensual experiences which will begin to educate it about what is loving, harmonious and stable. The ego grows with the body and the power that it can

wield in the environment. An infant who is not loved physically, instinctively begins to barricade itself and initiates the laborious job of mounting self-defence mechanisms. Its Venus becomes encapsulated and starts to callous if it is not the source of absolute joy and pleasure to its mother. If the emotion from the mother is warm, loving and nurturing, Venus is happy and secure, but if the primary energy from the mother is anxious, hostile or uncaring, Venus begins to warp itself to conform to the outside environment. This deeply unconscious, infantile development is one aspect of Venus that is difficult to undo. The personal planets are difficult consciously to 'change', being embedded with traits and visceral messages. The body is memory. As we grow older, the basis for our eventual likes, dislikes, pleasures and pains, lies in this source. It is difficult to differentiate between nature and nurture when it comes to instinctive responses, because nurture is immediately imposed on nature and they both become interwoven to such a degree that therapeutic 'talking' about certain aspects of our Venus nature is quite pointless. Certain sign positions for Venus, and particular aspects between Venus and other planets, predispose us to view the world harshly and others encourage a more romantic vision. Some Venuses are by nature hardy and resilient and others pliant, overly sensitive and soft, still others 'foreign' to the overall tone of the horoscope.

The polished aspects of Venus as they appear in our personalities are obvious in our interactions with others, how we clothe ourselves, what music or art or environments we like, the social circles we travel in and the kinds of experience we find exciting and developmental. Because we are fed values initially in a non-verbal way, through touch, smell, hearing, sensing, there is a complex interaction between the Sun and Venus and the development of the ego.

Venus tells us when we are repelled instinctively, thus protecting our essence from being offended. It alerts us to desire and the responses that will satisfy our needs, whether that is through food, love or visual stimulation, and encourages us to follow its guidelines for taste. Someone who has 'bad taste' is often someone whose values lie in areas other than the aesthetic, but that individual may not be unhappy with his or her asceticism or tone-deafness or lack of fashion. Indeed, he might have a sound ego and sensible values. However, this is the surface of Venus. If we go against our core instincts and behave in a way which we know to be false, yet are applauded by millions, then this is a Venus problem. In a situation such as this, the Pandemic instinctual Venus has been subordinated by Uranian social-ideal Venus, resulting in imbalance. This can often be the consequence of receiving mixed messages early in life, for example when the parental and familial values are in conflict, or when love is declared but contingent upon certain types of behaviour, or when a violation of personal rights has occurred in the early years of self-development, such as sexual abuse, violence or extreme emotional disturbance in the home. Venus grows along with us and our values are embedded in the viscera, where there is an intelligence far superior to the intellect. Fundamentally,

Venus tells us what is right and wrong and as we mature increasingly influences how we view society and its values, and whether those values are the ones to which we personally wish to subscribe.

We might see Venus as the *elegantiae arbiter* - the arbiter of taste. The Roman emperors employed such people in their courts, one of the most famous being Petronius, author of the *Satyricon*, who was employed by Nero. Tacitus says of him:

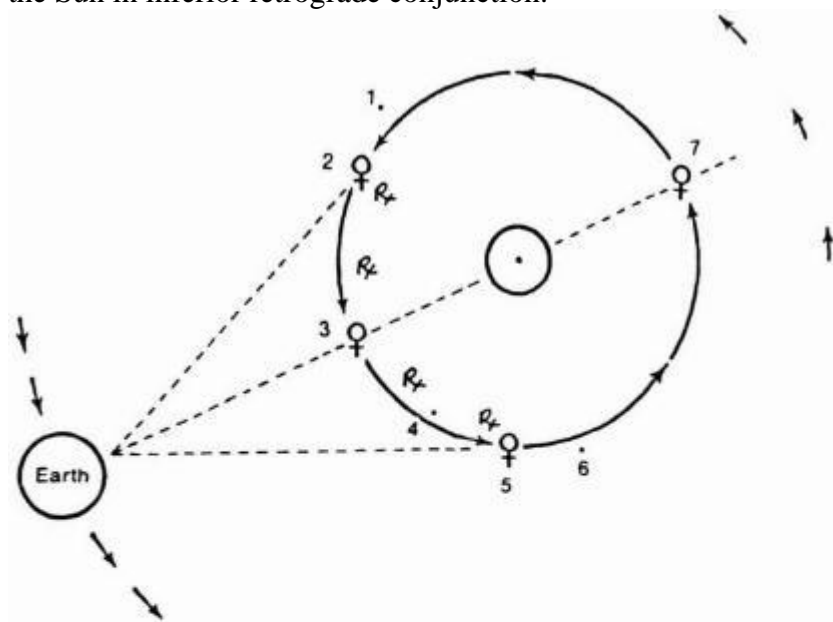
His days he passes in sleep, his nights in the business and pleasures of life. Indolence has raised him to fame, as energy raises others, and he was reckoned not a debauchee and spendthrift, like most of those who squander their substance, but a man of refined luxury . . . he was chosen by Nero to be one of his few intimate associates as a critic in matters of taste.

1
Venus stands guard against that which will poison us or render us outmoded. There are times when, of course, our own taste changes and our activities need refreshing new horizons. It is only by experience that we know when our values have become jaded or debauched, or out of fashion with our new selves. Perhaps we could see Venus as the sensory detector which alerts us to when we need to alter the outer garments to suit the inner self. For the ego needs dressing as well, and Venus unerringly and instinctively seeks out suitable vestments which enhance (or downplay) our self-image, whether they be our lovers, the people we surround ourselves with, the environment in which we live, or the style, music, art and culture which stimulate our higher, Libran aesthetics.

THE CYCLE OF VENUS RETROGRADE

Summary of the cycle

Greatest eastern elongation (point I in fig. 5.2): Venus is Hesperos, the evening star, about two months before it turns retrograde, $45\text{--}48^\circ$ ahead of the Sun in zodiacal longitude. During this time the Sun appears to gain on it in longitude and, in the midst of this phase, Venus reaches the degree at which it will conjoin the Sun in inferior retrograde conjunction.



1. Greatest eastern elongation (Hesperos, evening star)
2. Station-retrograde
3. Inferior conjunction (retrograde)
4. Heliacal rising
5. Station-direct
6. Greatest western elongation (Phosphoros, morning star)
7. Superior conjunction (direct)

Fig. 5.2 Venus cycle

Station-retrograde (point 2): When Venus reaches its stationary point and *appears* to move backward against the backdrop of the zodiac. It is always 30° *ahead* of the Sun at this point (orb of 1.5°). The Sun advances and Venus retrogresses to meet at point 3.

Inferior conjunction (point 3): Venus now begins to fall *behind* the Sun in longitudinal degree. This is the midpoint of the retrograde cycle and the beginning of a new phase of evaluation or action.

Heliacal rising (point 4): A few days (about six or seven) after the inferior conjunction. Venus is about 10° *behind* the Sun and is first seen after the obliteration by the inferior conjunction and begins the long phase of morning star.

Station-direct (point 5): Occurs when Venus is exactly 30° *behind* the Sun in longitude (sign) with an orb of 1.5°. Venus now advances towards point 6.

Greatest western elongation (point 6): The point at which Venus is the morning star - Phosphoros - about one month after it has reached the degree at which it was in inferior conjunction with the Sun. Venus is always 45–48° behind the Sun in zodiacal longitude at this point.

Superior conjunction (point 7): When Venus is on the other side of the Sun, from geocentric view, and reaches the same degree as the Sun in zodiacal longitude. It remains invisible to the eye for about fifty days around the conjunction. This marks the time when Venus begins the advance towards greatest eastern elongation, and the cycle begins again.

The Mesoamerican view

The Mesoamericans - both Aztec and Maya - venerated the twin-star Venus. All known evidence reveals that the Mesoamericans truly understood Venus retrograde, the symbolism as well as the motion.

It is the phase between the station-retrograde and station-direct of Venus which bears the greatest relevance to our inquiry into retrogression and its implications, both natally and in transit. What is it that the Mesoamericans considered happens when Venus hides in the arms of the Sun, invisible to our view? Bruce Scofield says (my italic):

The panels at El Tajin begin with Venus as Evening Star [in her station-retrograde place]. It is during this phase that Venus, according to Aztec mythology, *takes the form of a man and walks the Earth*. Here he meets the goddess Xochiquetzal, goddess of love, who abets him in breaking his vows of purity. In the next panel . . . Venus spends the night with music, drinking and love - and he couples with the goddess. There appears to be a product of this coupling, the birth of a sky monster. In the third panel . . . [inferior conjunction], the ball game is played in the underworld. Venus loses and s/he must be sacrificed by the Sun. In the fourth panel, which covers the span from Evening Star, through inferior conjunction, and on to Morning Star [heliacal rising], Venus is sacrificed. The death of Venus occurs while the planet is obscured by the Sun, but ultimately Venus is reborn as Morning Star [and female].

2

The androgyny which the Greeks only manage clumsily to create through the union of Aphrodite and Hermes is obviously a more implicit characteristic of Venus retrograde than we might generally assume. That a monster was born is no surprise, for we all know of the monster our shadow Venus brings out in us. It has been called 'green-eyed', but is in fact a representative of all that we may not have, or cannot bring to the light of day. Horrors lurk in the darkness of Venus, and the ancient Maya and Aztec cultures devised an entire calendrical system around it comprising long cycles with large numbers, which was astronomically surprisingly precise.

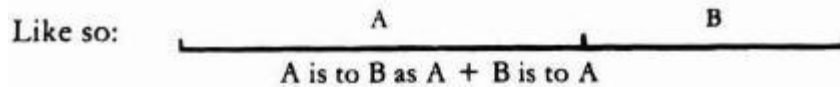
The shroud of mystery around the Mesoamerican calendar slowly unravels when we look at the evidence from various ancient sources. Several features come together, such as the ritual ball-game *peylota* played by opposing teams during the eight days of consummation and death of male-Venus at inferior conjunction; the instigation of war accompanied by human blood-sacrifice at heliacal rising; and the subsequent fertility rites. This is not the harmonious Venus inseminating one with ideal Uranian love, but closer to the vindictive aphrodisiacal Pandemic *himeros* which ultimately destroyed

Phaedra and her stepson Hippolytus, who was fool enough to worship Artemis, the chaste goddess.

The Mesoamericans appear to have known more about Venus retrograde and attached greater significance to its astronomical cycles than other learned cultures. They set armies marching in synchrony with her rise from the underworld, transformed from woman to man to woman again, still redolent with the atmosphere of the dead. To them she was Venus Goddess of War. The calendar seems indisputably astrological, calculated to determine propitious times for combat and sacrifice to the gods. The *peylota* was a ritual combat, re-enacting the legendary journey of the Maya hero twins Hunahpu the Hunter (Venus) and Xbalanque the Jaguar (Sun) to the underworld called Xibalba, where they faced many trials at the hands of the Lords of

mandala that Venus' retrograde loops perform illustrates its inherent beauty perfectly. The centre of the mandala is Earth, the place where one must struggle to achieve wholeness and knowledge.

Quinary symbolism traditionally represents man after the fall, in his profane Pandemic state. Esoteric schools see the power of the number five as the cause, not the effect, of the five-digit contact points on our human extremities. It has always been associated with man's innate capacity to understand, and to create something from that comprehension. The quinary is associated with material understanding of arcane or esoteric truths and is symbolic of the whole of the material world. The fifth element in esoteric work is ether, the 'cosmic glue' which transports thought (idea) to the lesser, but manifest, body. As far back as Egyptian hieroglyphics the five-pointed star signified the concept of 'rising upward to the point of origin' and formed part of word groups meaning 'to teach', 'to bring up' as in to raise a child, and the 'teacher'. Inherent within the cyclic pattern of Venus is the Star of Man, which Leonardo da Vinci illustrated in his drawing of the circle squared with man in balance, the most famous of the Golden Section representations in art. The Venus retrograde pattern forms the basis of the Golden Section, in which there are implications of hidden generative powers. Strictly defined, the Golden Section is an irrational proportion which is equivalent to the division of a straight line into two parts so that the ratio of the whole line to the larger part is the same as the ratio of the larger part to the smaller (13:8).



The Greeks knew about this measure, at least since Euclid (c. 300 BC), and it is thought to possess some aesthetic virtue in itself, a hidden harmonic proportion in tune with the universe. It may well be why the Pythagorean brotherhood chose the pentangle as their emblematic symbol — each segment in the star figure is in golden ratio to the next smallest segment. This ratio is imbued in nature -the chambered shell of the nautilus mollusc is an ideal example of this natural phenomenon: as the mollusc inside the shell grows, the shell enlarges along a logarithmic spiral so that it always remains an identical home, because it does not alter its shape as it grows. A spiral galaxy, like our own Milky Way, is a macrocosmic view of such a divine order of things.

With regard to Venus stations, both direct and retrograde, the Golden Section is activated and resonates around the zodiac at 72° intervals, setting up a tone which 'recollects' all Venus stations within that cycle. Ultimately it is this harmonic resonance that is most significant, and should it connect to a natal planet, then that planet is employed as an agency to resonate the transiting Venus retrograde message around the horoscope at 72° intervals.

3

As Charles Harvey writes in *Working with Astrology*

4:

The importance of the Golden Section in the processes of nature has been known about since at least the Greeks, and these and other 'irrational' numbers such as π , Planck's constant, and so on, can definitely be seen to play a vital part in the scheme of things. Various writers have independently pointed out the importance of the Golden Section ratio and have suggested that planets in the GS ratio to each other at any time will have a very distinctive and creative resonance one with another.

Venus retrograde incorporates the mystical fifth harmonic in its long cycles, thus imparting its own 'selfness' into the psyche of the individual born when it is in that cycle. To be born in either of the stations - retrograde or direct - signifies a powerful connection with the interior mechanism of the Golden Section. The introverted and contemplative (asocial) natures of such individuals are highly imaginative and must find ways to externalize the metaphysical through the physical. In transit, something mysterious takes place, a reformulation of natural order, a return to an ideal place

where everything manifest can appear to be a cheap replication of cosmic perfection.

The association of consciousness and 'mind' with Venus is not traditional. However, as we now see, the number five is not associated with the intellect *per se* but with the inspirational force behind the intellect which, of all the animals, man possesses in great measure. It is the number of creative spirit, of *ars* and *techne*, of creative imagination put to skilled use. This function simultaneously enfolds creative and destructive potentials. The dualism of Venus speaks of these polarities: the sacred and the profane; the divine and the temporal: the life-force and the death-wish; the goddess of love and the goddess of war; the celestial and the worldly. Celestial dreams become worldly reality when the creative impulse of man embodies and makes manifest the Platonic ideals of imagination.

David Hamblin says (*my italic*):

My own research has convinced me that Fiveness is essentially connected with the idea of *making, arranging, building, constructing, structuring, forming*. It is to do with the creation of order out of chaos: the bringing-together of things that are naturally separate into a formal relationship with one another. It is, therefore, the first number in which man asserts his power over the world.

5

The connection of language and knowledge with creative and procreative functions is drawn by Michael Harding in *Hymns to the Ancient Gods*, in which he links the quintile fifth harmonic and the seeds of consciousness. He says:

... the 5th harmonic refers specifically to the ordering and empowering function of *language* and the way in which it might create a specific form of *consciousness* in the individual. It is this consciousness which then becomes impressed on the world in the form of art, style or some such similar external expression.

6

When Venus is retrograde, all cycles of retrogression are invoked, past and future. The retrograde period activates the Golden Section pattern inherent in the quintile, the capacity to know the unknowable. There is no 'first' or 'last' with a cycle, only evolutionary patterns, and Venus is bound up with the impulse for creative physical expression of an exalted idea. It then follows that individuals born during Venus retrograde periods have the pattern imprinted in their psyche and carry this Venusian quintile about, experiencing the creative angst that many artists express through the medium of their work. Unfortunately we often only attribute the artistic temperament to those actively involved in the classical creative arts. This is not only misleading but also discouraging to creative people who may not write arias, paint masterpieces, dream poems or whatever.

Perhaps the invocation of the Golden Section quintile accounts partially for the Venus retrograde individual's sense of being 'different'. It may be why much rumination over love, values, creative issue and diplomacy occurs both globally *and* individually when Venus stations, turns retrograde and remains so for forty days, communing with the immutable forces which guard the mysterious knowledge. The knowledge that Venus imparts upon its return to the upper world is not the *information* that Mercury brings to the surface with each of its cycles. It is an aesthetic, visceral knowing, which cannot be articulated but can only be enacted or portrayed through the subtlety of relationships with others or in abstract imagery.

In ancient Egypt, the lotus symbolized nascent life or first appearance (an archetype) and was a natural symbol for all forms of manifestation. In the Middle Ages it came to represent the mystic 'centre' and the heart, but the five-petalled lotus combines both sacred *and* profane symbols: the lotus of mystical illumination with the quinary symbol of man's capacity for manifestation. In the lotus,

The potentialities of being are realized by means of an activity which is always internal since it is exercised from the centre of each plane; furthermore, from the metaphysical point of view, it is impossible for external action to be brought to bear upon the total being, for such action is possible only on a relative and a particular plane.

7

That the retrograde cycles of Venus describe a lotus-mandala in the heavens (see [fig. 5.1](#)) is apt because it is the 'internal activity' of the Venus retrograde transiting cycle which ultimately is impossible to externalize. The lessons learned in the course of the forty-day retrograde period are relative only to the individual experiencing them. In fact, it might well be that the lotus flower only picks up that which was left off at the last station of Venus in the same sign and house. Full integration of Venus retrograde into the ego structure is unlikely to take place immediately upon its direction, but is incorporated over time. The retrograde period creates a quiet introspection which takes place on a very deep level, rather like observing one's own behaviour and responses while nevertheless participating wholly. Of all the retrograde cycles, Venus' appears to be the most unconscious in its immediate effects, but in the long view the most rational.

Therefore, it would serve to look back eight years when analysing a current Venus retrograde trend, for there will be echoes of the past in the present situation. The inferior planets always pick up unfinished processes where they left off in the last retrograde cycle, but unlike Mercury's rapid and accessible cycle, Venus' is more lengthy. Venus retrograde transits the same natal house every eight years, reviewing and resurrecting incomplete or dormant issues which have been quiescent since the last transit.

One gets a cold hard look at one's relationships and at what is relevant to one's integrity at this time. It may be that there is an imbalance for a period while deeply mysterious transformations occur — so mysterious that one never really knows what has happened until several months have passed. After Venus has turned

direct, and begins to move along at about the same speed as the Sun (in the ephemeris), stasis initiates a time to review what the retrograde period revealed.

The station-retrograde begins a time of global review; the entire Earth experiences the retrograde phenomenon. We can see how it manifests in the collective by watching the news in regard to diplomatic and international relations. The reconsideration of what is diplomatic, and what is necessary to maintain a balanced world-view and sense of integrity, is precisely what happens to the individual when Venus transits a sector of the natal horoscope. The Maya believed that the point at which Venus reaches her heliacal rising, about six or seven days after the inferior conjunction, was when political situations were particularly unstable and leaders insecure and fallible. Bruce Scofield says he has found the heliacal rising, 'often corresponds to a time of failure or resignation on the part of leaders and often coincides with a major accident or storm.'

8 Venus is still retrograde at this point, but stationing and moving slowly as the Sun appears to move ahead in the zodiac.

An instinctive recoiling occurs at the station-retrograde, sometimes because of an event, at other times as a conscious, voluntary retreat. More often than not, the area in the chart which is being examined by Venus retrograde has gone unattended for some time — certainly with this deep perspective. One tends unconsciously to withdraw, seeking hidden meaning in experience, hoping to draw value or deeper knowledge from one's daily interactions. The area in which Venus is retrogressing becomes vulnerable to attack and is often the stage for a confrontation upon resuming direct motion. Unspoken messages, hints, nuances and subtleties become magnified and can be distorted, but they are nevertheless laden with implications.

Venus plumbs the depths of undeveloped personal characteristics in the areas of the horoscope it is transiting, and is likely to contact a natal planet by aspect in the course of that time since it backtracks over 15–18° of an arc. If the inferior conjunction makes an aspect to a natal planet, the results of that insemination are likely to be birthed well after the direction of Venus. When the planet traverses two houses there is an overlapping of concerns, which has a direct bearing on the eventual outcome. When it changes signs during the retrograde phase, it then has a subtle change in theme (since the retrograde period covers about 15–18°, it can and frequently does pass back into the previous sign).

The transmutative aspect of the Venus retrograde cycle is evident during the transit period because there seems to be a mirror image of what is one's 'normal' method of arriving at conclusions. That is, if one is usually terribly intellectual and systematic about decision-making, one might find another way more fruitful and become more instinctive. Conversely, a normally intuitive type finds solace in logic and highly organized methods of dealing with the world. There is an experience of discovering and dealing with one's opposite.

That Venus became a male god in the retrograde phase of its cycle symbolizes the necessity of inversion to experience wholeness. The transit of Venus retrograde exposes the need to see aspects of oneself which are normally hidden from view. Those values are

often diametrically opposed to the ones consciously espoused and can create some of the most profound emotional disturbances. A great number of mistakes can be made during Venus retrograde transits, largely because it is so infrequent and thus foreign to the daily experience.

The degree of discord that arises within one's personal life during the retrogression signals the distance that one is from one's core values and higher creative inspirations. The sudden imbalance can tilt one towards an opposing pole, creating tremendous upheavals in relationships and in one's personal experiences. All the turmoil may be a magnification of a single issue and can be blown out of proportion. Ideally, it is a time to contemplate what one's deepest, most personal, creative needs are and from what well-spring those needs originate. It is a time to explore one's own needs for love and nourishment and to examine one's capacity to receive both of those life-sustaining forces.

The mysterious 'ideal' can interrupt and tear apart what one has found to be loving and nurturing - flaws and faults in others can become enhanced, and one might see all the dangers of intimacy, rather than the supportive aspects of it. The call to war after the inferior conjunction of Venus with the Sun might bring forth the dead, and one may be recalled to times in the past when rejection and emotional pain conspired to erect an emotional fortress which for current circumstances might be quite inappropriate. Ultimately, it will depend upon the degree of responsibility that one assumes for one's own lovingness and capacity for commitment that will correct the situation, allowing for necessary changes.

NATAL VENUS RETROGRADE

Venus' disappearance from the sky, subsequent entry into the underworld and marriage to the Sun were surrounded by mystery and omens in both Greek and Mesoamerican cultures.

The retrograde cycle portrays an intimacy between Earth and Venus, with the Sun as an illuminating backdrop: symbolically, Venus mates with the Earth and Sun simultaneously, embodying the polar aspects of Urania and Pandemos in one figure. Though

the image could be of the Sun devouring Venus, it is equally one of Venus mating with the Earth.

Psychologically, Venus retrograde people often have a sense of being complete within themselves, of being autonomous and independent from the worldly design of senses, values and relationships. The Mesoamerican Venus' transsexuality in the inferior conjunction is very much the *mysterium coniunctio* of the alchemical wedding, where the King and Queen mate in the saline bath and merge to become the Hermaphrodite.

The peculiar androgynous feature - psychological or physical - is also notable among those who have Venus close to the inferior conjunction with the Sun. That is not to say that such people are physiologically hermaphroditic or sexually ambivalent, but men with Venus retrograde are closer to their feminine instincts, and women more connected with their masculine animus. Because the Sun and Venus are 'in a marriage' during the retrograde phase, Venus retrograde people have difficulty in separating their own needs from what is expected of them, so they frequently retreat - either into ascetic denial of bodily needs and visceral demands, or into the sensual aspects of life. Either way, they are at Aphrodite's mercy. The possible manifestations are numerous, but range from multiple relationships to virtual monkism.

Graham

Graham was born when Venus in the ascendant in Scorpio was stationary and about to turn direct. When he was in his sixth year, Venus made its station and turned direct. He was sent to an orphanage, where he spent the years from seven to fifteen, although both his parents were not only alive but still together. At age fifteen, progressed Venus, having turned direct, passed back over the natal degree. At eighteen years old, when progressed Venus began to gather momentum and was quincunx natal Uranus in the eighth house, he was drafted into the US Army for the Vietnam conflict. (A side note: Graham was also born with Mercury precisely stationary-direct, and when he was eighteen it had progressed to the exact degree of his natal Sun.) His experiences in the jungle were the ordeals that the retrograde Maya Venus portrays. He witnessed the horrors of combat, madness, drugs, the insane depravity of his superiors and, eventually, the blood-sacrifice of one of their own. His deep sensitivity and inherently religious values may have helped him to survive psychologically, though he was unable to speak of the war experiences until many, many years later.

Upon his arrival back home from the war, Graham had found that a new social order had emerged in his absence. Expecting a warm welcome, he was instead spat upon and derided by a coterie of the 'loving' members of this new order. Cut to the quick by this thoughtless, hostile act, broken and soul-sick from Vietnam and now turned against by his peers, Graham beat a quick retreat to a Jesuit monastery where he spent a couple of years healing and recuperating while studying the discipline which would eventually lead him towards his spiritual vocation - Venus stationary-direct in his natal chart, urging him on to ever higher aspirations.

Ten years after his release from an underground prison and, ultimately, the army, he was returned to the war zone through the agency of his unconscious. During his wife's first pregnancy the war returned in his dreams and he would awake streaming with perspiration, quaking in terror, reliving the horrors he had experienced in active combat and later in the concentration camp. The imminent birth of his own baby brought back to him the deaths he had witnessed and was forced to take part in — the ritual interweaving of life and death dramatically portrayed in a Vietnam veteran's psyche.

In relationships, Graham said he had always found himself attracted to women who had experienced numerous sexual partners, while he himself had had relatively few and was painfully shy with most women. His charisma - often radiant with Venus retrograde people - drew many women to him in his public life, but his private life was ascetic and very reclusive. When he had finally married, after Vietnam and the monastery, it was to a woman who had had 'rafts of relationships', as he put it, and she carried a great deal of his feminine side for him. Though he has a very sensitive, feminine side to him, it was reserved for a public persona; in private he was quite unconsciously chauvinistic. He and his wife eventually separated when he was forty, at which time he 'found' his Venus and moved into a new pattern in relationships.

Graham had learned at a critical age to batten down his needs for relationship and love when he was rejected by his parents and sent off to a home. This was compounded by the fateful excursion into the combat zone, his subsequent rejection by the new hippie love-children and the monkish existence in the Jesuit institution. Though Venus by secondary progression remains direct for the remainder of his life, he still retains the natal influence and early memories of Venus retrograde. His instinctual human emotions were blocked and thwarted, and the natural expressions of give and take in love were foreign to him. Graham is what one might call a late bloomer in the area of Venus sophistication, but he has found a sense of harmony and balance between the extremes which had not only split apart his psyche but his life too.

John

John, who has Venus retrograde in Scorpio conjunct Saturn (within 1°) in the tenth house, had a very complicated infancy involving adoption and a subsequent court case. He was two weeks overdue at birth and had to be delivered by Caesarean section (he has Mars exactly opposed Pluto from the second to the eighth houses). This brings to mind Kronos as midwife, in that he had to be reluctantly ‘disgorged’ from his mother (Venus—Saturn conjunction, Moon rising in Capricorn). In John's natal chart (see [fig. 5.4](#), p. 100), Venus was at its direct station, and remained hovering around the natal degree for many years before actually turning direct.

At the age of six months John was adopted, and two months later, allegedly to get revenge on the errant father, his natural mother attempted a court case to retrieve him. The court awarded the foster parents full custody after a year of dispute, and he never saw his mother at all. Venus stationed and turned direct in his seventh year, having finally reached the exact degree of the natal Saturn. His adoptive father died of a heart attack in his office, where the young man discovered him at age nine. All of these early events, coupled with the feature of the wounded Venus retrograde and its progressed movements, established a strong barrier between John and the world of loving relationships. He is desperately afraid of being ‘swallowed’ or ‘devoured’ by a woman, yet longs for marriage and children. Acutely aware of his own psychological androgyny, he

is the editor of a magazine whose staff and readership are largely homosexual, though he himself is not.

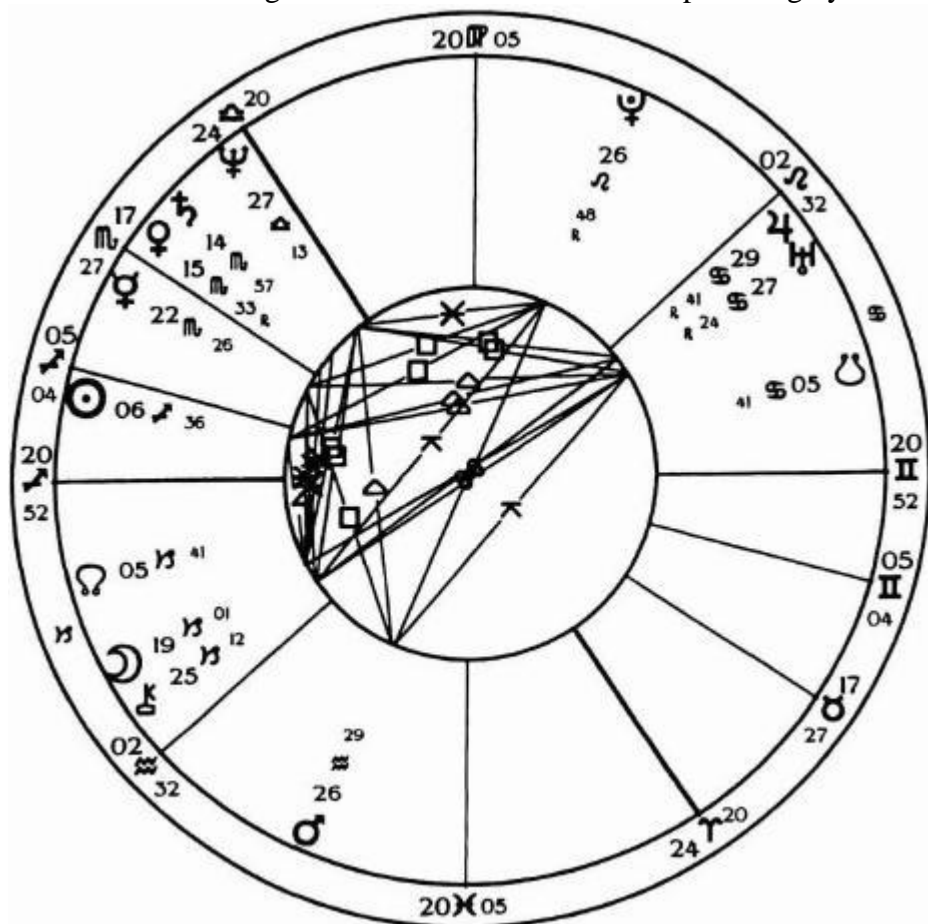


Fig 5.4 John

Justine

On the same theme, a woman whom I will call Justine was born just two days after John. She too has the same Venus retrograde conjunct Saturn, but, being two days later, it is an even closer aspect (within 5 of arc) and located in the twelfth house. Her Moon is in Aquarius and the same Mars-Pluto opposition occurs in her chart, but from the third house to the ninth (see [fig. 5.5](#)). Justine described her inner world as being a fantasy to escape from the violent beatings administered to all the children by her father. The parents divorced under acrimonious circumstances when she was about eleven (Venus was direct, but still hovering around natal Saturn) and her feelings of guilt and divided loyalties virtually paralysed her emotional world. She did not see her father again until she was twenty years old, around the time progressed Venus conjoined natal Mercury.

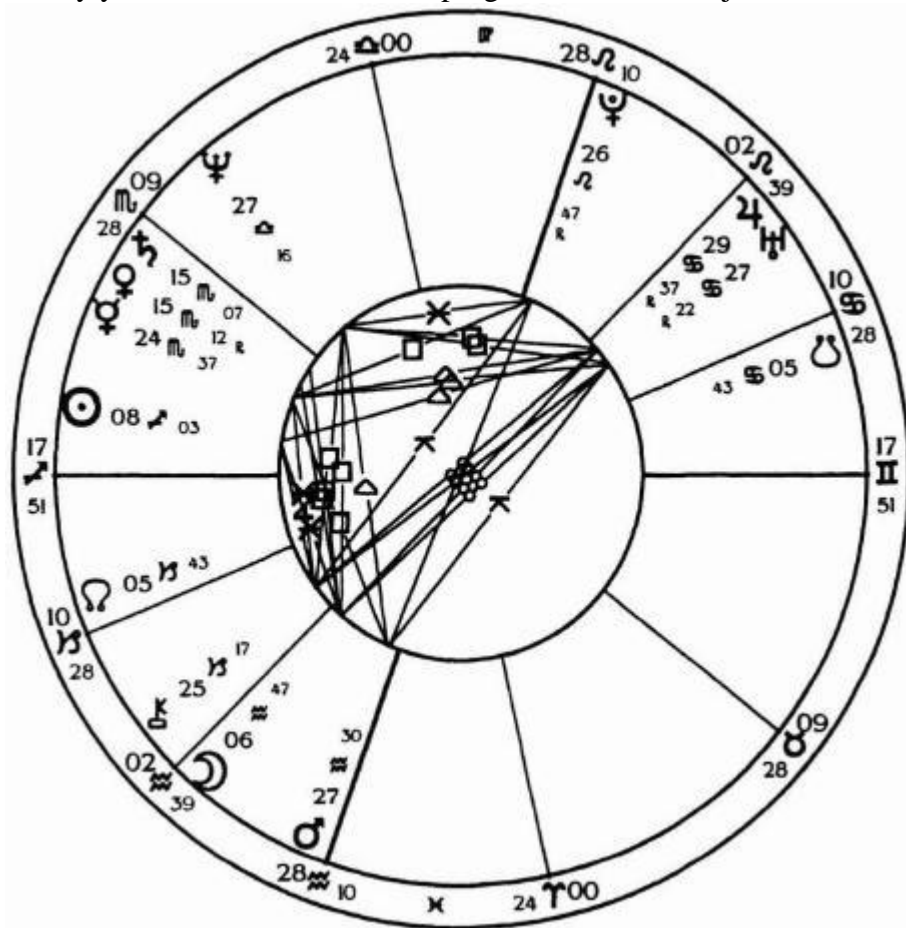


Fig. 5.5 Justine

All through her childhood and adolescence she was withdrawn and shy, painfully aware of her 'difference' from others but not able to recognize quite what that difference was. When she described her feelings to me she spoke repeatedly of mirroring, dualism, dichotomies, dilemmas, polarities and being split between an outer world and an inner world. She vainly attempted to meet society's standards but burst out of hiding at seventeen and launched an all-woman punk-rock band which had a great measure of success in the mid 1970s. Justine says that her inner conflict continues to this day, though it is becoming increasingly integrated into the whole of her personality as she achieves the perspective of maturity. Still, she finds it emotionally difficult to sustain a long-term relationship because she cannot bear intimacy. She feels that it is not because she is afraid of it, but that it confines her world to a single focus. Her own androgyny is apparent to herself - she described herself as a complete man-woman - but she does not experience conflict with this inner union. Individuals with Venus retrograde natally are acutely aware of how the values they witness in their environment differ greatly from their own feelings of what is right and wrong. Venus retrograde's relationship to the Sun depicts a view of reality which does not conform to the consensus of values. The individual's inner will (the Sun) is inextricably connected with his or her innate sense of justice and sensory intuition (Venus). The closed circuit that is formed with Venus, Earth and the Sun more readily allows one's perceptions and valuations to come directly from the Self. This union of Sun and Venus creates a more interior and subjective alembic for the development of personal values, and the pure statement, less easily tainted by externally imposed values, remains intact - although it undergoes variations with experience and maturity. Naturally this causes difficulties as the child leaves its secure environment of home and enters the world where it will experience the values and senses of peers, superiors and society as the collective voice of

authority. A child with Venus retrograde needs to be encouraged to listen to the inner voice, and to respond to its instinctual nature, because that is the only reliable source of personal integrity with this position.

Emma

Emma, a young woman of eighteen, came to see me because she had failed her A level examinations and was concerned about her life direction. She was about to repeat the examinations in the spring term, and had to make decisions regarding her education and career future. She was a striking-looking girl with a clear, articulate understanding of her difficulty. However, she was exacting to an obsessive degree, self-critical and totally lacking in confidence. Emma had Venus retrograde in the twelfth house in Cancer, exactly square to Pluto in the third house. Though her parents did not push her, or try to mould her to their own ideals, she inherently felt pressured to perform in some unique way. Indeed, it appeared that her parents were unusually sympathetic and understanding of her and made attempts to encourage her to be easier on herself. The square from Venus retrograde to Pluto in the third house intrigued me and I asked her about her siblings. She confessed to resenting her younger brothers very much and felt offended by them for no particular reason other than that they were boys and they existed.

In the year I saw her the progressed Venus had retrogressed back to the natal Sun degree, while transiting Saturn would oppose her Mars twice in that same year. She was feeling depressed, lonely, isolated and completely without will or vitality. She had just broken off with her first real love and her closest girlfriend was now at polytechnic and they were drifting apart. It appeared to me that her failure to achieve her A levels in that year had something to do with her deeper sense of her feminine self being unrecognized. Even in the case of a fairly benevolent home environment, young Emma had imposed far too exacting a standard on herself and her inner Venus was crying out for expression. The symbolism of progressed Venus sitting on her natal Sun (in Gemini) spelled out a need to get in touch with her feminine values, to live within herself as a person, not as a standard of measurement of accomplishments.

The progressed Venus-Sun conjunction is the Maya myth of transsexual male-Venus mating with the underworld goddess of love, breaking his vows of purity and experiencing profane love. The animus-Venus, the harsh, exacting monster of a woman's (negative) intellect, was harping on at Emma to do better, to excel, to achieve intellectually, but was not encouraging her to meet with the love goddess and bear the fruit of her feminine side - her spontaneous, creative and fun-loving side.

Emma's Gemini Sun had consciously established an intellectual standard of achievement, which her inner values now found deeply unsatisfactory. Natively, her Mercury in Gemini also squared Pluto in the third, imposing upon her the exacting characteristic of having to know everything. Her 'failure' was really a cry from progressed Venus to learn to love herself for her own innate beauty, which does not predispose intellectual achievement but enhances it if it is inherently there. At an early age Emma was forced inward to contemplate her personal resources, and required to examine her capacity to realize her worth as an individual. The aspects that coincide with the resitting of her examinations are less stressful and she is likely to be successful, but more importantly she has had time to re-examine her own values and discover within herself the essence of her femininity.

When progressed Venus conjoins the Sun it underscores the year for relationships. Depending upon the age at which this occurs, relationship will have different connotations. Generally, one is awakened to one's interior opposite and to the undeveloped aspects of one's inner longings for love and bonding. A relationship or love match made in that year marks a turning-point, and is often a precedent for subsequent relationships in years to follow. The individual who has found his or her invisible partner - the 'inner mate' - will find it often manifests in an actual relationship. Progressed Sun and Venus contacts to each other do seem consistently to manifest in love, although this may not necessarily be just romantic love, but a deeper, truer sense of inner balance which then results in expanded perceptions. Though often realized through love, romance is not just relationships but an enhancement of the senses - when life is more intense, colours brighter, sounds more resonant, touch and visceral experiences quickened and the whole of the experiential self aroused.

Emma's priority was to examine her relationship with herself and to be in closer contact with her feminine, sensual, emotional and visceral side, rather than with the split-off masculine Gemini Sun dictating to her that intellectual success is the way to happiness. In

the year of progressed retrograde Venus to the Sun she had to re-evaluate her life direction as well as her relationships with others.

Ego development of those with Venus retrograde does seem to be slower, and they linger on the threshold of social sophistication longer than those with direct Venus. The process of social evaluation is less easily

influenced by externals - the Venus retrograde person is more likely to retain a measure of guilelessness, which cannot cope with superficial social activity but must do things that have deeper meaning. Their primal survival instinct - knowing instinctually what is life-giving or death-dealing - is an important factor in their apparent shyness of shallow social contact. What is really functioning is a deep realization that they might be 'killed' by insensitive, or merely trivial, haphazard actions perpetrated by others. On the level of personal values they find a kind of soul death in things that many may find quite pleasurable and harmless. Young Venus retrograde people are frequently exposed to situations that cause them to recoil and internalize their instinctive responses, which in turn involves serious contemplation of their true inner worth. Even if the parental situation is basically supportive (as in Emma's home) there will still be a wall between such children and the world until they find the inner security to protect them from the harshness of reality. Wherever I have encountered women with Venus retrograde who have also been sexually violated in their developmental years - if not by their fathers, then by uncles, brothers or other close male members of the family - there is an ominous parallel with the Maya god Venus' transformation. Mating with the Sun-father may sound rich and exciting in myth, but it is definitely not in real life. When a young woman's rite of passage into her sexuality is not an instinctive response but a forced coercion by a solar figure, it is indeed hell on earth. Her feminine essence is bound by the male assailant, disappears and is buried underground. What surfaces later is a war cry; the cold, rejecting hostility of the woman is actually the arrested psychic development of the sexually abused girl-child. In some cases this event, the violation or involuntary marriage to the Sun, actually does eventually emerge as a transsexual manifestation, where the animus takes charge, overriding the feminine psychic counterpart, and the woman becomes a man-woman - strong, courageous, valiant, political, militant, aggressive, strident and terrified.

I do not know of any link between Venus retrograde women and incest, nor will I draw any, but the erotic charge in the family home is often tense, displaced and instinctively carried by the person in the family system with Venus retrograde. They are intuitively more aware of discord or ambivalent feelings on the part of their parents, either towards each other or other family members. The sensitivity to the sexual undertone of the family is also extremely high.

Venus retrograde in men frequently coincides with a much more powerful psychological and physical bond with the mother than with the father. Female abuse of male children seems not as prevalent as with fathers and their children, but it may be that it is more subtle and also more difficult for men to acknowledge because of social pressures and stigma.

Warren

One man with Venus retrograde at 6° of Pisces in his fourth house and the Sun at 12° of Pisces experienced such abuse at the hands of his mother. Warren's Sun is exactly quincunx Neptune, and Venus is within a couple of degrees of heliacal rising - the point of transformation of Venus back into a female goddess just before her reappearance in the morning sky. As an only child with an absent father, Warren's earliest life was spent almost wholly in the company of his mother. He told me that from his earliest memory his mother would bathe him and scrub at his penis until it was fiery red and stung. She was always on at him about its cleanliness and function, and about its awkwardness as opposed to the tidy, hidden, polite arrangement that she had (and all women presumably). She continued her ministrings until he reached puberty and began to lock her out of the bathroom. Warren grew up very unhappy about himself and his unfortunate penis.

Finally he sought therapy because of his transvestitism, which he felt was depraved. He was not homosexual but had never performed heterosexual intercourse in his life (he was forty-three). He met and married a woman who loved him, and they have a good sex life which involves, as one might suspect, a lot of bathing. The guilt

and shame he felt earlier had been crushing, but with therapy and the fortune of finding someone who 'was as weird as he was' (quote) his Venus is now quite happy.

Less problematic Venus retrogrades in men find other ways to undergo the transformation of gender. They have a powerful identification with the feminine side of themselves and often find that it is easier to relate to women, rather than men, as friends. With a distinct lack of masculine competitiveness their social tastes often run from one extreme to another - from reclusiveness and enjoyment of their own company to the cultivation of frivolous, superficial and fluttery companions. The alternative reaction is the he-man image, where the male ego is terrified by the feminine anima and the man as a result spends his time in search of the ideal woman, ultimately trying in the only way he instinctively knows to return to the womb - as often as possible.

Lacking the early will to assert themselves, Venus retrograde people are often victims of introjection - that is, they passively accept the values handed to them wholesale by family and society, all the while viscerally screaming rejection of them (as in the case of Justine's childhood experiences). This creates a special conflict, a wound to body and soul that turns them inward to contemplate a universe whose laws are in accord with their own feelings. They often have a strong charisma, an undercurrent of emotional intensity which exudes from them as a subtle vibration, rather than manifesting in overt social activity or extraversion. Hence, they are often magnetic and compelling in a quiet way, generating sensual power and attractiveness.

Based on a strong sense of inner justice, their values are often either crude and primitive or exalted and religious. The religious factor always seems to arise; it is as if a spiritual adviser lives within. Orthodox or heterodox, the religious needs are strong and systems to support that need are sought after. When wounded, defeated or profoundly rejected in love, Venus retrograde people often seek the solace of Aphrodite Urania, the purifying goddess of ideal love; spiritual union with a mythological character soothes and heals the sadness and hopelessness of the profane experience.

Venus retrograde individuals often find it difficult to relate to superficial social values and consequently have what they assume are problems in relationships. It is not relationships *per se* that are a problem, but how they were experienced in their formative years. The lens through which relationships are viewed is predisposed to an ideal, which is not what happens in real life. Therefore the wounds of Venus retrograde people are usually exacerbated by what is actually experienced in their environment.

Nadia

In Nadia's chart, there is a stellium of six planets in the seventh house, including Mercury conjunct Pluto conjunct Venus retrograde - all at 3° Virgo. The stellium is contained between Uranus at 18° Leo, and Mars at zero Libra (see [fig. 5.6](#)). With Aquarius rising and Moon in Scorpio conjunct Neptune, one would correctly assume that a degree of independence and secrecy was inherent in Nadia's nature, but the degree to which it conflicted with the heavily tenanted seventh house became an issue for her. When Venus' natural house contains a majority of planets, relationship plays a greater role in ego development, and inner conflict can be projected upon the partner. The complex of Venus retrograde and its dualistic nature added to the already ambivalent feelings that had begun to well up in her at the time of our consultation.

Nadia came for a chart-reading at the time her progressed direct Venus was back at the natal degree, which heralded the rediscovery of her submerged personal values. The apparent reason for the consultation was to talk about separating from her husband - who had become her friend rather than lover - and moving into her own place. The unconscious factor emerged in the course of the session; she was to discover how vastly separated from her personal values she had become and how she could best reconnect with them.

She was the youngest of three children by fourteen years and was raised virtually as an only child. Her father, an alcoholic, was very ill, and her mother became totally identified, indeed fused, with Nadia, treating her as a 'substitute father', a most unusual and very confusing role reversal for a young girl who later had to fight for separation from her mother. Her father stopped drinking when her progressed Venus stationed and turned direct at sixteen, which is when she left home to pursue her career.

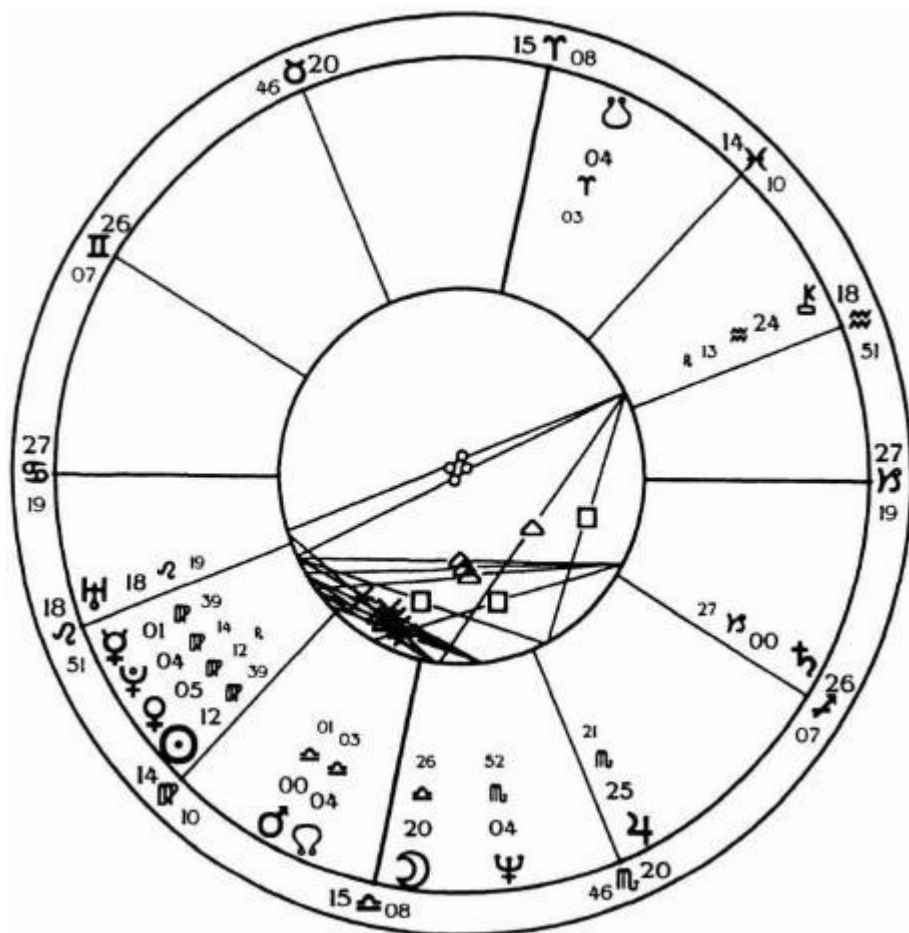


Fig. 5.6 Nadia

She claimed to hate relationships because of their confining qualities. She seemed unable to deal in specifics and spoke, instead, in universal terms, masking her fear of facing what might simply be an incompatibility between herself and her husband. She had developed a global defence as a life philosophy - 'I hate relationships' - rather than voicing particulars such as, 'I am not satisfied with the quality of this specific relationship or the degree of personal satisfaction that I experience within it.' Through exploring the Venus retrograde experience, she was more capable of understanding the ambivalence of her inner feelings and found that her fear of identifying specific issues masked deep denial of her own validity as a person.

MOVEMENT OF VENUS BY SECONDARY PROGRESSION

As previously noted, Venus in either station (retrograde or direct) will resonate the Golden Section. Therefore, loosely applied, the progressed stations will resonate to the Platonic concept of the ideal plane. So, psychologically, this then translates as the surfacing or awareness of an exalted sense of perfection and a hope to achieve perfect harmony through love, study or art.

Progressed station-retrograde: Because Venus is direct for such long periods of time it is possible never to experience its station and retrogression by secondary progression in a lifetime. Should it do so, however, then the individual will find that it inaugurates a new cycle of values. As with all progressed planets and aspects, its effects are subtle and operate as a thematic backdrop for the more actively manifest transits. It may be that the station-point itself is unremarkable, but the progression is triggered by transits to the natal Venus or transits of outer planets to the natal chart which stimulate the progressed Venus into action.

If Venus should station and turn retrograde by secondary progression, two significant years ahead to note will be: first, the year it passes back over the natal degree, if it does, and second, the year when it will conjoin the progressed Sun in the inferior conjunction, about twenty years after the station. Within those two stipulations there are two more refinements to consider.

1. If the natal Venus is *before* the degree at which inferior conjunction will take place, it is entirely possible that the progressed Venus will never reach the degree it was at birth because it is about twenty to twenty-four days from the degree at which it will conjoin the Sun to the stationary-retrograde point, and yet another twenty or so days to inferior retrograde conjunction. The order of progressed points in this case is as follows: the planet first reaches

inferior conjunction, then it progresses back to the degree at which it was natively.

2. If the natal Venus is *past* the degree at which inferior conjunction will occur, then the sequence is thus: first, progressed Venus passes back over the natal degree, then it reaches progressed inferior conjunction. The station-year itself could precipitate withdrawal from what has been a lifelong affinity, and a completely new way of perceiving one's creative essence slowly emerges. All the ingrained teachings that have been summarily adopted are likely to begin to falter and one is then required to turn inward to explore one's own central value. All the values which have not originated from one's own core fall away, becoming pale and superficial, prompting a change in the motivation underlying the formation of relationships and the establishment of values and mores. Often there is some specific event or circumstance which, upon reflection, appears to have precipitated the inversion.

Over the few years following the progressed station and retrogression, naturally extraverted people may find themselves increasingly discouraged with the external world and its pleasures, becoming cynical and withdrawn until they become more accustomed to the new way of perceiving their environment. Introverted types on the other hand, may find themselves pleased to discover that they were not wrong after all, and that the great well-spring of love and joy *is* internal. In either case, the interior world becomes richer and more meaningful, imparting a greater sense of satisfaction in being alone with oneself. The ego becomes easier to appease, less in need of external approval and more centred on self-creative aspects.

A shell might form around Venus, protecting it from outside perturbations, creating a container for healing a wound. Usually the wound is one which occurred early in life and is only recalled at the turning-point, as Venus begins slowly to backtrack past the degrees in the zodiac over which it had been moving direct since birth. One may revisit one's past in this way, correcting imbalances and impurities which have polluted one's sense of integrity. A self-correcting device is always triggered upon the station-retrograde of a planet, and one may not even realize the degree to which one had deviated from the central path.

If progressed Venus moves back over the natal degree before reaching the progressed conjunction with the Sun, repressed but inherent values are reawakened and begin to surface at a fairly early age. It becomes apparent in that year that certain values are misplaced, and one begins to abandon a life which is not fulfilling. The year begins a search for a 'lost self'. One's taste, values and needs are often drastically altered in the course of that year, followed by a quiet retreat into oneself. People have remarked that the year was noteworthy because of some kind of emotional revelation or relationship, which changed their life and felt more true and personally real to them. To summarize, the station-retrograde occurs in the first twenty or so years of one's life. Then, progressed retrograde Venus will eventually meet the progressed Sun in the inferior conjunction. With this order of things, an unconscious recollection of inherent values emerges to become wedded with what one has learned over time, and one finds one's lost self, buried in the rays of the Sun.

If the station-retrograde occurs after mid-life, or in the years from the late thirties into the forties, it can mark a time of gathering together all that one has learned and compiling it into a great work. In the years immediately after Venus' station-retrograde, naturally creative people will find an abrupt change in focus or technique, throwing all past assumptions about their work into a state of chaos and resulting in a re-evaluation of it. This may be the beginning of the *magnum opus*, when the sum and total of one's life work is brought to bear in a single focus. In this case, Venus may never progress to cross back over the natal degree in the course of the life, but meets with the progressed Sun about twenty years after its station resulting in a progressed inferior conjunction. (The natal Venus would then be in a much earlier degree than the degree in which inferior conjunction occurs.)

When the progressed Sun and Venus meet in the inferior conjunction late in life, one may encounter a soul mate when one least expects it. The transsexual nature of the inferior conjunction, the marriage of Venus with the Sun and the symbolic transformation into the man-woman, can literally mean the transformation of the ego into a non-sexual identity. Beyond a certain age, there is no stress on gender roles, and a meeting of souls is truly transcendent of physical and material matter.

Recall that the Aztecs and Maya placed great emphasis on the point at which Venus first became visible in the dawn sky, when she made her appearance after having undergone the mystery rites. It was said that this was the time of the unveiling - with Venus about 10° behind the Sun after the inferior conjunction - when her light-bearing qualities and illumination were beginning to advance towards their most brilliant. In natal astrology this seems to bear out, that people also take their time in 'showing their new self' after the death and rebirth at the inferior conjunction.

Progressed station-direct: Because Venus is retrograde for approximately forty to forty-three days, it will turn direct by secondary progression at some point in the 'first half' of life, that is, as or before one hits the mid-life transition. Depending on how late in the retrograde cycle one is born, Venus may or may not pass back over the natal degree in direct motion.

1. If the natal Venus is in the *first* half of the retrograde cycle (i.e., before the inferior conjunction), it will achieve the progressed inferior conjunction at an early age, and then be followed by progressed Venus stationing-direct about twenty to twenty-two years later.

2. If the natal Venus is in the *latter* half of the retrograde cycle (i.e., after the inferior conjunction), then progressed Venus will station-direct before the age of twenty-two and will reach heliacal rising before age thirty. If one is born right at the inferior conjunction, progressed Venus will not pass direct over the natal place until around age forty-five or so.

When Venus is retrograde natively, the ability to relate to people on a superficial level is almost non-existent and the world of relationships and values is viewed through either an exalted lens or a jaded glass - the body and its physical, visceral needs is highly responsive and primitive, while the philosophy is often in conflict. It is more difficult to reconcile Urania with Pandemos, and there is often a dichotomy between one's desires and beliefs until a degree of maturity or experience is achieved. The characteristic to mythologize, symbolize and lend universal terms to very human and specific needs is epitomized by those with Venus retrograde.

The progressed station-direct of Venus symbolizes a time of emergence from a secret place wherein all sorts of mysterious alchemical processes have been under way. Recall the emergence of the Aztec-Maya Venus from the retrograde phase. She had been transformed into a male god, mated with the underworld goddess of love and birthed a sky creature. Married to the Sun she finally emerged restored as the Warrior Queen ready to lead armies.

The first six or seven years after direction are unstable, uncertain times for Venus retrograde individuals. There has been a level of inner turbulence and insecurity around their values, and their relevance to the world around, which the direction of Venus alone will not alter. The focus should be on transits and aspects to natal Venus during the years following the direction.

It is a volatile Venus that turns direct. Largely because of its lifetime of defences there is often a feeling of having been stripped of those mechanisms once Venus begins progressed forward motion. This can be both a relief and a problem. It is a relief because it is now possible to be more open, direct and confident, but a problem because one is not accustomed to living life without a set of defence rules and boundaries. Undoing habitual justifications and dropping one's shield is not easily accomplished and 'going direct' can be just as problematic as being instinctively defensive, internal and armoured.

The progressed direction of Venus can, however, be likened to liberation. One client who was born under the inferior conjunction said the year of her progressed direction was the highlight of her life. It coincided with her ordination into a religious community which takes her around the world to serve third-world countries in critical distress. At the age of twenty-three she felt she was finally free to move out of her cloistered set of values and share her selfishly guarded secret love of divinity.

By whatever mechanism the cluster of private, sacred, interior values has remained apart from the profane world of ordinary mortals, and whatever defence has been erected to sequester one's deepest spiritual feelings about one's inner self, these barriers begin to erode at Venus' progressed direct station, allowing a tighter meshing of the inner and outer life.

Well-known people with Venus retrograde:

Muhammad Ali (also SA, UR, JU, PL retrograde)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (singleton)

Johannes Brahms (also SA retrograde singleton)

Pearl S. Buck

Charlie Chaplin

Winston Churchill (also NE, PL, UR retrograde)

Adolf Hitler

Alan Leo (also MA, NE, PL retrograde)

Gustav Mahler (also MA, NE retrograde)

Peter Paul Rubens

Socrates

C. C. Zain

PART THREE

THE SUPERIOR PLANETS RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

6

THE CYCLE OF SUPERIOR PLANETS

Fig. 1.3 (p. II) is a model of the geocentric view of retrogression, with the retrograde superior planet set 'in place' relative to the transiting Sun's position. In order that the dynamics of retrogression may be fully appreciated, both natively and in transit, I shall reiterate the cycle according to a twelve-stage cyclic viewpoint. In the conjunction of the Sun with a superior planet, through opposition and back to the conjunction we see a rhythm, a resonance of motion which defines the aspects between the Sun and superior planets.

1. Conjunction (direct): When the Sun and superior planet are in conjunction, we cannot see the planet because it is longitudinally in the same degree of the zodiac as the Sun and obliterated by solar rays. (It may not necessarily be parallel in declination, however, which is an important consideration when a planet and the Sun are in exact conjunction because declination determines whether or not the planet is occulting or 'eclipsing' the Sun.) The planet is moving at its quickest. At this annual point, which occurs slightly later in the calendar year each time, a blend of energy occurs which sets the tone for the subsequent cycle of motion for each planet.

The only superior planet which differs slightly from the following paradigm is Mars, which is the only superior planet whose trine from the Sun occurs *just prior* to its station-retrograde and *just after* its station-direct. Otherwise, the motion theory is valid. Mars' cycle is treated in depth in [chapter 17](#).

2. Sextile (direct): The superior planet is visible just after sunset when the Sun is in the dexter sextile to the superior planet. Its motion is average. The Sun is two signs ahead of the superior planet.

3. Square (direct): By the time the dexter square from the Sun to superior planet occurs, the planet is losing direct motion momentum and therefore appears to slow down. It is preparing for the station-retrograde.

4. Station-retrograde (apparently motionless): At the station-retrograde the planet is virtually at a standstill, and has appeared so for a couple of weeks. Its power has become concentrated and its apparently inert station creates a sense of impending change, but the quality of the change is unknown. The mood of a station-retrograde is one of suspense.

The few days just prior to the station are often eventful or psychologically tense. Essentially, the Sun now begins to dominate the planet; the planet's principles and energy are inverted and become subversive. The planet deviates and develops acentrically, often operating in the individual in deeply unconscious ways which become conscious later, at the opposition, and again at the station-direct point.

A planet's distance from the Sun when it stations-retrograde can be predicted as follows (see also [fig. 1.4](#), p. 14)

Mars: 138° (note the Sun trine has occurred 15-20 days prior)

Jupiter: 117°

Saturn: 109°

Uranus: 102°

Neptune: 102°

Pluto: 99°.

5. Stationary-retrograde trine (retrograde and accelerating): After the station-retrograde, the planet slowly begins to gather momentum as it accelerates towards the opposition. At the trine, the suspense of the station is broken, and the trine often acts as the 'trigger' for events. The Sun 'collects' the energy of the stationing planet and manifests it. After the trine has passed, the retrograde motion has been absorbed and the effects are stabilized.

6. Accelerating quincunx (retrograde): The planet is gaining retrograde momentum at this juncture, as the Sun moves towards the opposition to the planet.

7. Opposition (retrograde): At this point in the cycle the superior planet is moving about two thirds as fast as it is when in conjunction with the Sun. This is the fastest motion of the retrograde cycle, and it releases the tension of the first half of the cycle. With the Sun trotting forward as usual and the superior planet retrogressing, they meet to confront issues that have been suspended since the station. The cycle changes tone and phase as Earth is posited between the Sun and the superior planet. It is worth checking the

declination of Sun and planet to see if they are parallel - coupled with longitudinal opposition this would be particularly powerful.

8. Decelerating quincunx (retrograde): The planet is now losing momentum steadily as it heads towards the stationary-direct trine, just prior to its station.

9. Stationary-direct trine (retrograde and decelerating): The planet is now virtually at a standstill again, but retrogressing by minutes of arc. The Sun collects the product of the retrograde cycle and loads the planet station with restrained energy. The mood around the stationary-direct trine is one of suppressed intensity - compulsion with no direction - and one has the feeling of captivity. The tension is subjugated excitement which sets the tone for what will be released or revealed at the station-direct.

The number of days before the station-direct that the trine from the Sun to the planet will occur is roughly the same as for the stationary-retrograde trine.

10. Station-direct (apparently motionless): The planet appears to stop. As it turns direct, the mood is one of disorientation, of liberty with no direction. Gradually, over the subsequent days of direction, issues become clear. The manumission of the planet from the Sun's domination can create a sense of hysteria around events and in psychological responses. This is a highly reactive phase, which can discharge erratic energy and temporarily create chaos. The Sun has continued to move in its regular apparent motion, but its position relative to the superior planet has triggered that planet's direction. The planet is liberated, but with no containment.

The manifestation of the entire retrograde cycle may take weeks

to develop. It is often the square from the Sun which brings about the time in which practical reform might occur.

11. Square (direct): Now the Sun has moved to square the superior planet. At this point, the planet is accelerating in direct motion, but the Sun is still closing in on it from behind - from three signs back in the zodiac. This occurs for each planet, other than Mars, in a cyclic fashion:

(Mars: is *trined* by the Sun 15-20 days *after* the station-direct)

Jupiter: 28 days

Saturn: 20 days

Uranus: 14-15 days

Neptune: 12 days

Pluto: 6-8 days in Taurus; 13-14 days in Scorpio (the extremes of Pluto's eccentric orbit).

The trine of Sun to Mars produces the drama for which its station-direction is known. The rest of the superior planets receive the sobering square from the Sun after the station-direct. The subsequent period is the result of the entire retrograde phase, when the practical aims of the annual review become incorporated into the daily stream of life.

12. Sextile (direct): The sextile from the Sun to the superior planet as it heads back to the conjunction foreshadows the seeding at the next conjunction. At that time it is two signs behind the superior planet.

Successive conjunctions of superior planets with the Sun take place slightly later each calendar year:

Mars: about 26 months

Jupiter: 1 month

Saturn: 13 days

Uranus: 4 days

Neptune: 2 days

Pluto: 1-2 days.

SOLAR ASPECTS IN THE RETROGRADE ZONE

As already stated in [chapter 1](#), there is a limited number of aspects formed between the Sun and a retrograde superior planet: the trine, sesquiquadrate, quincunx and opposition. Bracketed by the stationary-retrograde and stationary-direct trines are the two types of quincunx and sesquiquadrate (see [fig. 1.3](#), p. 11).

The Sun creates the atmosphere of the aspect made to the planet. Since we see the Sun's motion as relatively constant, it is the superior planet's movement that appears markedly different throughout the retrograde phase. It is this *apparent* speed of motion that lends 'personality' to the retrograde planet in question. Also, the fact that it is the *Sun* and planet making the aspect, and that the planet is invariably retrograde in that aspect, changes the quality and manifestation of the aspect. For example, the interpretation for Venus opposite Pluto, or Jupiter trine Mars, does not stipulate whether either of the planets involved is retrograde. They may or may not be. The aspects themselves - trine, sesquiquadrate, quincunx or opposition - all have

their inherent qualities, but when the Sun is involved in those aspects the superior planet is retrograde, adding a special feature to the behaviour or manifestation of the aspect.

The power of any aspect is increased with the exactitude of the orb. Since it is already clear that a retrograde planet is implicitly in aspect with the Sun, in the sense that the phenomenon of retrogression is meaningless without taking the Sun into consideration, the exactitude of a classical aspect strengthens the contact and heightens the intensity and power of manifestation.

The more distant a planet is from the Sun, the more prolonged and profound the stationary period and all subsequent aspects. This increases the intensity of the inner experience of the planet. Although controversy rages about the interpretation of retrogrades, it seems generally agreed among astrologers that the stations are of particular importance and hold a significant quality of power. *Therefore, a Sun-to-planet trine has different properties from any other combination of planets in trine.*

With respect to the social planets - Mars, Jupiter and Saturn - the retrograde function itself, and exact aspects with the Sun, are directly related to relationships with others within family and society, and are often more obviously manifest in the personality than are the outer planets. As fully explained in [chapters 11-13](#), Uranus, Neptune and Pluto retrograde may not be as evident in obvious personality traits unless there is an aspect with the Sun, or with one of the other personal planets.

Because the motion of the outer planets is so slow and their retrograde periods lengthy - covering only a few degrees of arc over a period of about five months - much controversy surrounds their interpretation in the natal chart. I tend towards the conservative end of the spectrum and would not lay down a definitive description of what Uranus, Neptune or Pluto 'mean' when they are retrograde in the horoscope. However, when one of those planets is within a close orb of aspect from the Sun, then it is a personalized statement about the individual's purpose in life in relation to a collective movement, statement, goal or ideal. The potential for strong ego identification with a collective force is enhanced when the natal Sun is in direct contact with a trans-Saturnian planet.

The other, more difficult, manifestation of Sun contacts to retrograde outer planets is unconscious compulsiveness, when the ego becomes identified with mass psychology and is therefore not a true representative of the inner Self, being bound up with compulsive behaviour rather than conscious, individual choice. However, the individual could very well be a genuine voice of the collective if other considerations in the horoscope support that ability. We shall see examples of such individuals who have had tremendous impact on the collective, with exact aspects from the Sun to retrograde Uranus, Neptune or Pluto.

The Sun's sign and house and the sign and house of the retrograde planet, as well as aspects between the Sun and the retrograde planet, are all significant factors in analysing what the inner Self intends the individual to develop and externalize. What follows is an interpretation of the aspects that the Sun makes to a superior planet in the course of the planet's retrograde period. By incorporating the symbolism of planet, sign and house, a clearer understanding is gained of how to employ one's will to activate and exploit retrograde planetary energy.

In order fully to appreciate the evolutionary approach to retrograde aspects, we move from the station-retrograde, to the stationary-retrograde trine, to the opposition, and on to the stationary-direct trine.

If your computer-program chart-wheel shows 'SR' for stationary-retrograde or 'SD' for stationary-direct, the exact day is being indicated. If the stations are a few days before or after birth, the only indicator will be 'R' for retrograde, with no indicator for direct, even though it might be the day before the retrograde station or the day after the direct station. It will still be necessary to look in the ephemeris, therefore, to see if the planet concerned is in fact within two or three days of a station. Being born exactly on the day of a station only coincides with the orb of a trine in the case of Jupiter, whose station is within 6° of the Sun trine to it.

It is possible to hazard a guess as to whether the planet is stationing by knowing the patterns of each superior planet, which are repeatedly emphasized in this book. However, there are slight variations in the number of days, so we must still refer to our ephemerides. Even with that in mind, how might we define a stationary planet? Technically, it is only for an hour or so in twenty-four hours that the planet actually appears motionless. For the sake of interpretation, however, allow at least three days on either side (I often allow six), although the intensity of the station increases with exactitude, as do all types of aspect.

Stations

Station-retrograde: The station-retrograde constitutes a short circuit which can deprive the individual of the potential to externalize the energy inherently associated with the stationing planet. Unless there are other aspects that facilitate or channel the energy outward, it implodes, resulting in an internal force that draws

energy inward from the environment or from other people. One often finds it difficult if not impossible to express oneself to one's satisfaction. This can result in obsessive or compulsive types of behaviour, or dedication to rigorous detailed work which through its thoroughness satisfies one's sense of completion and success. The only superior planet found natively in the stationary-retrograde position which will turn direct by secondary progression is Mars - very late in life - between sixty-five and seventy-five years of age.

The single most important factor to consider is that the stationary planet - with the exception of Mars - will be trined by the progressed Sun in the person's youthful years, constellating power and assisting in directing it outward. If the station is exact, the progressed Sun trine to Jupiter occurs between ages three and five; to Saturn, twelve; to Uranus, between seventeen and twenty; to Neptune and Pluto, between nineteen and twenty-two. The year in which the trine occurs is the optimum year for release; contacting the internalized energy and discovering avenues for expression can result in the stationary-retrograde planet becoming a powerful vehicle for the ego as the individual continues to mature.

One could say that the stationary-retrograde natal planet was the autistic member of the family - present but not accountable. It may be that it remains mute and unborn all of one's life, but there are usually many other factors to consider which do not paralyse the whole person, only that one aspect of the psyche. Of all other astrological signatures, the most significant is the power of the progressed trine from the Sun, which can 'collect' energy and give birth to it, providing a solid vehicle for the ego and creating a powerful channel through which the person may learn creative means of self-expression. The years between birth and the progressed Sun trine could be viewed as the 'incubation period' during which an interior and often quite unconscious gestation is occurring. The awakening at the Sun trine can coincide with the discovery of a special quality that the person may have been aware of but perhaps had no capacity to realize until this time. With conscious effort, maturity and specialization in the areas associated with the stationary planet, the Sun trine can become a unique area of artistry and talent, and a channel through which genius may be expressed.

Station-direct: A natal planet sitting in the precise station-direct has already constellated a great amount of power and is virtually trembling for an avenue for expression. Unless there are other aspects to the planet that promote a channel for the energy, such as a trine from Mercury or a trine or sextile with Saturn, Mars or Jupiter, then it is likely to have little grounding in the early years of one's life.

The position marks an Achilles' heel - a divine weakness which, if unprotected, leaves the individual open to attack in that area. Whereas the station-retrograde rendered the planet over-bound, encapsulated and entombed, the station-direct is fully formed but infantile, with weak, if any, boundaries. The years between birth and the progressed Sun's first major aspect to the planet are experimental, and often tangential to the eventual direction and purpose the individual experiences upon embodying the maverick energy.

For Mars, the first aspect from the progressed Sun is the trine, which occurs somewhere between ages fifteen and twenty, and serves to help create an arena for playing out the high-intensity drive inherent in the stationary-direct Mars; a young person might suddenly find a direction, as if awakening from a long sleep. The progressed Sun trine gives the rampant energy an ego focus, a place to shine and a sense of organization, collecting itself and becoming increasingly directed in the years following.

With all the other superior planets, the first progressed Sun aspect is the square to the stationary-direct planet. If the planet is Saturn, then the square occurs at around age twenty, coinciding with the natural rite of passage at the transiting Saturn square to itself at twenty-one. The progressed Sun squares Jupiter at age twenty-eight, coinciding with the progressed lunar return at twenty-seven and a half and heralding the Saturn return at twenty-nine. For Uranus, the progressed Sun square occurs around age fourteen or fifteen, the turbulent adolescent years marked by the transiting Saturn opposite natal Saturn. Neptune is squared by the progressed Sun at the age of twelve, and Pluto varies widely because of its high orbital inclination to the ecliptic. Depending on its sign, Pluto receives the square from the progressed Sun between the ages of six and fourteen. When Pluto is in Taurus, Gemini and Cancer, the square occurs about age six to eight, but not till age twelve when Pluto is in Virgo and Libra. In Scorpio, Sagittarius and Capricorn it occurs at age thirteen to fourteen - right in the mid-adolescent years.

The year of the square will be marked by a confrontation between the developing ego and the still uncontained stationary planet. What may be inherently a rebellious, anarchistic trait could be also the source of great originality, with proper containment. The year in which the square occurs may well be an opportunity to contain the undifferentiated energy and find a tangible means of using potential power and authority.

Paul

Paul's situation illustrates the power of stations and the progressed movement. Without taking into consideration all the many other active astrological signatures, we shall only examine his experiences around his stationary Jupiter and Saturn.

Paul was born with the Sun at 22°; 56' Aries in the third house, Jupiter at 28° 56' Sagittarius in the eleventh house, and Saturn at 15° 47' Leo in the seventh house. Both Saturn and Jupiter were virtually motionless, moving only a minute or so of arc per day. Jupiter was closest to its station-retrograde, and reached it in Paul's third year. By that time it was apparent that Paul was experiencing great difficulty in communicating (and with a third house Sun!); he could not make himself understood and his parents were becoming extremely concerned. If he wanted something, he was unable to make himself understood as his words garbled, so he devised a pictograph system: basically, he drew what he wanted to say. He also contrived a symbolic language and drew figures, glyphs and ciphers by which to communicate. Paul recalls he was obsessed with north Africa, Egyptian themes and the pyramids at the rather precocious age of three and four; clearly his 'language' was hieroglyphic. His family, however, thought he was defective.

Between the ages of four and five, the station-years of Jupiter, Paul underwent speech therapy. He remembers it clearly as a time of great frustration and apparently, according to an aunt, 'failed' his pre-school class at age five. He was put into a special class with those who had emotional and learning disabilities and the teacher touched something deep within Paul, reaching the aspect of him that had remained encapsulated.

Following that, a remarkable turn of events occurred. In the next year, his sixth, the progressed Sun made the post-station trine to his Jupiter retrograde and Saturn stationed-direct. Paul made a major breakthrough, his 'problem' cleared up and his scholastic and communication skills soared. By the end of the first year of school he was on his way to being an excellent student, as indeed he was through university and postgraduate school.

The inversion of Jupiter coupled with the release of Saturn to direct motion, all tied in with the developing ego-Sun, served to break the tension. Jupiter station-retrograde at age three had internalized Paul's sense of social awareness to such a degree that his family were alerted to his withdrawal, precipitating concern. By the time the progressed Sun trined the planet, he was finding ways of externalizing his knowledge and skills. In that experience, coupled with the station of Saturn-direct, Paul embodied his wavering ego. He said he felt he had really only 'incarnated' around the age of six, and until then was hovering around his body. There was an inner awakening in Paul when Saturn turned direct that he described as 'a dramatic shift in social awareness fostered by the ministrings of the pre-school teacher and speech therapist; finally something broke through to me.'

The next major aspect to follow Saturn's station-direct was the progressed Sun square to natal Saturn, at the age of twenty-four, eighteen years later. By that time Paul had graduated from school, entering university to complete a BA degree major in history, with a minor in literature. In his twenty-fourth year he emigrated. Paul went on to complete an MA in psychology, recalling that when he was six he had decided he wanted to be a psychiatrist.

Today Paul is a teacher of astrology, a counsellor and a prolific writer in his field. By nature an extravert he is orally fluent and speaks publicly with great ease, but he finds it painful and frustrating to write, as if the process is disgorging something deep within himself which is unformed and dead, needing resurrection. The Jupiter station still operates natively, as does the Saturn station, but the infant's unconscious association with ancient hieroglyphs and symbolic language has become a working system for Paul as an adult. So, the progressed movements do not change the natal aspect - that remains the seed - but the evolution and maturation of the seed is shown dramatically as the Sun continues its decisive motion, drawing the retrogression and direction of planets through the classical formations.

Classical aspects

Stationary-retrograde trine: (Orb 5-6° on either side of exactitude.) The stationary-retrograde trine is marked by the stillness of the superior planet. It has been slowing down for about a month and - with the sole exception of Mars - any superior planet in a trine with the Sun is at its slowest motion *and* retrograde. The general complacency that is associated with the trine angle is more than enhanced: it is the epitome of quiet, powerful accomplishment.

The planet will not turn direct in the course of one's life and remains retrograde by secondary progression; as the Sun progresses a day for a year, the planet will slowly continue to retrogress. However, two significant progressed times are possible. The first is when the progressed Sun reaches the accelerating

quincunx to the planet. This marks a major turning-point in one's life and requires a hard look at one's ability to reclaim power. It coincides with developing maturity, and occurs between the ages of thirty and about forty. The second major aspect is the opposition of the progressed Sun to the progressed retrograde planet, followed by the opposition to the natal retrograde planet within a couple of years. This occurs thirty years after the progressed Sun quincunxes the natal retrograde planet (see section on Opposition). The stationary-retrograde trine confers an inner stillness and centredness which allows for a graceful flow of energy between the solar will and the planet involved. Though not energetic and powerful in an active sense, the aspect is highly productive and can offer the individual a strong inner sense of spiritual direction. It is a fundamentally lucky aspect; with little effort one's will provides a stable vehicle with which to direct matters pertaining to the planet, and the universe seems to comply with that effort. Often, opportunities will arise at the right moment, and it then becomes a matter of choice as to whether or not one will act on them. Without the necessary effort (as with any trine) life just seems to flow along and the worst effect that results is a feeling of boredom or restlessness, with no external stimulation to energize the Sun trine. This seems characteristic of both station trines, but this one has the power of introspection and self-generating energy. The trine is by nature a highly social aspect, but it conflicts with the internalization function of retrogression resulting in an internal dialogue, if not outright conflict, over using the potential energy in an overtly outgoing way. The aspect does need others to ignite the creative impulse, but the inversion of energy symbolized by the stationary-retrograde function cringes from invasion. It often takes maturity to know when to draw the line between freedom and closeness.

Stationary planets contain suspended power; this trine has locked within it a sense of uncertainty about the future and whether or not one's inner dreams and plans will ever come to pass. There can be a deep frustration with timing and distrust of the future, manifesting in apathy and depression. The trine confers a rich imagination and powers of fantasy along with a high degree of inner vision about future possibility, but it requires conscious effort to externalize the imagination. Though the dream might presage the actuality, it must be embodied or remain for ever in the non-productive, frustrating domain of potential. Unless other factors in the horoscope encourage application, stress, will and pragmatic use, the trine remains a static aspect, a comfortable cushion against harsh reality.

By the time the planet in question is within orb of a trine, it has begun to pick up speed as it heads towards the quincunx and opposition. In the natal chart this poses an even greater sense of conflict and may manifest in manic phases of activity followed by debilitating depressions. One's ego is torn between a double message from the planet - to foster and energize extraverted activity, or withdraw into an interior world where no risks are necessary.

Isadora Duncan, the beautiful and talented iconoclast who embodied a new form of dance had Sun in 5° Gemini trine to the stationary-retrograde Jupiter in Aquarius at 7°. Her unorthodox, exuberant, yet tragic life was ended by her scarf catching in the wire wheel of an open-topped roadster as it accelerated, snapping her neck.

Elvis Presley had the Sun in 17° Capricorn in the stationary-retrograde trine to Neptune at 14° Virgo. Unlike Shirley Maclaine who has the stationary-direct trine to Neptune, Elvis could not pour out his spiritual malaise, but introverted it and treated it pharmaceutically. He died of drug poisoning though he remained vocally perfect until one week before his death.

Accelerating quincunx: (Orb 2-3° on either side of exactitude.) The keyword most often applied to the quincunx aspect is 'adjustment'. When the Sun is quincunx to a superior planet, this is particularly so. The ancients thought the semi-sextile and the quincunx aspects to be especially pernicious because the planets could not 'see' each other - their aspect was mysterious, hidden and therefore malefic. In fact their positions were not confluent or even antagonistic, but simply out of round. A feeling of entrapment may accompany this quincunx; the superior planet is beginning to speed up towards the opposition from the Sun. Symbolically, this motion represents a feeling of being thwarted by the world, and the ego can be weakened by repeated challenges from areas in life that are symbolized by the houses in which the aspect occurs in the chart. The planet involved in a quincunx from the Sun is representative of the unconscious psychological complex which compels the person to examine, repeatedly, what is being held back, suppressed or obstructed.

There seems always to be a checkpoint in ego expression, as if one needs to be on constant alert lest a hint from the environment is missed. An intense desire to rush headlong into activity is often brought up short against one's own feelings of inadequacy. Rather than being spurred on by this inherent challenge a feeling of stuckness and depression may be created, resulting in lack of will and reduced life-force. Unlike the

decelerating quincunx, there is more of a feeling that the environment, rather than the divine source, is impeding one's freedom of choice. In fact, it is indeed more likely to be the circumstances and conditions in one's external life that dole out the spiritual message, than the inner divine daimon. It seems essential that one become aware that choices are proffered in an experiential fashion and the more nimble one becomes at adapting to environmental situations, the quicker one is to achieving the goal.

The ego might have bigger plans for development than the quincunx allows, hence the frustration when people with this aspect run up against unforeseen obstacles in their quest for success. This may in part stem from the deeply unconscious collective goals or standards set by the family and endorsed by the father, which in turn appear in the world as rigid, uncompromising conditions with which one must cope. The family 'myth' must often be broken down and reconstellated around stories and styles more appropriate to the individual. When the progressed Sun reaches the trine to the planet at about age thirty a breakthrough year is indicated and, coupled with the Saturn-return and other transiting aspects, marks a release for the incubating talents.

Very often the quincunx problem crops up in a vocational sense, in the work sphere, or in the body as illness. These external alert systems are designed to bolster one's sense of purpose in life. A battle occurs between the ego-Self-Sun and the World-as-it-is (rather than as it seems to be), and if it is felt as a social cause it can add a tremendous badge of courage to the person who wears this aspect. The aspect can, therefore, be found in the charts of extremely canny people, who excel in manipulating their environment and who shoulder the challenge of taking on the world with all its hurdles and obstacles.

Jane Fonda used her stardom as a political club during the Vietnam War, and insulted many fans by her endorsement of the North Vietnamese, for which twenty years later she apologised. She has the Sun at 29° Sagittarius in the accelerating quincunx to Pluto at 29° Cancer. Her issues around the body (she is a self-confessed bulimic - Sun/Pluto) resulted in her famous aerobic exercise tapes and books and promotion of health and fitness. She remains politically ambitious, and continues to struggle against any oppression, quixotic as she might appear to be in her affiliations.

Opposition: (Orb 6° or so on either side of exactitude.) At the opposition the superior planet is moving almost as quickly (about two thirds as fast) as it does during its conjunction with the Sun. This motion adds a quality of impulsiveness to an aspect that would seem to contradict the retrograde function. The tension in a Sun-planet opposition is terrific and the ambivalence and inner struggle intense. The opposition between two planets always brings an awareness of polarities and dichotomies, but the retrograde opposition from the Sun greatly exacerbates that experience. The natural function of the opposition aspect is to bring perspective by awareness of other-ness, and it contains excellent potential for clarity and objectivity - not always the characteristic strengths of retrograde planets.

The argument between introversion and expulsion of energy is often wounding at the very core of an individual's psyche. It is in this aspect that the greatest damage can be done; perhaps this is what the enigmatic quote of John Dee's means (p. xi), that 'it [the station of a planet and its subsequent retrogression] will seem . . . to have done the equator a serious injury'. There is a central implosion that is countered synchronously with an urge to explode. This is what I would term a 'meltdown' aspect. Self-love and self-compassion are required in this aspect for there is a tendency towards self-hatred and feelings of deep inadequacy about one's capabilities which often diametrically oppose the reality of the situation. For the opposition brings with it superb powers of energy focus and direction, although the retrogression and the war between the Sun and the planet can deplete the stamina necessary to fulfil those potentials. Even when those potentials are actualized, one can feel that it was dumb luck, fate or some other self-effacing external cause rather than one's own talent that brought results.

The Sun battle creates a climate either of self-criticism or megalomania. This is the syzygy of ego and superego, where one's own strength of inner Self and true potential ability is in direct conflict with what one feels one must do in order to appease the family, society or some exalted purpose in life. Inflation is a pathology of the opposition aspect anyway, and when the Sun is involved there can be aggrandized fantasies of one's self-importance concurrent with a negation of one's true value.

The inner lack of confidence about one's abilities may be quite unrealistic, and striving for self-betterment and success frequently pays off. The year in which the progressed Sun forms the quincunx to the retrograde planet will mark a major attitude change and is often the time in which one finds one's direction relative to the planet's energies. (The quincunx will occur somewhere in one's mid-thirties, with the usual exception of Mars, which will occur in the mid-twenties.) When that progression takes place, major adjustments between

one's inner feelings of inadequacy and one's assessment of actual accomplishments occur, often with surprising results.

When the progressed Sun reaches the decelerating quincunx to the planet at around age thirty, the opportunity to challenge overtly the inhibition that is inherent in the opposition to the Sun, and to release much of the interior rage, presents itself. The developing ego finds ways of adjusting to the situation and begins to acquire skills, and one may feel that one can finally get on to something that utilizes the revolutionary drive.

Famous examples of Sun-superior planet oppositions are numerous, but a few illustrate this battle well.

Angela Davis, a black activist in the 1960s in

America, who was once on the FBI's most wanted list, currently teaches political science at a major mid-Western university. She has Sun in Aquarius opposite Pluto in Leo.

Carl Jung, psychoanalyst and philosopher, with Sun at 19° Leo opposite Saturn at 24° Aquarius (Sun also trine a stationary-direct Mars) developed the theory of the Shadow function and broke with Freud over his approach to the unconscious. He had a weak, religious father, and found in Freud another father to rebel against, which resulted in fathering his own school of thought.

Krishnamurti, with Sun in Taurus opposite Uranus in the ninth house, having found himself proclaimed Buddha incarnate, threw off the cloak of religious leadership and dissolved the foundation which he had established, shocking his followers and the Theosophical Foundation. He has said, 'Truth is a pathless land. Man cannot come to it through any organisation, through any creed, through any dogma, priest, ritual, nor through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique.' This quote exemplifies the Sun-Uranus opposition.

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Elizabeth Taylor has Sun in 8° Pisces opposite to Neptune in 6° Virgo. She became a projection of beauty for the American public, as well as a public example of identity confusion, marrying several times over. Her romantic life has always been public domain, as has her struggle with alcohol and drugs. Having survived all these vicissitudes, she established a drug-rehabilitation program, and supports AIDS research by active fund-raising.

Decelerating quincunx: (Orb 2-3° on either side of exactitude.) Major adjustments in perspective occur periodically, particularly when transits activate the quincunx, but inherently there is a tension that keeps one alert and aware of activity on one's periphery. The most extreme manifestation of this is paranoia - a fear that the world itself is a conspiracy to check one's direction and purpose in life. Exerting one's will is difficult with this quincunx because the ego runs up against issues in one's environment or even difficulties in health and the body. The quincunx provokes relinquishment of the will to power and there are often strong indications that one must comply with what appears to be a higher order. There may be pressure from the family, the father in particular, to conform to certain established standards which are in turn easily projected on to various systems of authority such as religious orders, political parties or social hierarchies. As with the accelerating quincunx, a feeling of being bound or trapped heightens the tension. The outer planet is beginning to slow down in preparation for stationary-direct motion. Symbolically, this motion results in feeling thwarted by the universe, and the ego can be weakened by repeated challenges from areas in life that are symbolized by the houses in the horoscope in which the aspect occurs. A tense excitement surrounds the potential to overcome an obstacle and transcend difficulties, but the energy to do this is often repressed or suspended. The mysteriousness of this quincunx adds an element of surprise to its manifestation; the ego-Self-Sun 'knows' its *moira* - its lot in life - but there is an underlying argument between what is fated and what the consciously developed ego desires. By listening to the inner voice and following the dictates of the inner master, one is then not fighting the world, but following a truly unique path.

Often people with this aspect feel as if they are in an enigmatic apprenticeship of some kind, to a master who will not disclose the purpose of it. Any sense of moral decay they sense around them should be focused inward, to examine their adherence to an uncharted path. They must grapple with the demons on a regular basis, undergoing repeated tests of faith and spiritual integrity.

This is an exciting aspect, with much potential; there is a feeling of being led along a path of destiny and being strongly, divinely inspired. This is particularly so if there are two quincunxes forming a yod from the Sun (see p. 139 for this special configuration), splitting the path between the sacred and the mundane. There is a heightened sense of awareness and a natural, instinctive sensitivity to subtle hints and nuances from the deeper Self which accord with the ego's need to break from the past and form new relationships within the

environment. There can be an inherent fear of stagnation which creates a sense of unrest, manifesting in quixotic behaviour and disrupting the status quo at every turn.

The decelerating quincunx is followed by the stationary-direct trine, which means that the progressed Sun will trine the planet involved at around age thirty, offering a vehicle for the restless, anxious energy. Depending on the planet, it is possible to see it station-direct later in life, bringing meaning and social relevance to the interior struggle for understanding of the mysteries of the world and its people.

Martin Luther King, the American Baptist minister who led the US toward racial integration in the 1960s, was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 1964. This man, who had fought for peace, the internalized warlord, was felled by an assassin's bullet in 1968 for his efforts. He had Sun in 25° Capricorn in the decelerating quincunx to Mars retrograde at 22° Gemini.

Stationary-direct trine: (Orb 5-6°, on either side of exactitude.) This aspect is marked by a sense of doldrums, as was the retrograde trine, with the difference that there is a psychological build-up, a sense of expectation, of something about to happen. A tense power and high degree of anticipation is the undercurrent energy between the Sun and the planet involved. People with this aspect often feel that they have a specific destiny to fulfil, but equally often suffer from a feeling that it is a destiny which will evade them. Other aspects from the Sun will help to clarify how their particular fate might be channelled. The house position of the retrograde planet will suggest what area in life needs greater objectivity and integration. If the aspect is exact, the Sun will progress to the point where the planet will station and turn direct fairly early in life (depending on the planet, before the age of twenty-three at the latest) and offer a release for the pent-up charge. With this aspect, it helps to keep in mind that the promise of this direct motion is encoded in the psyche, and that the individual's feelings of destiny and fate are not necessarily inflated or aggrandized, though still requiring practical measures to fulfil. However, the frustration of not immediately being able to satisfy such an inner urge can be acute. By nature, a trine is an aspect of grace and ease and is not designed for struggle. It therefore requires discipline to actualize and manifest goals. Locked within the stationary-direct trine is a conflict between the dream of the good life and the stage already reached, centred on the reality of how much work is required to embody that dream. This conflict can result in the lethargy which is conventionally associated with the trine. Laziness is less the problem though than being paralysed by problems around assertion. The natural exuberance of something about to be released is countered by the fact that the birth of that 'something' is yet to come. This aspect is akin to being in the birth canal, because all the required elements of production are complete, yet must emerge and be tested in the real world.

Bouts of depression and anger are often symptoms of deeper issues that centre around the need to channel the retrograde energy through the Sun trine in an extraverted and social fashion, which conflicts with the natural inclination of the retrograde planet to internalize its characteristics. The ego needs structure and form to display inner worth, which the trine alone does not provide. Extra effort is required to realize the potential inherent in the trine, but looking to the house in which the Sun is located helps to pinpoint where one will find the arena or stage to perform.

There are often difficulties with forming or maintaining psychological boundaries, particularly in the case of Sun-Saturn. At best, boundaries are muted, soft, or provisional. A feeling of being available for whatever might happen can weaken self-resolve and allow the external world to bleed into one's inner world more easily and with greater impact. Individuals with this aspect are prone to distraction and diversions, hopeful that the world will provide an exciting project or adventure for them to act out their inner need for dynamic activity. At worst, they are frenetic and anxious to overachieve and overindulge, burning off the excess of built-up energy. Often this aspect can appear in personalities who act as if they must accomplish something before the world ends.

The planet in this relationship with the Sun will station-direct within thirty years. Depending on the planet the aspect will mark the time in an individual's life when it becomes increasingly possible to reconcile and externalize the abundant energy and exuberance inherent in the Sun trine, which has been held in abeyance by retrogression. During the station all unrealized aspects of the planet's nature constellate in a tense psychic configuration, expelling into the environment. Depending on one's age, this will manifest in different ways socially, but one will definitely be assuming more responsibility for one's ego expression.

Shirley Madame has Sun at 4° Taurus in stationary-direct trine to Neptune at 9° Virgo (Neptune went direct in 1961 by secondary progression). She went Out on a Limb after her retrograde Jupiter stationed to turn direct in 1981. She poured forth her pent-up spiritualism and reached out to a mainstream audience with her tales from the other side.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross has a Sun—Pluto conjunction in Cancer in the stationary-direct trine to Saturn retrograde in the eighth house. She became discouraged, then dissatisfied and finally militant about the lack of respectful care of the dying. Her efforts raised the consciousness of the medical profession and the public, enabling hospice centres to be established worldwide, teaching people how to assist the terminally ill into death with dignity.

SPECIAL CONFIGURATIONS FORMED WITH THE SUN

Solar yod

When the Sun is the focal point at the inverse midpoint of two superior planets, forming a 'Y', a fixed dilemma is activated by transits to any of the three bodies involved. The yod splits the energies of the single planet at the base of the yod in two directions. One of the most common yods to be found in horoscopes between 1940 and around 2035 occurs with Neptune sextile Pluto as the 'Y' configuration, with any planet at the inverse midpoint of those two planets. A yod can be formed between any three planets, but when the Sun is the base planet the 'Y' involves two planets retrograde in both forms of quincunx from the Sun. The yod has been called the finger of god, or the hand of fate. It is the engraved silver hand, curled, with the index finger pointing, which is used to mark the place in the Torah where the last reading took place and the next reading is to begin. It marks where the word of God left off and is to begin again. In this way the finger of God writes about fate.

When the primary symbol for the Self and the ego is in the focal position, the energy required to activate destiny is split between two forces. Individuals with a solar yod often find themselves in a position where a distinct choice must be made actively and consciously to give up one path in favour of another. All decisions eliminate an alternative, but here, a significant life decision is being taken to walk a specific path, deliberately shying away from identification with the other.

There will be an 'easy' way: the Sun will lean towards one or other of the planets involved by aspect or sign. Keeping in mind that the aspects for a yod should be tight (no more than 2.5°), the planet receiving the closest aspect from the Sun will be the more powerful; next, if the Sun is dispoised by or dispoises one of the two planets, then that planet is more powerful than the other; and, finally, the planet in the accelerating quincunx pulls more weight than the planet in the decelerating quincunx. By analysing these factors we can see that the Sun will tend towards a relationship more with one planet than the other. In the case of yods, however, it seems that the path of greatest resistance is the path to fulfilment. If the Sun is bound up with the path of least resistance, the person feels as if some important personal goal, which is often mysterious, may not be being attained.

Because of the peripheral disturbance coming from two angles, a split opens up in the central core of the ego. The usual ambivalence of retrograde planets is doubly accentuated in the yod. Sometimes it will manifest in dualistic tendencies, at other times it will create confusion between the two forces pulling at the centre, still another potential is to split off and deny one direction in favour of another. More often than not it remains quiescent until the configuration is triggered by a transit to the Sun, at which time the split is activated and the person is alerted to a question of destiny.

Harinder

A woman whom I will call Harinder has just such a yod in her horoscope (see [fig. 6.1](#)). Her Sun in Capricorn is in mutual reception with Saturn, which forms an exact quincunx. In turn, the Sun is quincunx Uranus within 2° . Harinder wanted to look at her chart because she was concerned about her lack of personal success in both great and small ways. She said that she felt her entire life had been a supreme ordeal of overcoming family issues. She wanted perspective on what planetary configurations might be contributing to her seemingly unending struggle with destiny.

Harinder was born in Lebanon in 1948 and is the eldest of sixteen children by four years. She knew that she was loved very much by her father and his parents (Uranus in the ninth) but was completely ignored by her mother, as were the other numerous siblings (Sun in the fourth house in Capricorn quincunx Saturn in the eleventh house). When Harinder was fourteen her paternal grandmother died, which proved a devastating blow. The whole family broke apart, shattering the final threads of cohesion. Harinder's grandmother was the one person who saw her as an individual and encouraged her creativity and intellectual interests (Uranus in the ninth house of grandparents). She received no education beyond the level of high school, and was so sheltered that when she was pregnant with her own first child at the age of twenty, she did not know how it was to be born! This fact was divulged by Harinder with intense anger and rage at her mother, whom she actively and

openly hates. She described her mother as ‘a woman who gives birth’, stupid, dull and without wit at all, someone whom she hated so much that she feared her own children would hate her in the same way. Because she did not know what it was like to love her mother, she could not comprehend what her own children felt for her because she had no precedent experience of mother-love. It was wise for Harinder to be aware of this distinct possibility, but in the course of talking over the real relationships that she had with her children it seemed that they did not hate her. That fact did not, however, diminish her anxiety.

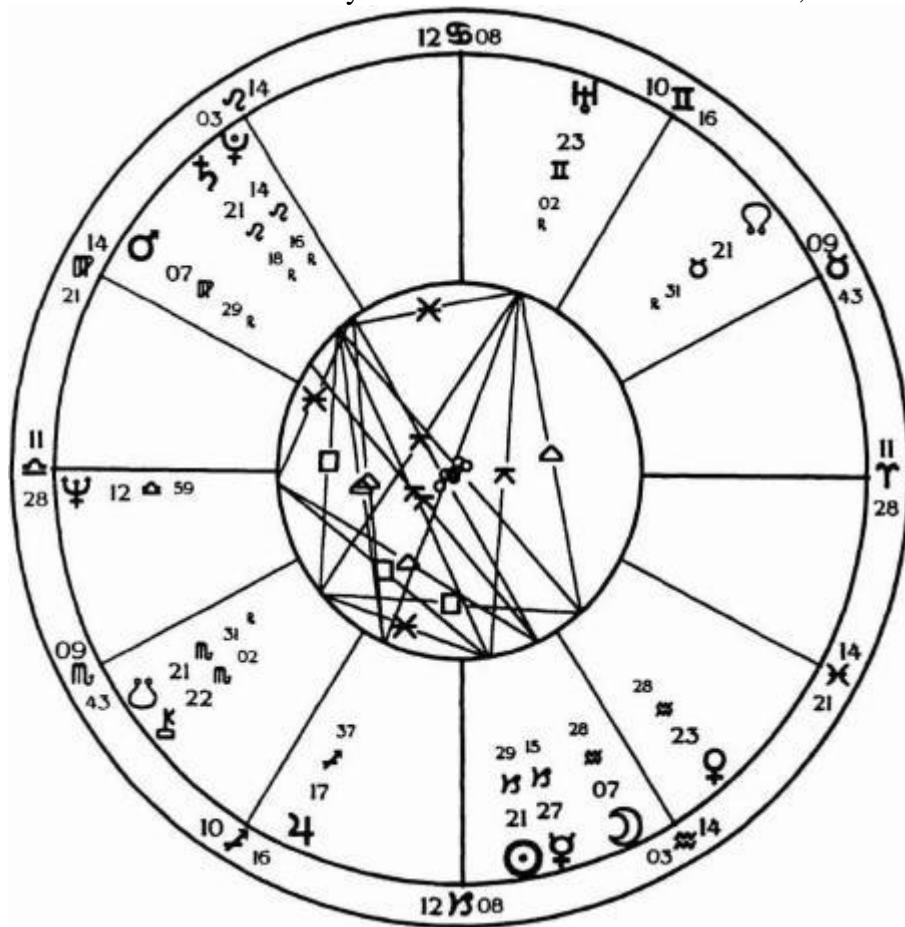


Fig. 6.1 Harinder

Aside from her desire to understand her feelings of failure, Harinder was deeply concerned about what she called her family fate and was terrified of passing on the family dynamic to her own children. Her awareness of this possibility was quite sophisticated and she could see the likelihood was very high of alienating her children just as she herself was alienated from her mother. This process was beginning to occur with her eldest son, and in her confusion and panic her ability to see her role objectively was undermined.

She came from Lebanon with her first husband in 1968 and had a second child. She later divorced her husband and remarried in 1973, having two more children. She now has four children and is content in her second marriage, but feeling a lack of personal fulfilment. She had been in a depression for about two years while Saturn was transiting Capricorn, and at the time of our session Saturn had just left the degree of her Sun, which activated the quincunxes to Saturn and Uranus.

Looking at the yod we can see Harinder's life purpose split in two directions: from the fourth house towards Saturn in the eleventh house (accelerating quincunx), and towards Uranus in the ninth house (decelerating quincunx). This could be interpreted as a fundamental obligation on Harinder to fulfil a family-oriented path (focal Sun in Capricorn in the fourth house) which could lead in two directions: either, to a rigid, self-perpetuating complex around self-denial and appeasement of the status quo established in the family, and unconscious willingness to accept less than her worth (Saturn in the eleventh house), or to Uranian originality and the break-up of the family pattern through deeper understanding of her own uniqueness as separate from the unspoken but overpowering family myth and tradition. The decision to be made turns on being shy, retiring and passive or rebelling against the inherited patterns and struggling towards an independent identity. The integration to strive for combines Saturnian practicality and recognition of the real limits within her spiritual path (there *are* restricting cultural influences) with Uranian impulses for taking on new and challenging situations as they appear in her environment.

The tightest aspect in the yod is between Sun and Saturn, which are in mutual reception and also form the accelerating quincunx. Because the Sun and Saturn are bound in so many ways the tendency would be to lean towards the Saturn path of least resistance and fall into the cultural-familial-paternal mould. Until this time Harinder had leaned towards the Saturnian inclination, to be swallowed by the family and to swallow her own creativity. That she became acutely and consciously aware of the pitfalls of this path during a Saturn transit to the Sun (the focal point) speaks of an internal warning system alerting her to an encoded set of standards which were not based on personal choice but adopted wholesale until such a time as a decision had to be made. Harinder's concern about her self-worth and value, her inability to break up self-defeating patterns, and the increasing isolation she was experiencing, brought the situation to the point of breakthrough.

First, the transit of Saturn over the IC and through the fourth house marks the point along the life path where one digs deeply into the family roots and history and makes an attempt to unearth one's own identity, as separate from the collective identity of the family.

2 Secondly, when transiting Saturn is conjunct the Sun one feels the weight of necessity - of having to define oneself and one's purpose in life. In Harinder's case, we have not only these two life-shaping features, but also the pressures of turning from one path and moving towards another.

Saturn retrograde has weak boundaries and a thin skin; Uranus retrograde has an internalized, explosive, revolutionary quality. With the Sun in the fourth house in a yod to these planets the tension lies between choosing the conservative path of least resistance and the transformational, and thus more stressful, path.

The rest of the horoscope reinforces this dilemma. Harinder's

Aquarius Moon is in opposition to Pluto, which heightens the danger of passing on her alienation and subsequent dissociation from her mother to her own children. Venus is in the fifth house in opposition to Saturn in a cross with the nodal axis showing Harinder's fears of alienation between herself and her creative issue, in this particular instance her children; but it also speaks of her fear of loving and being loved, and of her distance from her own creative core. More often than not, our fears have some grounding, if not in reality then in potential, and in Harinder's situation she needed to exert energy to prevent her anxieties becoming self-fulfilling. Simplistically, her biological identification with the mother (same-sex parent), coupled with the intense rage still felt towards her, speaks of a powerful and unresolved complex around Moon-mother-children. The Uranian path of the yod amplifies the necessity of moving towards freedom and objectivity, breaking the choke-hold that her mother still has on her.

The Uranus branch of the yod is strong - it feeds into the Moon and Venus by dispositorship, and there is also Venus' exact trine to Uranus. By consciously shifting focus to a higher level of reasoning, rather than going along with the *a priori* Saturnian assumption that her value is measured by maintaining the status quo, Harinder would activate the latent power of Uranus, revolutionizing her ideas about herself and testing them in her world by creating and accepting change in her environment. That this is more difficult to do than to advise is obvious, but Harinder had already begun the process by the time we talked about it. She had enrolled in a healing course and a set of seminars in philosophy and psychology, which would begin when Saturn entered Aquarius in the spring of 1991.

Solar grand trine

When the Sun forms a grand trine with two superior planets, both of those planets are retrograde (with the exception of Mars, as usual). By nature a grand trine is an elemental closed circuit, which requires externalization through active, conscious effort, especially if no other planet aspects or is aspected by one of the planets involved in the configuration. Although this isolation is unusual, it is entirely possible for the trine to be so segregated. Frequently a

kite formation is created by one of the planets in the trine by its opposition to another planet, which allows expulsion and redirection of the pent-up energy associated with a closed circuit.

Any major configuration such as a grand cross, kite, T-cross or yod is called by Rob Hand a harmonic syndrome.

3 It is a conspiracy between planets to band together and create an autonomous complex - a gathering of energies - which can split off from the whole of oneself and behave quite independently from the rest of the horoscope. It is as if they converse in a private language, reinforcing each other by mutual agreement, without consulting others. It is often shocking to the individual who holds one of these configurations to discover that there is another language, another world 'out there'. Retrograde planets are anyway by nature isolated; but their involvement in such configurations with the Sun amplifies the closed harmonic syndrome. For example, you could not have three retrograde superior planets forming a grand trine.

Transits to one of the planets, or to the mid-point of two of them in such a conspiracy, augments and fortifies the syndrome, especially when there is a tight orb (1-2°) between the planets involved.

The solar grand trine often poses very specific problems regarding the realization of solar potential (see pp. 128-9, 'Paul'). Of the two planets in the trine other than the Sun, one will always be stationary-retrograde and the other stationary-direct. The energy of the Sun is split between the urge to internalize the experience of the stationary-retrograde planet and to deliver or externalize the energy symbolized by the planet. The configuration can result in a shy, uncertain personality which experiences itself internally, rather than in an overt, social fashion. The ego may or may not be healthy and happy, but it is likely to be rather static and conservative.

By secondary progression the Sun will eventually move towards the stationary-direct planet, thus widening the gap between itself and the stationary-retrograde planet. Therefore, even in a static natal chart there is a sensation of the Sun 'leaning' more towards one of the grand trine planets than the other. This viewpoint animates the grand trine, and we can get a feel for how the Sun might 'break out' of the locked-in sensation and express its own originality.

There is an unconscious collusion between the Sun and the planet. For example, if the Sun is trine to Jupiter stationary-direct and Saturn stationary-retrograde, an inner excitement, which is Jupiter, is countered by a blockage, Saturn, and the ego struggles between dramatic, flamboyant display and underestimating its capacity to be creative. (By the time the Sun secondary-progresses to square the stationary-direct planet, it will have moved to opposition to the stationary-retrograde planet.) This combination could be extremely productive, embodying the principles of controlled expansion, or, it could result in a closed circuit in which creative self-expression is constantly undermined. Similarly, should the grand trine be between the Sun and Uranus stationary-direct and Neptune stationary-retrograde the double message is: find a method of externalizing solar energy through completely unique and original ideas or actions, or, internalize the potential to be remarkably creative by withdrawing into a fantasy world in which others do not necessarily play a major role. The following case shows a remarkable birth process.

Martina

According to her mother, Martina was a beautiful baby, even winning the Most Beautiful Newborn at the village maternity hospital where she was born - quite fitting for a Venus in Leo rising, with Moon in Leo (see [fig. 6.2](#))! Her mother also says that Martina was a loving, affectionate, extraverted and demonstrative child, but quite happy to be either in company or on her own. For the first few years, they were a happy family: mother, father and baby. They lived in a small fishing village on an isolated island in the Pacific Northwest of Canada where the father owned and operated a salmon-boat. Martina's mother is a full-blood Haida Native American Indian and her father an English-Canadian. Martina had the exotic beauty so often found in mixed blood, but had the tragic fate of belonging to neither culture, for in those years a woman who married outside the tribe relinquished her tribal status (men who married Caucasian women retained theirs) and so her mother lived outside her cultural law (Mars in the tenth house square Uranus rising). This situation has since changed, but not soon enough to protect Martina and her mother from the inevitable ostracism.

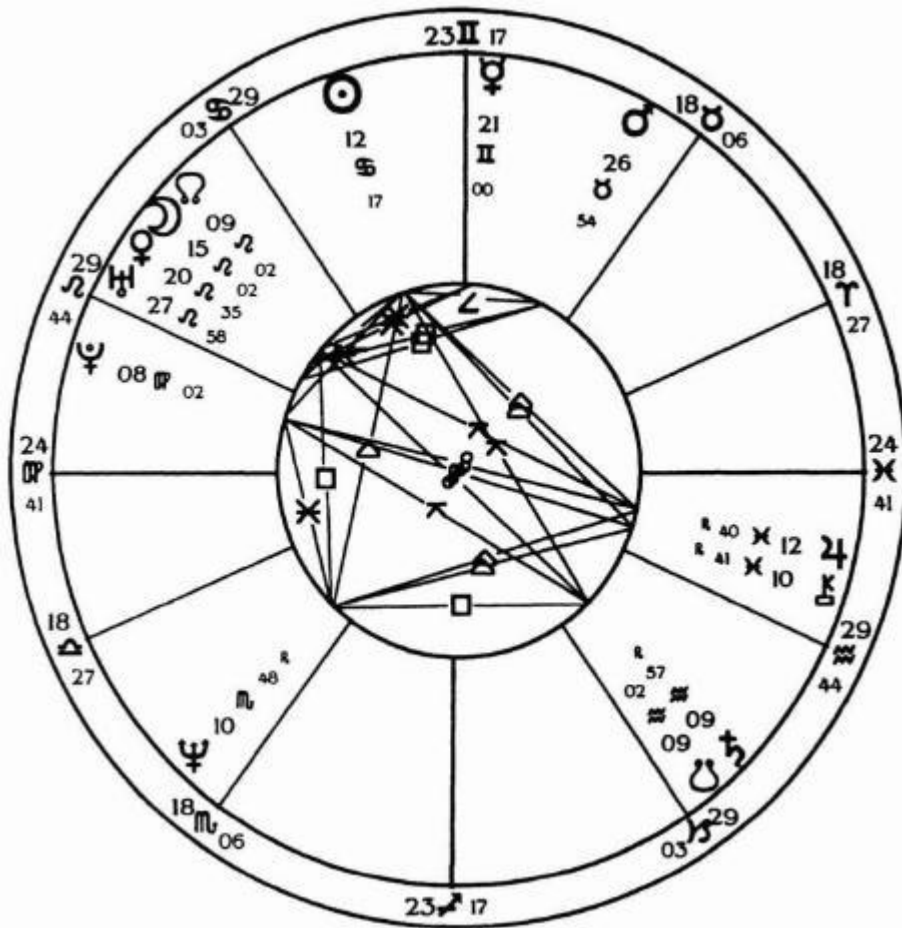


Fig. 6.2 Martina

When Martina was three, in September 1965, her father's fishing-boat capsized in a flash squall, not far offshore from their cabin, and he drowned. At the time of the drowning, transiting Saturn was in Pisces in her eighth house, just past the conjunction with Jupiter, but was also opposed to transiting Uranus at 14° Virgo and Pluto at 15° Virgo. This loss was not only father but also absolute alienation from her mother's culture and rightful inheritance, for the tribe would not care for a native woman's child by a white man. When a child loses a parent, the experience is similar to being orphaned, for the grieving process steals the surviving parent away for a time, and when parent and child have recovered, both are permanently transformed and sometimes widely estranged. By the time the mother had recovered from her grief, a year or so after the father's death, irremediable damage had been done (she was now an alcoholic) and little Martina was much changed.

Martina's horoscope dramatically portrays all the elements of her life: Neptune in the fourth house retrograde (conjunct the IC): living on an island, traditional origins obscured, father drowning, mother turning to drink; Jupiter in the eighth: a potentially rich inheritance of spiritual and cultural mores, values and support taken away (retrograde); Sun in Cancer in the eleventh: strong bond and identification with the mother as audience and friend; Sun and Moon in mutual reception with the Moon in the twelfth square Neptune: emotional growth suspended, unborn, difficulty in expressing emotion due to early trauma (opposed Saturn); Saturn conjunct the nodes: father and mother separated by misfortune (Saturn retrograde quincunx Pluto rising) and subsequent loss of mother through alcoholism.

Martina was thrown back on her own resources and she became adept at foraging for herself, looking after her mother and making sure she was safe. The constant stream of men coming in and out of the tiny cabin assured them both of some financial income, but it also threatened their security as the mother was often victimized by her informal customers - sometimes they gave her money, most often only a bottle and a beating. In this time, between the ages of three and twelve, Martina developed an even stronger bond with her mother, identifying with her intensely. She had been sent to the reservation school but was regularly truant, and her status did not warrant the attention of the truancy officers, so she eventually slipped through the cracks of education.

The grand trine in Water from the Sun to Neptune and Jupiter is a closed emotional circuit which blurs the already enmeshed boundaries between mother and infant and, when involved with Neptune, symbolizes a condition which I will call 'unborn'. The Cancer Sun -a signature of womb-like energy which manifests in

all Cancers very differently, but characteristically is seen through deep psychological, emotional and biological ties to the mother - is approaching (by secondary progression) Neptune stationary-direct and separating from Jupiter stationary-retrograde. The orbs of the trine are tight, creating a dynamic energy which is charismatic. The Sun 'leans' towards Neptune, and something mysterious, confusing and filled with longing around issues that deal with genetic history and family fate is hinted at. Martina's grand trine is particularly intricate for various reasons: Jupiter and Neptune are in mutual reception (and Jupiter has the additional effect of being the old ruler of Pisces); the planets are in Water signs (the two retrograde planets are in Water houses, as well); and all the signatures are around sexuality, genetic and hereditary confusion and deeply unconscious contents pregnant with nascent issue. In all, a deeply mysterious and emotionally charged fusion of symbols. Martina's grand trine was like a chrysalis - an alembic for some mysterious transformation.

To differentiate between the two solar aspects in the grand trine, let us take the Sun-Neptune trine first. Previously we saw that the stationary-direct trine involved a condition where something frustrating and imminent was felt, where there exists a need to deliver or externalize the energy symbolized by the stationary-direct planet. Externalizing Neptune is not usually one of the earliest processes of individuation, indeed, to embody or realize Neptune is antithetical to its nature. However, it will out at some point, in some way. The Sun-Jupiter stationary-retrograde trine talks about further internalizing the concerns of the planet involved - Jupiter is about social and moral law, the justice of natural order and the deliverance of wisdom or creative issue. The main problem with the stationary-retrograde trine lies in the deep sense of despair over not being able to fulfil the destiny which is felt so intensely.

Now to look at the whole trine itself. In keyword phraseology, this grand trine says: 'In order to realize fully my solar individuality and gain acceptance for who I truly am I must bring forth a strange and unknown facet of my Self which lies deeply buried in my unconscious. This might possibly be from a direct link to my genetic inheritance and it is likely that discovery of and acceptance of this fact will further deepen my awareness of the mysteriousness of social order, so that I might emerge from deep within the embryonic waters of the collective unconscious into full daylight life.'

Martina thinks she was about age twelve when she realized something about herself that was mysterious, different and somewhat disturbing. She referred to it as, 'something needing to be born'. Having been isolated most of her life, never interacting with other children in an ordinary way, often horribly persecuted and rejected by them because of her status and also because of her mother's reputation as the island whore, she never learned to draw comparisons between herself and others. Slowly she began to do so. And what became of that realization is the story of her life to date.

For Martina had been born Martin. Upon reflecting back on her childhood and early development, Martina felt that her feminine side had been embryonic all her life and she was gestating the woman that she would become. It was in the turbulent years of his (at that time) Saturn opposition, the natural demarcation at childhood's end coinciding with the emergence of eros, that progressed Venus conjoined natal Pluto while progressed Mars was still within orb (1° past exactitude) of the square to Pluto. Up from the deep came the primal battle between masculine and feminine. Between fourteen and seventeen were the worst years for Martin because he now knew fully what it was within him that wanted to be born. Was it nature or nurture? Most definitely it was nature, but in its mysterious way his background supported his metamorphosis into the woman, the 'mother', that he was inside.

He gave birth to himself at the age of seventeen. At first it was nominal. He was talented and star material, and he became a transvestite entertainer in a major city in the very year that Neptune stationed and turned direct. That which was unborn was finally delivered. The progressed Sun had moved to 29° of Cancer, kicking Neptune forward in motion while transiting Saturn was moving through Virgo to oppose his natal Jupiter retrograde in the eighth house (recalling the Saturn transit fourteen years ago at his father's death). The myth of Jupiter delivering the swallowed offspring entombed within the body-womb of Saturn comes to mind here, especially since the eleventh house Sun sextiled Jupiter. This was 'coming out' in a big way. Still, however, it was not enough. It was like 'playing house', he said, and he began to seek out specialists in transsexual surgery. Having made a great deal of money, Martin gradually metamorphosed into Martina over the next five years, undergoing the final transformative procedures as Saturn was transiting the fourth house. The specific implications of this transit are: atonement for the family fate; wresting the treasure from the bosom of the family; rescuing the maiden; a search for individual identity within the confines of one's genetic history.

Around this time the laws on the status of Native American women were changed by tribal council. Martina's mother was 'rescued' from herself and enveloped in the community from which she had been ostracized. She accepted treatment for alcoholism and began a long, restorative cycle in her own life. When Martina was twenty-eight and a half, in the year of her Saturn return in Aquarius in the sixth house, her progressed Sun had moved to the promised opposition of natal Saturn and she was finally able to deal with her masculinity. Her mother had given her little if any valuable information about her dead father, but as she emerged from her alcoholic haze, mother and 'new' daughter began to talk about him. So now Martin has become Martina and finds the incongruous situation arising in her life of having to deal not with the anima but the animus!

The elements and the solar grand trine

The element in which the solar grand trine occurs is of the utmost importance. The astrological elements take us back to the old humours of Galen's medical hypotheses and today are comfortably aligned with psychological traits. Like any type of closed circuit the grand trine can operate autonomously and form a complex of potentials which do not necessarily blend in with the rest of the horoscope unless otherwise aspected. The element in which the configuration is found indicates in which element one might find one's light and consciously develop it.

Fire: The ego of individuals with a solar Fire trine not only has an interior stage, props, script and director, but also an appreciative audience. Ideally, they would like to see the performance played to a larger, more public assembly, but only time will bring their courage out. At some point, the planet in the sign later in the zodiac than the Sun will turn direct by progression; this will mark the beginning of the externalization of inspiration and direction.

Earth: The capacity to realize tangible results from applied effort requires conscious externalization. Being so bound up in body issues, individuals with this trine might find themselves overly concerned about their physical appearance. Ultimately, the trine is creative in certain very practical ways and needs a channel to work out highly imaginative forms, creating practical artwork.

Air: It is often difficult to externalize ideas and articulate thoughts. There is a strong tendency to keep ideas to oneself. People with this trine need to learn intellectual confidence and to apply their minds to systems that will give them a vehicle to animate their internal brilliance. The ego is bound up in appearances and, since appearances are never quite perfect, people can be hypercritical of themselves, which is easily projected on to others, either individuals or society.

Water: This is most aptly described as a chrysalis in which deep, unconscious issues undergo stages of transformation and emerge as butterflies from the soul. The ego can remain nascent and infantile until such time as one realizes the value of one's own feelings and trusts in what one's deep, inner Self knows is of good or bad value. Deeply intuitive, it might be difficult to articulate one's feelings about others, but individuals with this configuration are often extremely perceptive, though perhaps lacking the will to develop their talents.

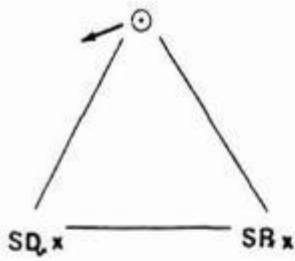
OTHER PATTERNS WITH RETROGRADE PLANETS

Wedge, or fan

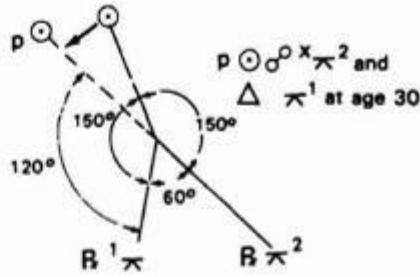
It is entirely possible for a wedge, or fan, pattern to harbour a superior retrograde planet if the Sun is on one end of the gestalt and the superior planet is in trine to it from the other end, in which case the pattern is 'contained' by the Sun and the retrograde planet or planets.

The wedge or fan gestalt portrays a highly focused chart with an inner tension that characterizes an independent individual (even if the planets all fall in the descendant part of the horoscope). This horoscopic pattern is the epitome of a self-motivated individual who breaks from the past not from opposition to family or society, but from an inner compulsion to be personally unencumbered by others and their opinions. It can mark an obsession with independence and self-direction to the point of egocentricity, and frequently requires shocks from outside to turn the mind inward.

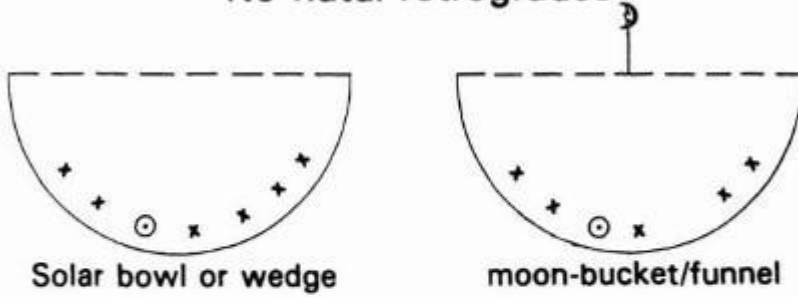
Solar grand trine



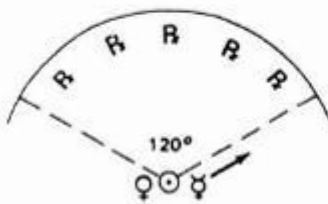
Solar yod



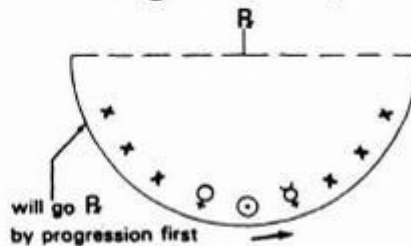
No natal retrogrades



Multiple retrogrades



Singleton or pair



Lone retrograde

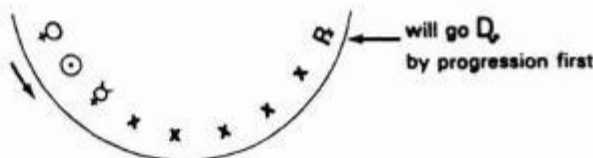


Fig. 6.3 Retrograde syndromes with superior planets

Bowl

One or more superior planets can be retrograde in a bowl if the Sun is on either end of the procession of planets contained in the gestalt. In this case, it is likely that the superior planets on the opposite end to the Sun will turn retrograde by secondary progression at some point in the life; the year or years in which this should happen mark significant turning-points.

When all the planets are contained within an opposition and no superior planets are retrograde, one hemisphere of the horoscope is automatically accented, thus alienating the other. If this is the case, then the Sun, Mercury and Venus (the identity trinity) will be centred in the configuration, conjoined with or flanked by the superior planets. In the funnel or bucket chart, the singleton 'handle' of the pattern is usually a retrograde superior planet. If it is not, it will be close to its station, either retrograde or direct.

Singleton superior planet

In the case where a superior planet is a singleton, set apart from the gestalt of the other planets, it is the handle to the bucket or funnel and is usually also retrograde. The energies and motivations which the planet symbolizes will be disconnected from the rest of the horoscope and may act as a compulsion or an obsession. There is often an obsession with the issues that the retrograde planet symbolizes and until that

energy is integrated to some conscious, observable degree, it can hold the individual back from experiencing the full range of his or her capacity.

The planet acts as a maverick, picking up stimuli and translating all experiences through it, thus creating a bias which colours

everything with the tone of the planet. For example, in Jupiter's case everything can be inflated or wildly exaggerated - psychologically, philosophically or physically - and the individual will attempt to find meaning or roots in all things. Mars tends towards more sexual or martial obsessions, where everything is seen as a battle, a cause or a revolution. Saturn creates a darkness around every experience, exuding a senex wisdom or melancholic aura; one's own authority or authenticity can be projected, inflating the power of others at the expense of oneself. Uranus creates an internal crisis mode, and the world is perceived as at worst uncertain, at best chaotic; a compensatory 'rational' philosophy can be adopted to make sense out of nonsense. Neptune can distort the perceptions, creating either a world of visionary dreams or a descent into the womb of madness; the lack of boundaries can result in actually becoming the 'other' (person) through sympathetic transference. Pluto, when isolated and retrograde, exacerbates one's natural existential angst, and one's awareness of death and entropy permeates all things, often resulting in feeling unloved and having to 'steal' love, as Hades did.

Sigmund Freud had Mars retrograde as a singleton, and his entire aetiology of neurosis stemmed from the sexual impulse. Freud was infamous for his sensitivity to sexual repression and his theories on infantile sexuality, the libido and the seduction theory caused him much trouble with his colleagues.

John Jacob Astor had Pluto as a singleton. He is the prototype of the American 'self-made man'; he amassed a fantastic fortune in wealth, property and power, establishing the first financial dynasty in the US, a true leader of free enterprise.

Moon as handle to the bucket, or funnel to the wedge

When the planets conspire to form a bucket with no retrogrades inside, and the Moon opposes the midpoint of that gestalt, a very unique emotional condition is apparent. Although it is dangerous in any psychological model to propose absolutes, this configuration shows itself to be the most difficult. The emotions and feeling function are amputated from the body of the psyche. The self-involvement that we saw in the previous configurations of bucket and wedge is present, but with a distinct lack of emotional integration.

Until they are forced into awakening to their emotional impact on others, they act unconsciously as emotional vampires, living off the feelings of others without appreciating their own emotional ethos and its succubus quality. This case shows emotional responsibility to be dormant, a situation potentially rife with the attributes necessitating projection. Other people may feel the burden of carrying the emotional baggage of those with this curious configuration. They tend to be surrounded by high drama where others become unreasonable in their demands, conscious or unconscious, for emotional responsiveness, thus giving them the alibi of not being present or involved in the crime of emotionalism.

When the progressed Sun moves to the point where one of the superior planets stations and turns retrograde, it marks the year or few years where experiences force an inward glance and promote self-examination.

Though this might not affect the Moon *per se*, it does begin a time of spiritual questioning. The innate sense of personal authority is challenged, which automatically brings the feeling function into a more active state. Individuals who have a segregated Moon are confused by those whose feelings are relatively integrated, and they might choose to find a life path or dogma which by regimentation protects them from emotional barrage. It can manifest in its most extreme as a form of emotional autism. It is very likely that the mother (Moon) has played her hand in this either by being cold and distant, or by manipulating in such a way that emotions are seen as a tool for control. Oddly enough, the configuration results in the person emotionally controlling any situation which might overpower the isolated Moon. It is really fear of feeling that creates this atmosphere. If one's own feelings are separated from one's whole self, then it is quite natural to suppose that that condition is universal.

James

James has a planetary configuration which shows all planets bracketed by Jupiter quincunx Uranus and sandwiching the descendant with the Moon as a singleton handle in the ascendant in Pisces. He was brought up by three women one of whom was his mother, according to him a 'shadowy, insubstantial figure'. James never

knew his father because he died before he was born and he never really had a male figure with whom to identify and develop a strong masculine ego structure. His life largely depended on women for sustenance.

He is a very successful business man, is well liked by his associates, has numerous friends and has many achievements to his credit. With Sun conjunct Neptune his primary concern in the consultation was a strange, dissociating feeling of unreality, which had plagued him for as long as he could remember. He feels he is an imposter, though external evidence proves quite otherwise. The needs of his ego, even though externally satisfied, constitute an empty void inside. His feelings are largely projected and his numerous short-term lovers eventually 'evaporate'.

He and his wife had split up before the birth of their daughter and the wife had not wanted him to be involved with her upbringing. He had complied with this and as a result had not seen the infant for twenty-two years. He effectively disappeared. Although Uranus (first planet to turn retrograde) had stationed and turned retrograde seven years before he met the girl, it was the year that his progressed Sun moved to square natal Pluto that brought the whole situation to light for him. Because of the unconsciousness and collective ethos of the transpersonal planets, the time at which they station and change direction by progression is not necessarily an event but rather a gradual initiation into a new process. In the case of Uranus, it invokes a process of individuation - when James's progressed Uranus stationed and turned retrograde, he began to experience clearer self-definition. His ego began to assert itself in a way which it had not previously; that is, his emergence out of the fog of the Sun-Neptune Moon in Pisces was initiated around the time of the Uranus station by progression and focused in the year of the progressed Sun-Pluto square.

By meeting his daughter and becoming increasingly involved James began consciously to participate in his lunar emotional life, which had been so divorced from his solar life. He began to experience his emotions and feelings in an increasingly focused way, and his relationship needs began to change accordingly. In the year after becoming a real father he was experiencing some confusion. As he said, 'I have lived as if in a dream, floating between women, never feeling fulfilled or satisfied. Only now do I realize that I must look after my emotional needs myself and draw some defined boundaries around love.' He was beginning to comprehend the need to reconnect his amputated Moon to the body of his psyche, but it is a process, not an event, and though his natal Moon will always be 'out there somewhere on the horizon', with his planetary gestalt in the seventh house region, his willingness to reach out and take responsibility for his own emotions will result in more solid feelings around his love life.

Chris

Chris, a Cancer, has all his planets contained between Mars at 29° Taurus and Neptune at 4° Libra, with Saturn on his ascendant at 16° Cancer. The Moon at 5° Capricorn, separated from the main gestalt of the horoscope, is opposite Saturn.

Chris's father, a senior figure in the Royal Navy, was in Australia at the time of his birth and played virtually no role in his life. His mother had multiple sclerosis diagnosed when he was about six and she deteriorated rapidly, being in a wheelchair by the time he was fourteen. In that same year he was sent upstairs to find out 'what the commotion was about', only to discover his father dying of a heart attack in the bath. His mother subsequently handed him the responsibility of looking after her. Chris was born predisposed to split off his feelings and contain himself (Moon as the handle, in Capricorn opposite Saturn rising). Yet his early life experiences collaborated with the astrological signature to a fine degree.

The elder of two, Chris says he raised himself from the age of fourteen. His sister says he refuses to talk of his childhood and even when asked direct questions he blocks. Although having lived with a woman now for more than ten years, his wife has found great difficulty in crossing his boundaries and reaching him. His emotional armour is extreme and rigid and he feels that any form of therapy or psychological analysis, including astrology, is 'dangerous stuff'. It is logical from Chris's chart that he feels this way; such activity would appear to him very threatening because working in the deeper levels of his psyche would require him to step out of his armour and experience his feelings. This is not an impossibility in the future, but we do not know what Chris will allow to happen for him in times to come.

Majority of superior planets retrograde

Individuals with most superior planets retrograde are born into a time of collective rebellion and disorientation and may carry the psychological rejection of all social values quite consciously. They will nevertheless be motivated towards change in distinctly personal ways, depending upon their social and familial background, and also the house or houses which hold the Sun, Mercury and Venus. It requires great courage for those with every superior planet retrograde to listen to the inner voice, the Self, and overcome the values and mores as presented to them in their early years.

It is possible that such people may be overwhelmed by wars between their ego needs (Sun) and the greater Self about how to achieve autonomy over the family biases and social constraints. Frequently people with these configurations in their charts 'wake up' with a shock at adolescence, when biology calls them to begin the process of individuation and self-assertion. Whereas they might have been withdrawn and shy as children living in a world of their own, the surge of hormonal and social changes at adolescence results in a sudden and dramatic 'coming out'. People with this reaction will often appear to have become 'another person' according to their parents and friends - acting wildly and with abandon, experimenting without reserve and generally being hyperactive until their thirst for the physicality of life is slaked, at which time they revert to a more quiet, introspective and philosophical lifestyle.

A further possibility is that such individuals may be so over-whelmed by the mass of unconscious rebellion and primitive, nascent characteristics that they become completely withdrawn from their environment and retire to a world of shadows. There can be a powerful fear of what is boiling under the surface and though the aspects themselves do not connote madness (as no astrological configuration is absolute) there is an underlying horror of what lurks in the deepest recesses of the unconscious. The sleeping monsters of our most archaic self might rouse themselves at a moment's notice.

People who had no retrogrades in their birthchart said they were in some way forced into introspection by events, circumstances or startling inner shifts that created a wound or a deep realization which they could no longer ignore. However, for those with a majority of retrogrades, a shock, a stirring or a biological interruption in their lives often forces them into facing the exterior world. So internalized and repressed is their emotional expression that their feelings of isolation can be profound.

When the Sun is in the opposition zone to most of the superior planets, there is often great confusion around self-worth and ego assertion. The interior life is often much more real to the individual than any outside influence. This creates much consternation for parents because they feel helpless in the face of such a child, often feeling that they might have done something to provoke such introversion. Indeed, it might be that parents who have such children are merely caretakers and play a minimal role in the development of personality, in that the children are often quite unaware of parental influence until they become aware of psychology and begin to examine in some depth and detail just exactly how the parents really did affect them (see Oscar's case in [chapter 14](#)).

Often parents are so alarmed by their child's apparent lack of response to or interest in them that they traumatize the child by forcing him or her into various moulds, thwarting a natural process and giving the adolescent ammunition to hurl back on finally surfacing. Finding a thread into the labyrinth of the unconscious and learning to understand more about oneself, though not always a comfortable experience, is absolutely necessary for someone with all superior planets, or a majority of them, retrograde.

No superior planets retrograde

If no superior planet is retrograde, then the gestalt pattern of the horoscope is either a bowl (all planets contained within an opposition, with the Sun and inferior planets very likely posited in the mid-zone of the configuration), or, it could be a wedge or fan pattern, which encases all the planets in a tight formation within approximately 90°. A third, and very significant, possibility is that the Moon forms the handle to a locomotive, bucket or funnel pattern.

In general terms, having no retrograde planets allows the individual to cultivate a highly developed ego structure which has no automatic check on its reign over the rest of the psychic functions. It might take a wound of some kind, an experience which brings the individual up sharply against personal adversity, so that he or she might be compelled to examine the more soulful aspects of life. Often these people have the unfortunate experience of wounding others inadvertently by their apparent insensitivity to others' needs. They are not unremittingly selfish, nor are they cruel by nature, but until they come to terms with the fact that the universe does not always centre on their needs, and that their world-view is not consensual, it is a lonely journey for them. Frequently others will inform them that their behaviour is alienating and intimidating. This might injure or offend them terribly, but the self-containment of the non-retrograde person is such that extra effort must be applied to comprehend the rest of the world. See [chapter 3](#) for further information on natal planets turning retrograde by progression.

Mick Jagger has no retrograde planets at all, with all the planets contained in a bowl from the twelfth house to the fifth house. His incredible energy and endurance, his capacity for management and his personality traits all fit the portrait of the non-retrograde individual. His Sun-Jupiter-Pluto conjunction shows his power over others and remarkable resourcefulness.

Well-known people with no retrogrades:

Alice Bailey	Franz Kafka
Hector Berlioz	Helen Keller
Paul Cézanne	T. E. Lawrence
Marc Chagall	Abraham Lincoln
Pierre Curie	Yehudi Menuhin
Charles Darwin	Benito Mussolini
Bette Davis	Edgar Allan Poe
Cecil B. De Mille	Pierre Auguste Renoir
Emily Dickinson	John Ruskin (Moon singleton)
Arthur Conan Doyle	Arnold Schwarzenegger
Margot Fonteyn	Margaret Trudeau
Anatole France	Twiggy
Yvonne Goolagong	Orson Welles
Xaviera Hollander	Tennessee Williams

with multiple retrogrades:

Muhammad Ali (JU, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Phineas T. Barnum (SA, UR, NE, PL)
Ludwig van Beethoven (MA, SA, UR, NE)
Sarah Bernhardt (JU, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Annie Besant (MA, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Helena Blavatsky (JU, SA, NE, PL)
Emily Brontë (JU, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Joseph Conrad (JU, SA, UR, PL)
James Dean (MA, JU, NE, PL)
Federico Fellini (JU, SA, NE, PL)
Nicolai Gogol (MA, SA, UR, NE)
Janis Joplin (ME, JU, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Jack Kerouac (JU, SA, NE, PL)
Billie Jean King (MA, SA, UR, PL)
Gypsy Rose Lee (MA, SA, NE, PL)
Sybil Leek (JU, SA, NE, PL)
John Lennon (SA conj. JU; UR)
Marcel Marceau (JU, SA, NE, PL)
Liza Minnelli (JU, SA, NE, PL)
Abdul Nasser (JU, SA, NE, PL)
Vaslav Nijinsky (SA, UR, NE, PL)
Yoko Ono (MA, JU, NE, PL)
Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (JU, UR, NE, PL)
Mark Spitz (MA sr, SA, UR, NE, PL)
William Thackeray (MA, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Henry David Thoreau (JU, SA, UR, NE, PL)
Oscar Wilde (JU, UR, NE, PL)

7

NATAL MARS RETROGRADE

HELENA: Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.

PAROLLES: Under Mars, I.

HELENA: I especially think under Mars.

PAROLLES: Why under Mars?

HELENA: The wars hath so kept you under that you must needs be born under Mars.

PAROLLES: When he was predominant.

HELENA: When he was retrograde, I think rather.

PAROLLES: Why think you so?

HELENA: You go so much backward when you fight.

PAROLLES: That's for advantage.

HELENA: So is running away, when fear proposes the safety. But the composition that your valour and fear makes in you is a virtue of a good wing, and I like the wear well.

All's Well That Ends Well, I. i.

THE MYTHOLOGICAL MARS

We first think of Mars as the god of war, as the ancient Greek god Ares, who was seven hundred feet tall and threw tantrums in the bloody and battle-scarred fields of Troy. He is not a pleasant figure, nor is he a popular one in Greek myths, being found mainly in situations of war and strife. He was worshipped by the Amazons, the warrior women, who are closely associated with the independent Artemis, goddess of the hunt. His role in the *Iliad* is supportive of the Trojans, which may be why his character never developed beyond a primitive force. He is inferred in the concept of jurisprudence by the placement of the courts in Athens on the Areopagus,

the Hill of Ares, but plays no active role in meting out justice. In the Ares form he is a figure of infantile rage and uncontrollable lust, something which all individuals can privately relate to, if only as a primitive emotion rather than as an active characteristic.

However, in post-classical references the god's image underwent a transmutation - the Romans felt differently about their Mars. With the assimilation of Ares into the Roman theocracy he became a more popular and frequently propitiated god. Mars personified a somewhat refined figure, a civilizing agent in their culture. Mars was father of Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome, and was associated with agriculture, a patron of builders and craftsmen and worshipped in many festivals throughout the month of March. Although Mars evolved from a lusty Greek war god to a civilizing Roman god, and his sword became a ploughshare, those tools are still of the same metal: iron.

The dualism of the god Mars underlies the planet's basic astrological and psychological functions - civilized and primitive. By civilized I mean useful, functional and directed, involving some personal and social moral content; by the primitive function I mean the fundamental human instinct to survive against all odds, an intrinsic drive which is amoral and without social conscience. Both are inherent potentials and may periodically be intertwined, but on the whole each is quite distinguishable from the other. Both these characteristics are necessary for full human expression and experience - if out of balance or overactive, both are destructive.

One key to Mars is passion, that bitter-sweet experience in which desire and suffering are intertwined and fused. Passion leads us into life; to lack passion is to lack the drive towards fulfilment. We tend to think of passion as related only to erotic pursuits, but it is also the essential component in conquest of any variety. The drive towards experience, the will to power and the ultimate acquisition of a goal are all Mars functions. The willingness to suffer life with all its attendant affairs -emotional and experiential - is a part of Mars' demand. As a god of war he appeared infantile in his rages and fits mid-battle, and as a lover he was equally primitive. In [chapter 5](#) we read of the myth of Ares and Aphrodite and their passion consummated even at the risk of detection by and ultimate derision of the other gods. Rampant,

undifferentiated Mars is obviously dangerous, but an imprisoned Mars is equally so in a different way. If we do not feel comfortable with our more primitive side it becomes sublimated and cannot be refined and developed fully. It remains in the unconscious, raging and burning to be freed. In this case these natural forces have all the power to irrupt into areas of life which have no place for infantile lust or rage. Situations in life which bring those 'uncivilized' feelings to the surface offer opportunities to come to terms with them, often acting as a vehicle for further transforming those undesirable attributes into useful qualities.

Mars' attributes, *eris* (strife) and *cholos* (rage), are commonly known, but there is an underlying theme of *thumos*, which is akin to what we call life-force. *Thumos* is also will and desire, libido, resolution, mind, heart, sense, courage, spirit, passion, anger, wrath. The deepest recesses of the unconscious hold this mysterious motivation - the survival instinct. Though we might say with conviction, 'I want to live', it is not in fact the prerogative of the wholly conscious mind to enforce this desire. The quality of one's life might be enhanced by conscious volition, but the unconscious will out, regardless of how, on the surface, we valiantly struggle to declare our allegiance to life. Equally, when we might think life is not worth living, or depression distorts perception and perspective, *thumos* keeps us curious and alive. A constant flux between conscious will and unconscious desire for both life and death is active in our mind-body balance.

MARS AND THE SUN: EXTERNALIZING THE EGO

Mars is truly the ambassador to the Sun. It is the planet most active in directing solar energy outward, manifesting it in the world around us, externalizing the ego's need for accomplishment. As the first planet beyond the Earth's orbit it symbolizes the vehicle carrying the identity trinity - Sun, Mercury and Venus - out into the world. It just might be the single most important active factor in expressing oneself. The relationship between the Sun and Mars is close, both constitutionally and characteristically, more so than between the Sun and other planets because it is through the energy output level of Mars that we can most closely observe when a person is expressing his or her individuality. Although other planets support the expression of ego, both the Sun and Mars demand open recognition of individual power. From the moment the umbilical cord is cut, there are many stages of separation and development: the infant crying for attention; walking upright; braving peer groups; learning to assert and win; identifying oneself and demanding recognition in adolescence. Through the various stages of assertive development, one recognizes that Mars plays a great role in one's separation from a collective mass and in the demonstration of one's individual identity. The gradual civilization of the Greek war god Ares into the Roman agrarian god Mars is not unlike the process of civilization that the individual planet-symbol Mars undergoes as it alters its psychological representation in the various stages of personal growth.

If we did not have Mars in the horoscope we would be unable to get out of bed in the morning and get dressed. Animus, a word used to describe the masculine principle in Jungian terminology, is a Latin word for spirit; it is also a word which, when used in a particular way, means anger. Animus in its positive, creative form breathes life into situations and objects; it 'animates' them. The degree to which we feel animated, inspired and comfortable with our assertiveness and aggression is shown by our willingness not only to succeed but also, at appropriate times, to concede. Individuals comfortable with their Mars power are capable of recognizing their limits and energy allotment, and will be more capable of assessing what is truly worth pursuing and what not. Jealousy and resentment, envy and rivalry, are felt when we are not externalizing and expressing what we *know* to be our own, individual, unique power.

The Sun being the prime representative of our ego as well as being made up of the deep, inner Self, knows what great and small accomplishments we are capable of. If Mars is not 'happy', or has not been nurtured and allowed to flourish, then the ego is frustrated in its attempts to demonstrate the Self broadly enough to satisfy the craving for recognition. These evils - jealousy, resentment, envy and rivalry - that consume everyone periodically, and some constantly, are expressions of the thwarted natural impetus to be number one. The Sun and Mars demand attention; they are both assertively masculine planets and need to measure their worth by external attainment. Together they might collude to produce a steady flow of creative energy, or they might battle, each wearing the other out, ending in burn-out and depression. What might be a healthy ambition in one can be a devouring monster of passionate envy in another. This condition takes away positive animus and renders one inanimate or, as it were, without spirit.

The Sun and Mars are the primal masculine principles in the horoscope, dual symbols of the father archetype. The role of the biological father in the child's life depends not only on how, objectively, he is, but also on how, subjectively, he is perceived. Father symbolizes the hero for a small child, regardless of how he might treat his children. He is the outside world, the big protector, the wise one. That he is often away or silent or uncomfortable with his feelings only increases his mystique and fascination. To incur his anger is more frightening to a small child than inciting the anger of mother. She is just about always there, but father conventionally is not, and father-anger is not, therefore, as easily resolved.

It is usual for one to long for praise from one's parents or, at the very least, tacit approval of one's actions or simply one's *being*. Although it is far too simplistic to designate Mars action to be father-specific, he is the representative of the hero and the aggressor in the unpsychologized psyche of the child. This then becomes the fundamental basis of how one relates to one's own masculine function and, further, how one relates to men in general.

MARS RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

The Sun-Mars battle as seen through the retrograde function often manifests in people as a sense that their energy and heroic ethos has been stolen or suppressed. People with Mars retrograde have to dig more deeply to find their sense of individual superiority and frequently find themselves at a loss as to how to go about this task. Often the thief is seen as the father and indeed there is a tie between a retrograde Mars and an emotional distance from the father, which leads to a fantasy or longing for acknowledgement and praise. In the

normal course of things fathers do not set out consciously to deprive their daughters or sons of their life-force, nor do they lie awake at night thinking up lists of how they might compete - and win - against their

child. Further, it is only in the most pathological situation that overt physical or psychological abuse from the father is a factor in a Mars retrograde person's life.

A father might unwittingly initiate a battle in the heart of his Mars retrograde daughter or son by his own unfulfilled Mars characteristics. His own will may have been subservient or undermined by difficult circumstances which the child constellates as a kind of fate and must vindicate in some way. The Mars retrograde person might have a father whose work was diametrically opposed to his vocation, in which case the child may carry father's interior rage and serve him by expiating his (the father's) loss of power or prestige by following the unspoken path.

A natural striving for father's appreciation is quite healthy and usual for all of us in development. However, if our endeavours are not acknowledged we feel that those efforts will not be of any use. If this is the case, or is felt to be the case, then the inclination is to invert Mars and stop seeking external recognition. In

Dynamics of the Unconscious Howard Sasportas writes:

With the opposition between Sun and Mars, there is a tendency to project Mars onto others. You feel that you have a strong desire to express who you are, but another person's willfulness (the Mars opposition) apparently blocks or confronts you. You may have the feeling that someone out there is trying to stop you being you. It feels as if your will-to-be is in direct opposition to somebody else's will-to-be. The conflict may be experienced through a parent, often the father.

1

Symbolically there is a battle of wills which can operate in positive way through growth-by-opposition. The Sun in the opposition zone to Mars automatically sets up a distance between the solar figure in a child's life and the capacity eventually to incorporate this exemplar solar-ism into his or her own nature. Because projection inherent in the opposition aspect, it is very easy to let someone else carry the dynamic force which ultimately is within. Initially, father (absent or present) is that projected image of hero-outside and I becomes a dominant figure in the age period from about three

seven when the ego is most vulnerable in its development. Ideally, the hero-outside becomes the hero-inside as we incorporate our Sun-father into the gestalt of our whole self. Since this is a continuing process clearly there are stages to it, but the most important feature of the Sun-Mars retrograde function is the difficulty with internalizing the solar hero and a tendency to continue to project it outside, seeing others as more successful, more interesting, more sexy, more powerful, and so on. Since fathers most frequently are our means of measuring external accomplishment, and Mars is the vehicle for externalizing inner worth and ego needs, there is a quest for success within all of us that is mirrored in the Sun-Mars relationship in the horoscope and in the father-child relationship.

Sometimes it takes a retrograde planet to revolutionize a concept. Individuals who identify with the oppressed masses and who feel compelled to speak up for them and represent them in a war against the establishment, may find themselves using the internal war to fight the oppressor. The suffragettes are a case in point. In *Chiron and the Healing journey* Melanie Reinhart writes:

In our century, since the suffragettes, the archetypal figure of the Amazon may be seen empowering the women's liberation movement. Like any collective movement, however, its attitudes and beliefs may subsume the individuals within it. Here, the shadow side includes destructive aggression towards men and the masculine principle, hunger for power, obsession with self-sufficiency to the point of inability to relate, and thus eventually emotional and perhaps physical sterility.

2

Although it may take a retrograde to create a revolution, a retrograde may not be necessary to maintain the new status quo. In the nineteenth century the suffragettes and other women who made major contributions to emancipation - directly or inadvertently through their works - show a remarkable percentage of Mars retrograde in natal charts. The ratio, however, had ceased to be as strong by the twentieth century and is no longer either necessary or viable. The *entantiodromia* effect occurs when something becomes too polarized and moves beyond effectiveness, flipping over to its opposite. The 'shadow side', which Reinhart points out, then becomes the dominant force. That it no longer takes Mars retrograde to emancipate women, *but at one point did*, speaks for itself.

3

Objectivity, maturity and experience are the keys to developing the latency of retrograde. Even though aspects in the horoscope can be projected it is most important to remember the horoscope is still our own. No matter upon whom our projections fall, therefore, they still belong to us. In turn, the projection upon the Sun-father is often extrapolated from that key source into all forms of authority, such as one's boss, society,

the police, one's spouse, and so on. At some point the retrograde Mars person must accept that his or her world-view is predisposed to the battle and thus must find an appropriate battle to fight. Since the war is actually an internal one, the opponent should be oneself - in athletics terms, striving to achieve a 'personal best' is the most effective way of satisfying one's aggression.

The withdrawal of others-are-heroic into I-am-heroic can be done, even by those with Mars retrograde. There is a point where father, and by extension all aggrandized external hero figures, must cease to be the controlling force simply because it becomes an excuse to whinge about bad luck or poor parenting. It often means a psychological about-face, a recognition that the battle out there is really the battle in here, and that one should turn one's attention to the self-limiting devices which have undermined one's capacity to realize natural ability fully.

The Sun-Mars principles demand an extraverted activity. If it is not possible to act out aggression then it implodes, creating a depression of the senses and, in extreme cases, periods of burn-out and acute melancholy. It might also result in creating needless conflict, if only to realize some form of excitement. When we can create excitement and challenge without it being destructive and confrontational we find that Mars is better served.

The term 'passive aggression' is intriguing because it is, on the face of it, an oxymoron. Anyone who has been on the receiving end of passive aggression knows how confusing and complicated it is; one has to spend a great deal of time trying to figure out what one might have done or what it is that the perpetrator really wants. In contrast, people who fall into the category of passive-aggressive are least likely consciously to understand what it is. It is a very special way of being offensive and defensive at the same time. Some might even think it economical - not only can you be angry, but you can prevent anyone from openly retaliating! It is a deadlock, not only inside but outside as well. Although passive aggression is shown through aspects of Mars-Saturn, Mars in Capricorn, Pisces or Scorpio and some combinations of Moon-Mars-Pluto, it is a feature of a retrograde Mars as well. A feeling of anger is exuded, rather than targeted, the retrograde provides a method for controlling others by subtle manipulation, rather than direct command. If Mars retrograde children are not allowed an arena to display their anger or aggression, or not taught how to use those instinctive forces while young, then they learn ways of diverting and thus displacing their Mars.

Goal-setting and achievement of aims can be a problem if the stated end is not what one has set up for oneself as a Mars retrograde person. An unconscious self-limiting device can be easily triggered, appearing to make one 'fail' in one's quest. Ultimately, this position really favours self-directed employment and creative work which allows time for contemplation and reflection on the meaning of achievement. It is so frequently found in the charts of those who have broken away from family tradition to establish their own careers or occupations that undoubtedly they found the pressure from the family (or the father) too great to bear. The suggestion that breaking away from the family and from heroic worship of the father is a natural function for anyone is unarguable, but that it is easily done by anyone is a fallacy. When Mars is retrograde in the natal chart there is an instinctive internal battle between the need for self-expression and the lack of drive to initiate action that will result in that self-definition. The closer that Mars is to the opposition of the Sun, the more intense is the heat and anger that builds up in the individual with this position. The passion of the Mars retrograde individual becomes introverted and difficult to externalize except when he or she is provoked to the point of explosion.

Although Mars, unlike all other superior planets, is not retrograde when it is in a trine from the Sun, it is worth mentioning a few features about the Sun-Mars trine. It is the most deceptive aspect; whenever the Sun and Mars are in trine, Mars is at its slowest and will either turn retrograde in about fifteen to twenty days, or will have just turned direct about fifteen to twenty days before birth and be gaining slowly in motion. The trine produces a stubbornness which is not usually associated with trine aspects — they tend to be described as flowing, easy, confluent, harmonious, to name a few popular key words. Occasionally we hear: lazy, apathetic, lucky (not hard working), among others. These attributes may well be exhibited, but the deadlock that a slow Mars can produce in the desire to express itself produces intense frustration in the person. Indeed, energy may flow between the Sun and Mars with ease and social grace, but how comfortably is assertiveness and aggression acted out? There is often a psychological circuit-break between the inner knowledge of one's superiority and the manifestation of it. The aspect can abreact as unrealized fantasies of accomplishment, a kind of megalomania and self-aggrandizement. Whether or not Sun-Mars trine people can actualize their tremendous potential depends largely on other more stressful and challenging aspects in the horoscope. And, of course, on the examples of ambition, aggression and self-

motivation that they saw in their early home environment. One axiom for those with Sun-Mars trine to adhere to is: The applause comes *after* the performance!

Mars at its slowest motion is in a passive trine (by sign) to the Sun, only moving forward about 2° before it stations. A person, therefore, born with the Sun-Mars trine prior to its station in retrograde will have Mars retrograde by secondary progression virtually all through adult life. The elemental trine - that is, when two planets are in the same element - is an aspect that promotes a gentle release of energy and a subtle flow of creative impetus. There is an elemental collusion between the Sun and Mars when trined -the ego will express itself through the elements in which they are located. It is a quiet, non-stressful signature, inherently unsympathetic with conflict. The year in which the progressed Mars stations-retrograde is an important year and will be between ages fourteen and twenty - the average is eighteen. In the station-year, the wilful march of the ego in development challenges the natal, 'easy', Sun-Mars trine to develop an inner strength to assert itself.

In the course of time, when the progressed Sun reaches the opposition to progressed Mars, a heated situation arises within the individual. No longer does the passive trine in the natal chart satisfy the desires of the individual, but a surge of energy arises for the two

or three years in which this aspect occurs. This time often marks a rebellion against one's chosen direction and occurs in the mid-life period - a time usually fraught with necessary change anyway. If one is born *before* the Sun's opposition to Mars retrograde, then the second important progression is the progressed Sun to the natal Mars.

Michel Gauquelin

Michel Gauquelin, the passionately devoted researcher of statistical astrology, had natal Mars stationary-retrograde (see [fig. 7.1](#)). Mars had stationed forty-two hours before Michel's birth and was virtually motionless in his natal horoscope. His Sun is 21° Scorpio with Mars at 9° of Cancer. Michel is the embodiment of Mars stationary-retrograde - quivering with energy, driven by passion and determination to do battle with the opposition - in this instance the 'hard' scientists. Though I wish to concentrate primarily on his natal Mars retrograde with respect to aspects made to it by his secondary-progressed Sun, I must point out that Michel has the majority of outer planets retrograde in the upper heavens, opposing his personal gestalt, as well as Neptune rising, turning stationary-retrograde in his twenty-first year. This split places Michel in psychological danger of separating his vocation from his personal centre, potentially alienating not only himself from others, but also his own ego from his deeper Self. The separation of inner and outer planets creates the consciousness of both voice and victim of the collective; that is, his ego (Sun) becomes bound up with his dedication to collective issues to the sacrifice of his emotional needs. (See [chapter 10](#) for a more in-depth view of a split gestalt.)

The Mars theme was woven into the fabric of Michel's nature from birth and, although not a singleton retrograde, is sharply highlighted in several interesting themes. By the age of twelve, Michel was already held in the thrall of astrology. His own father, an aficionado of astrology himself, but a dentist by profession, had introduced him to astrology as a young boy. Michel's school chums called him Nostradamus - apparently he had already discovered the knowledge of signs to be an attractive feature which simultaneously enchanted the girls and annoyed the schoolmasters (clearly showing an economy of purpose for an adolescent boy!). He was always very close to his sister Martine, whose name is the feminine for Mars. Upon entering university he carefully chose all subjects which would eventually facilitate his obsession - to establish an empirical observation of astrology. Gauquelin's internal clock *vis-à-vis* his Mars retrograde is as impeccable an exemplar as his own work in the field of statistical research was to become.

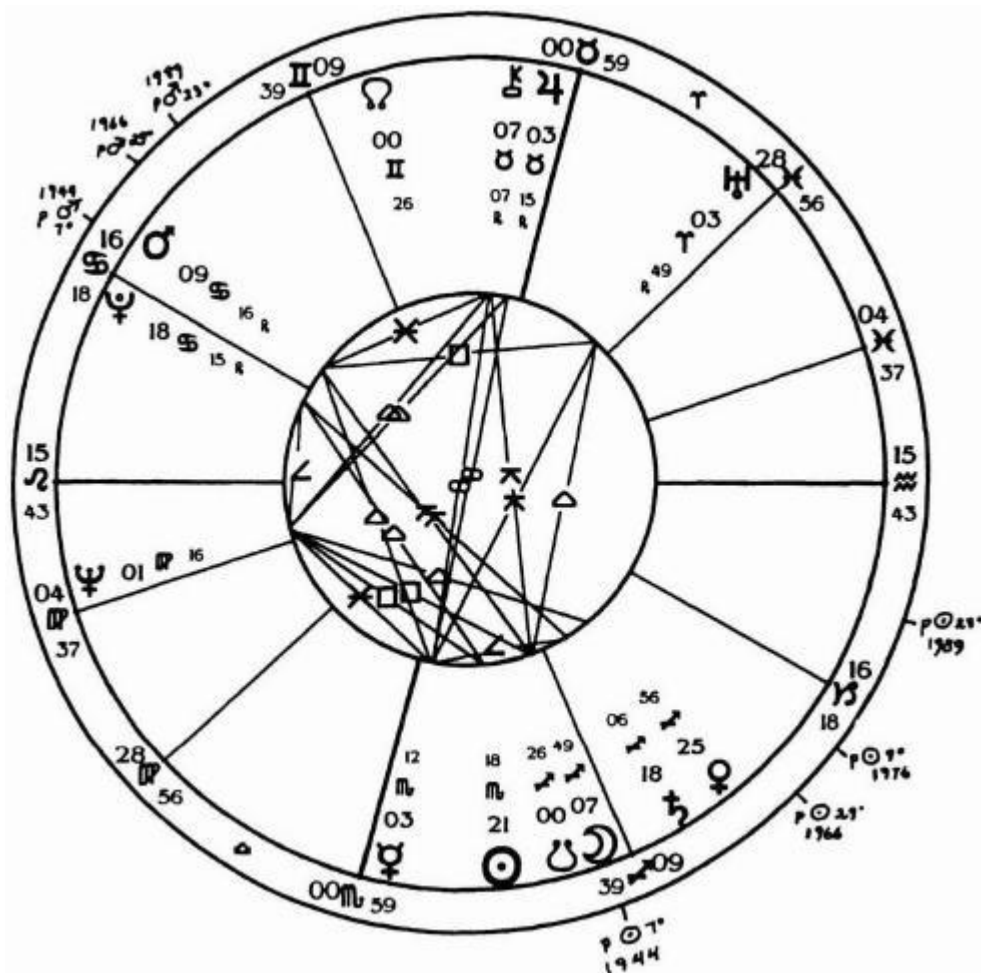


Fig. 7.1 Michel Gauquelin

Gauquelin identified with Aristarchos of Samos, the revolutionary Greek astronomer who dared suggest a Sun-centred universe, and

also with Copernicus, the man who 1800 years later confirmed its truth. Gauquelin felt that true astrological meaning had been obscured largely by Ptolemy's epicycles for a similar span of 1800 years. He felt that he himself might penetrate the veil and launch the new Copernican revolution in astrology by going back in time to rediscover a lost factor, which he demonstrated as being operative in the 'Mars effect'. He acknowledges his debt by saying, 'I did not discover the Mars effect *ex nihilo*, but because astrological literature already existed . . . during its long history, astrology has known many an "Aristarchos of Samos".'

4 Fundamentally, Gauquelin picked up an old sword and re-forged it into a contemporary weapon.

In a similar way, Johann Kepler's astronomical work was facilitated by the detailed observations of Tycho Brahe, who annotated the motion of Mars with remarkable precision. It was Brahe's precise measurements that underpinned Kepler's eventual establishment of the laws of planetary motion. Gauquelin attributes his own initial foray into statistical research to their inspirational work. The first compilation of data and results was on Mars, found in the Gauquelin 'plus zone' for athletes. (That Michel himself was one of France's top tennis players, a champion of the 'veterans' circuit, must have rubbed him badly — note that his own Mars lies not in the cadent angles behind the MC and ascendant, but in the 'insignificant zone'!) However, Michel's retrograde Mars had other plans for him.

He instigated a total reform in the field of data accuracy, as well as amassed more statistical birthdata than ever before in the history of astrology. He devoted his life to the fight, straddling two worlds, the world of astrology and the world of modern traditional science. He found himself faced with opposition in both camps: fear and defensive derision from 'soft' astrologers who find statistics and research too 'mechanistic', as well as hostility and scorn from the scientists.

His battle was not just with the scientists, but within the astrology world as well, encouraging astrologers to press on in search of models to establish astrology as an empirical science. He also chided them for their laxity and soft-scientific approach, relentless in his quest for *proof*. The degree of stress involved with instigating new

thought or reform, or integrating a revolutionary ideology into the mainstream is double-edged here. To knit the community of astrologers with the community of scientists is not only a formidable task, but one which might be impossible.

Gauquelin was emotionally involved with his work and it comprised a large part of his ego. The blend of Scorpionic passion, dedication and deep integrity inherent in that sign coupled with Mars retrograde is the mark of the true revolutionary. To give birth under arduous conditions in a hostile environment to a Minotaur child such as 'scientific astrology' is portrayed by Gauquelin's Mars in Cancer, mothering a war, a battle for truth.

Michel's battle was a Mars retrograde battle - a signature of the classic revolutionary who sacrifices personal happiness for a collective cause. His initial researches were shared with his first wife Françoise and their personal life was dedicated to their work. Together they formed the base of what Gauquelin finally labelled Neo-astrology, The revolution Gauquelin led has established once and for all certain absolutes in astrology, one of which surprised many astrologers - the power of cadent planetary placements. In his last book, *Neo-Astrology*, Michel talks about the work he did in the early days, and the hostile opposition he received from the originally American group CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal) in the mid-seventies. He felt under constant pressure to bring this fiercely reactionary group to intelligent awareness of astrology's validity.

His stationary-retrograde Mars, tense and vibrating with contained power, drove him further and further into his work, to refine, streamline and perfect it. Natal Mars retrograde shows a frustration in the relationship between the individual and his or her own father, where the father may have carried a disappointment or pain which the child experiences in a very personal way, needing somehow to vindicate that suffering. One might fantasize that Michel's father was a frustrated astrologer in the guise of a dentist. The Sun as representative of the father-ego can be further projected on to society as the collective father-image. Symbolically, the scientists are 'hard fathers', the embodiment of the mechanistic revolution, and Michel battled them as he might any oppressor, any murderer of freedom of thought. For although it was under the aegis of astrology that Michel's battle was fought, it might well have been under the banner of any oppressed group wanting to gain solidarity and the freedom to exist. Michel correctly perceived the consciousness that grips the old-paradigm scientists who quake in fear that their model may collapse and the danger that consciousness poses to any freedom-oriented society. It is not so much that Michel was a lover of astrology as it appears popularly, for certainly he was outspoken, had a certain arrogance and was antagonistic towards non-statistically supported astrology, but he espoused freedom of thought and worked for the good of astrological acceptance in the hard-edged world of technology.

Since the movement of the Sun acts as the trigger for all retrogression cycles - transiting or progressing - I will briefly outline the aspects to Mars made by the progressed Sun which illuminate the power of a retrograde planet. The contact from the Sun offers the vehicle for externalization of the retrograde planet's encapsulated energy. In Michel's chart, the progressed Sun ticked off, one by one, stages of development in the Mars retrograde battle.

By the time he was sixteen, Michel's progressed Sun had made the first contact to his progressed retrograde Mars in 1944-5. Progressed Sun conjoined his natal Moon at 7° of Sagittarius, simultaneously making the pre-opposition quincunx to progressed retrograde Mars - a signature of Michel's deep emotional need to uncover a creative way of harnessing his ranging Mars energy. The first contact the progressed Sun makes to a retrograde planet sets the 'tone' for its evolution. Natively, Michel's Mars retrograde is within orb (2°) of the quincunx to the Moon, but by his sixteenth year it was exact - recall his adolescent nickname and boy-astrologer ploy!

The second contact was when his progressed Sun at 29° Sagittarius moved to oppose his progressed retrograde Mars at 29° Gemini. By this time Michel had openly and firmly stepped into the fray. It was the year 1965-6 and he was already published and active in astrological fields, creating major problems for the opposing scientists.

The third significant aspect from the progressed Sun at 9° Capricorn was the opposition to Michel's natal retrograde Mars at 9°

Cancer, which occurred in his forty-eighth year - 1975-6 - the very year of the edict from the 186 scientists. This formal and public denunciation of astrology was in many ways reminiscent of Galileo and the Inquisition. In this same year Michel's battle became international and publicly very dirty. He and others among us had encountered a formidable force. His ego (Sun) now had to experience the interior battle (Mars

retrograde nately) externally in open confrontation (progressed Sun in opposition) and he virtually exploded.

The formation of CSICOP detonated Michel's inner bomb and he volleyed the lifetime of ammunition he had amassed in the form of data. From that point on, he was in for the count. The fourth and final aspect that the progressed Sun made to his progressed Mars in 1988–9 was the post-opposition quincunx - traditionally an aspect of correction or adjustment in perspective. That was the year Michel formalized his work and philosophy as Neo-astrology, and a conference was held under that name at the Matrix Heartcentre.

Tragically, Michel Gauquelin committed suicide in his Paris home in May 1991, just three months before his last book was to be published. Was his battle over? The revolution is essentially done, for there are now new doors open, but his work has left a legacy of responsibility for others to carry, not just in the field of statistical research, but in the continuation of establishing a serious astrology.

5

Sheila

In the case of Sheila, a demure blonde with Sun in Libra trine Mars (direct) in Gemini, Mars has emerged in various guises. The Sun is rising in the first house, with Neptune conjunct 'the ascendant (see fig. 7.2). Her natal Mars is direct in the ninth house, conjunct Saturn. Saturn tends to be a severe check on the energy of Mars, but the trine from the Libra Sun to the very slow Mars in the ninth was projected on to her husband. Having married at seventeen a man eleven years her senior, Sheila directed her own ninth house energies into working to support him through law school. That Mars in a woman's chart is easily projected on to the men in her life is a feature shared by men in the case of their own Venus. The likelihood of Mars being foisted upon the partner is greater when it

is retrograde in a woman's chart because she has learned various ways of sublimating her own masculine nature, her innate ability to organize and externalize her solar urges. If childhood training encourages or supports her passivity then she becomes compliant and submissive, directing her Mars through her husband or lover. In Sheila's case, all the components of a negative Mars retrograde were in place very early in her life.

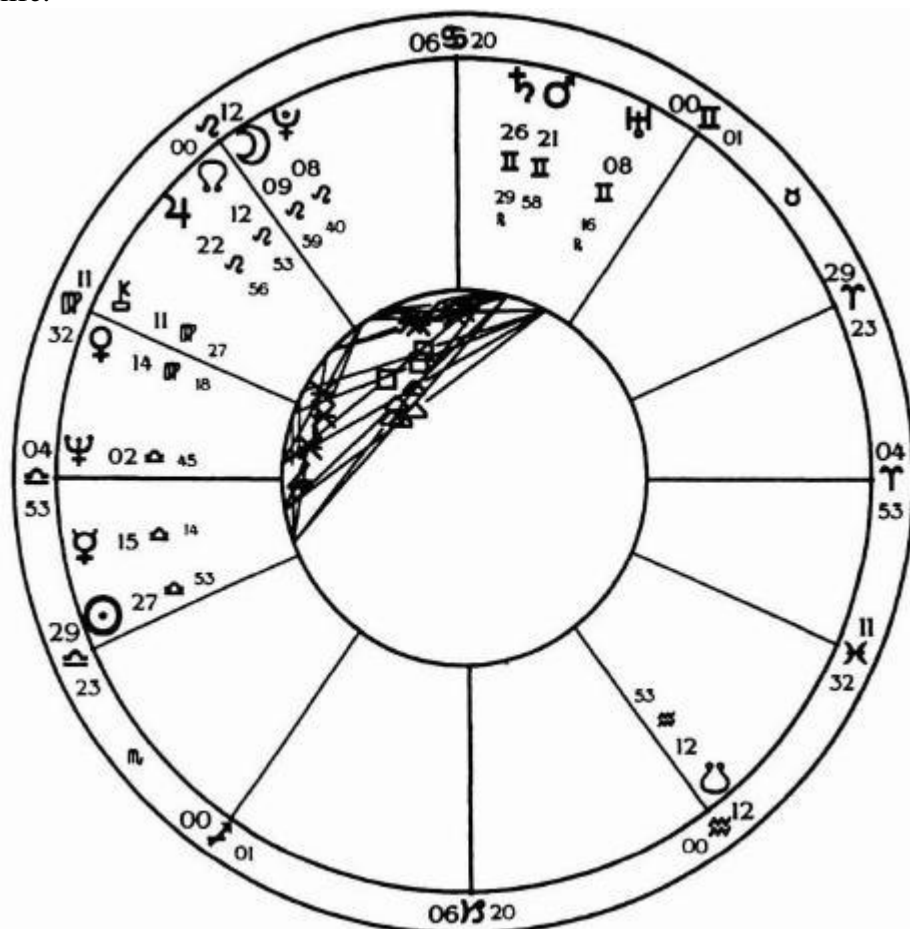


Fig. 7.2 Sheila

By the time Sheila was six years old, her progressed Sun had moved forward to the point where Mars stationed and turned

retrograde. Already she had been declared 'the family dunce', in part because her elder brother could read at the age of three, so by comparison she appeared slow, but also because she suffered from undiagnosed dyslexia and experienced extreme difficulty organizing her mind. Withdrawing into a dream world (Neptune rising in Libra) she fantasized about becoming a dancer and indeed was doing well at the Royal Ballet until at the age of eleven it became evident that she was going to be too big. Rather than being allowed to continue to dance for enjoyment she was abruptly withdrawn from dance class by her parents and told to forget about her dancing. The implicit message from her parents was that Mars equalled ambition and therefore could not be exercised for pleasure or self-enjoyment. Sheila saw this as the turning-point in her life, when all her energy turned inward and she began to experience bouts of depression and lethargy emerging only to find defeat.

By this time, progressed Mars had begun to adjust to its new view from the Sun and Sheila's energy and drive began to invert and become an inner enemy. Also, progressed Mars had retrogressed back to form an exact square to the progressed (direct) Venus, her chart- and Sun-ruler. Being a child, she did not have the capacity to reason out this situation and it then became woven into the unconscious mechanism of inner desire and outer expression and formed the basic fabric of her personality. Not until much later, in mid-life, did the resulting repression of libido and ambition arise. She became increasingly passive and angry, virtually poisoning her system with inward rage.

Sheila became absolute and rigorous about certain details of arrangement, fussing about objects being in balance and obsessive about minutiae. Because she did not feel that she had any power in her environment as a child, she created an internal system of check and balance. Mars was obviously intensely active, but not in the manner we normally expect. She marshalled her drive and became tyrannical in her obsessiveness about perfecting her inner self and organizing her environment. This eventually led to bouts of bulimia and anorexia in early adolescence.

By the time she met her husband, Sheila was firmly established as a 'helper' - her Mars had become a supporter rather than a doer.

She helped others to get things done and to become accomplished. In the years between 1969 and 1975 she bore four children, two of whom were severely handicapped, the other two being healthy. This kind of tragedy cannot be looked at from a moral view. The guilt Sheila felt over her children was in part quite normal but it was also infantile. Her feelings never evolved beyond helpless rage and self-administered lashings of guilt over these feelings. She has taken antidepressants for over fifteen years and only in the last two years has sought any help for her ravaged psyche. A progression and two major events were the triggers. In 1989 Sheila's progressed Sun had moved into 12° of Sagittarius, bringing with it the progressed Mars to the opposition point at 12° of Gemini. The progressed Sun-Mars opposition point had finally been reached and she felt a tremendous explosion within herself. Suddenly she began to rebel against her self-imposed restrictions and suppressed desires. She went on a cruise, met a man, and set about having a *grande passion*. This shipboard romance carried on for months, with her going to his home country and their both meeting in exotic places at weekends. She contemplated leaving everything behind her and indulged herself in sensual and sexual passion, and in managing her complicated double life. She put so much repressed energy into it that she wondered where all that power had been reserved. Astrologically, it had been waiting for this opposition for forty-five years, so that the confrontation between the obsequious ego and the repressed Mars could result in some kind of dramatic display.

Unfortunately, release is not always happy release. In the same year, ten months after the initiation of the affair, her youngest daughter died in her sleep while she was away. Rather than see this as a mercifully peaceful release for her imprisoned child, Sheila saw it as punishment (yet more punishment) for her behaviour. Out came the old Mars, raging, slashing and destroying. It was at this point that she first came for an astrological consultation, primarily focusing on her feelings of anger and rage, which were again causing her to slip into depression and feelings of helplessness.

When looking at the progressions, transits must also be evaluated, and in the year of the progressed Sun-Mars opposition transiting

Saturn was also squaring her natal Mercury and, in due course, her natal Sun in Libra. The combination of Mars and Saturn, especially considering that she has these planets in conjunction natively, is a struggle with the drive and control mechanisms in the psyche. The inner development towards releasing the pent-up Mars at the opposition point was coupled with an external experience related to the transit of Saturn. Right at the moment of release Sheila was forcefully reminded of her personal limits and responsibilities in the family (Saturn transiting from the fourth house). Profoundly depressed, agoraphobic and almost immobilized by the

meeting of these two antithetical symbols she again started on a treatment of antidepressants but this time also sought professional help.

The fever pitch which arrived with the Sun-Mars opposition in Sheila's case is clearly extreme, as are the manifestations, but a truth lies there for all. There is no doubt that the opposition marked a watershed for her in several matters. Her Self required that she grow beyond her shell, that she explore more of her nature, specifically her restrictions on her Mars function. The extremity of the manifestation is in direct proportion to the degree of inner turmoil. In the course of the year of the opposition and the year following, Sheila faced the extremes of her emotional state. By containing this experience in a self-developmental way she began to see it as an opportunity to pass beyond old, self-limiting passivity towards the goal of achieving an independence she had previously only dreamed of.

Marcia

Eros, that essential life-generating force which is Janus-faced, invigorating and also debilitating, is part of Mars' domain, as well as Venus'. Sexuality, only one aspect of erotic energy, is more difficult to express overtly for those whose Mars is retrograde. With some individuals this depressed eros is a result of an event or witnessing, with others it is simply the way they are inclined. However, the experiences surrounding the progressions of Mars retrograde all point to incidents that create a fear or discomfort about blatant sexuality, a disgust, anger or displaced rage with one's own sexual urges.

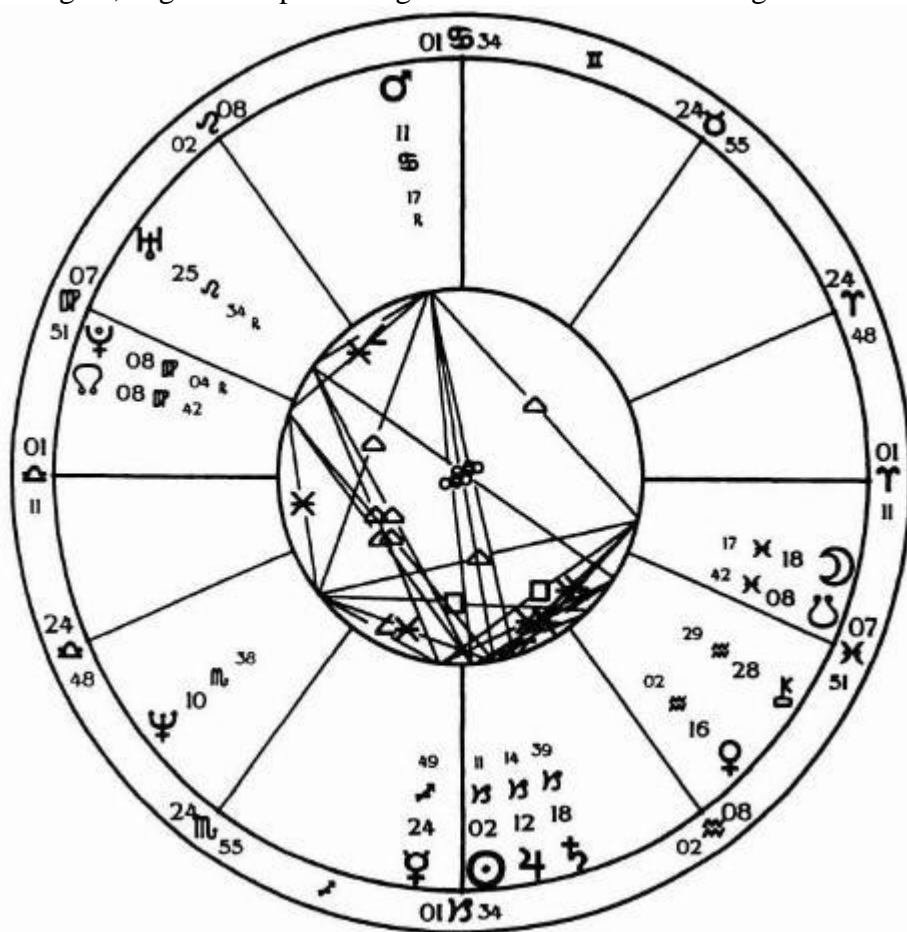


Fig. 7.3 Marcia

In a dramatic case of the progressed Sun reaching the exact opposition to the progressed Mars at an early age rather than later in life, we find a literal translation of the erotic combination of the symbols of Sun and Mars. A woman whom I will call Marcia has the Sun at 2° of Capricorn in the fourth house opposite Mars (retrograde) in the tenth house at 11° (see [fig. 7.3](#)). At the age of seven she had a shocking experience. She was swimming in the deep end of the pool with a male friend of the family while her mother sat at the side of the pool basking in the sun and talking

with friends. In the course of what began as innocent play she became aware that the grabbing, touching and holding stirred deep feelings of anxiety and she tried to signal her mother who, thinking her daughter was just shouting and waving in fun, carried on talking. What was happening of course was sexual molestation. Mars is the ruler of her Aries eighth house and the Sun is the ruler of her Leo eleventh house - sexual abuse by a friend of her mother is almost too florid an example.

The incident set off a chain of psychological reactions which were only making themselves known at the time of my meeting her. At the time of the consultation Marcia's progressed Mars was at 2° of Cancer in exact quincunx from the progressed Sun in Aquarius as well as being in opposition to the natal Sun. She was in analysis making valiant attempts to adjust to the recollection of this first of a series of sexual violations. The progressed Sun opposition to progressed Mars at the age of seven was the first of three incidents: at the age of ten, when the progressed Sun opposed her natal Mars, an uncle molested her, and at sixteen she was sexually assaulted by a stranger.

Marcia told me that she had submerged the memory of the incident in the pool, that she had only recalled it years later and only now, in analysis, did she feel she could cope with the repercussions. Her failed attempt to attract the attention of her mother during that first sexual experience left her with a sense of feminine betrayal, and later she could not bring herself to tell her mother of the event. Part of Marcia's self-identified problem was that she had difficulty bonding with women. In fact, women did not seem to trust her and there were several incidents in her past where she had been accused of flirting with or openly attempting to steal her friends' husbands or lovers. She adamantly declared herself to be innocent of these actions, and I could see that undoubtedly she was deeply unconscious of her erotic charge and competitive nature. Deep in the unconscious she equated the dismissal of her desperate attempts to attract her mother's support as she was being molested in the pool as abandonment by her; although the subsequent violations had not been abetted by her mother she came to see those experiences as partly her mother's fault. Women who are molested by male family members often cry at a later date, 'Why didn't my mother help me?'

As a child Marcia would not have invited a sexual experience from an adult, but when it happened she instinctively put it away in a 'safe' place: the unconscious. At the age of six, she sublimated her healthy erotic feelings because they were stimulated by unwanted overtures and resulted in feelings of disgust and anxiety. All the passions involved with Mars - anger, conquest, eros, libido, drive and competitiveness - are internalized with it being retrograde, but that does not mean they are dormant. Even though she consciously would not make any attempt to lure a friend's lover out of her arms, she clearly sent unconscious signals that both partners picked up. Her hurt and outrage at the suggestion is another facet of the Mars retrograde.

By discussing her need to be competitive and assertive in her environment (Mars in the tenth house opposed by the Sun) and stressing the fact that her ego flourishes in a good battle, we talked about ways of using that unconscious energy more consciously in terms of career. But the emotional sphere still remained very turbulent; her early introduction to sexuality continued to fill her with a sense of rage and shame that made it difficult for her to sustain a long-lasting love relationship. She unconsciously felt more secure soaking up the attentions of someone else's man, stroking her wounded ego with harmful flirtations and destroying the relationships she had with her women friends.

As Saturn made its return in her chart, transiting Pluto squared Marcia's natal Venus at 18° of Aquarius in the fifth house and progressed Venus conjoined her natal Moon in Pisces. Marcia became acutely aware of the emotional pattern that had begun at the age of six. Sex had been stolen from her and though her conscious code of ethics did not agree with seduction - in fact denied it was happening - she unconsciously played out the role of desiring and seducing the forbidden.

That which is repressed must somehow emerge. The more severely checked an emotion or feeling is, the more dramatic is the resulting display. Mars will out. As we saw in the myths he knows what he wants and will have it by any method, regardless of the repercussions.

Mars as a singleton, or sole retrograde planet

A lone Mars, separated from the rest of the chart, is a revolutionary aspect. It is an excellent indicator of people who will instigate something new because they are angry or have been insulted by the old. As mentioned, it featured prominently in the charts of nineteenth-century feminists, but did not show up in the twentieth century. This makes good sense, since the battle they fought was won. Mars still shows up as retrograde in the charts of those who figure prominently in the origins of new, revolutionary ideas, where personal anger can be used to constellate the anger of the collective, such as, for example, Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul II, Sigmund Freud and Martin Luther King.

The singleton Mars can pose distinct problems if the horoscope is not supportive of its rampant energy. Somewhere, deep inside, the individual feels pained and wounded, indeed, there may be good cause for the feelings. However, blind rage with no cause to fight weakens the individual's constitution, and rather than constellating the rage of the collective it can harbour all the unresolved complexes lying in the psyche. Lizzie Borden, who was tried but not convicted of slaughtering her parents with an axe, Yoko Ono, whose feminist and unconventional relationship with John Lennon was declared by them both as a total role

reversal, and Joan Crawford, whose children did not see her as the glamorous star but as the horribly abusive mother - these people all show an undifferentiated Mars, harbouring a global rage with nowhere to put it. Granted, the talents of Crawford and Ono are indisputable, but they did not endear them to the general public, many of whom saw them as perfect screens for their *own* undifferentiated rage.

The singleton Mars can not only constellate all of one's own complexes, but can also gather about it the collective rage, which eventually poisons one's essence. Ideally, it is helpful for such a person to be very aware of his or her sensitivity to collective neuroses and angst, and through that awareness try to create some special avenue of release. It is a very pioneering aspect in a horoscope, highly inventive and courageous, but needs earthing and focus. Whether that is through sport, writing, painting, building, espousing

a good cause or any other form of disciplined, concentrated release, will depend on the individual.

Single-minded revolutionary pursuits relieve the internal pressure from Mars retrograde, forcing it to externalize itself and manifest in open battle. The inherent need for Mars retrograde individuals to explode can be very well directed towards liberating others from oppression, thereby serving two masters - their own driving daimon as well as the collective's need for heroes and champions.

It may be a case of passive aggression on the part of Mars singleton individuals, but they can incite others to great heat, creating riots around them, and escape unscathed but feeling somewhat victimized. It takes time, consciousness, effort and a little luck to pull Mars into the dynamic of the chart so that it doesn't hang out waiting to be smacked, or so that it isn't cruising about randomly dispensing punishment to all who come near.

The singleton Mars retrograde can become symptomatic through migraines, infections, accident-proneness, anxiety with no apparent cause and various types of phobic reaction. If Mars is the handle to a bucket formation, then the danger of projecting all one's hate, rage and impassioned feelings upon others is a strong possibility -the negative manifestation of the rebel with a cause.

Well-known people with Mars retrograde:

Annie Besant

Lizzie Borden

Al Capone (also NE, PL retrograde)

Joan Crawford

James Dean (also JU, NE, PL retrograde)

Mamie Eisenhower (also NE, PL retrograde)

Betty Ford

Sigmund Freud

Judy Garland

Michel Gauquelin (MA station-retrograde; also J LI, UR, PL retrograde)

Ira Gershwin (also NE, PL retrograde)

Lillian Hellman (also UR retrograde)

Jesse Jackson (also SA conjunct UR retrograde)

Pope John Paul II

James Joyce (also UR retrograde)

Billie Jean King (also JU, SA, UR, PL retrograde)

Martin Luther King

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Gustav Mahler (also N E retrograde)

Thomas Mann (also JU, SA retrograde)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (also Sun exactly opposite NE retrograde)

Anaï Nin (MA retrograde trine PL retrograde)

Annie Oakley (exact opposition to Venus)

Yoko Ono (also JU, NE, PL retrograde)

Blaise Pascal

Franklin D. Roosevelt (also UR, PL retrograde)

Lech Walesa

Mae West (MA handle to bucket; exact trine from Sun to JU retrograde)

Virginia Woolf (also UR retrograde)

NATAL JUPITER RETROGRADE

For this among the immortal gods is the mightiest witness I can give, and nothing I do shall be vain nor revocable nor a thing unfulfilled when I bend my head in assent to it.

Zeus in the *Iliad*

My word, how mortals take the gods to task!
All their afflictions come from us, we hear.
And what of their own failings? Greed and folly
double the suffering in the lot of man.

Zeus in the *Odyssey*

THE MYTHOLOGICAL JUPITER

Our astrological Jupiter originates in the character of the powerful god Zeus, who incorporates many apparently conflicting attributes. He is the archetype of the hero and his story is the paradigm of all subsequent heroic journeys. After Kronos/Saturn had castrated Ouranos (his own father) at the request of his mother Gaia, he then reigned over a Golden Age when the earth bore forth unstintingly, old age never came and men lived in a time of bucolic peace. That came to an end, however, because the Moirai had decreed that Kronos would be usurped by one of his own sons.

Attempting to foil the Moirai, Kronos began to swallow each child as it arrived on the scene. Rhea, angry at having each of her offspring devoured, hid the sixth-born son in a cave on Dicte, where he was nurtured and grew to adolescence. This son was none other than Zeus. At the appropriate time, Zeus approached his father, forced him to disgorge the entombed children and commenced hostilities against him. This epic battle marked the end of the Golden Age and the beginning of the infinite Olympian realm of Zeus/Jupiter.

That tale is the earliest to tell of the origin of Zeus, but the Homeric Zeus, the great god of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, exhibits many of the traits that are the underpinnings of our astrological Jupiter. Attributes ascribed to the astrological Jupiter are all derived from millennia-old myths associated with the great sky god Zeus. As agents of Zeus, in many cases we can draw insight from his own children, as products of the Jupiterian core essence.

Jupiter is traditionally associated with justice, and indeed Zeus is considered to have had justice at his side in many instances. Soon after his succession as king, Zeus entered into a series of marriages, the first to Metis whose name translates roughly as prudence or wise counsel. He had been warned by 'Earth and starry Heaven' that he, like his father before him, would bear a son who would be a 'king of gods and men', But Zeus, forestalling danger, put her down
Into his belly, so that the goddess could
Counsel him in both good and evil plans.

1

Thus, Zeus embodies wisdom and prudence, and unwittingly participates in his family fate. In swallowing Metis he incorporates a sound mind but develops a splitting headache, and with the aid of Hephaistos' silver axe delivers Athene full grown out of his head. Athene is the personification of justice, a warrior queen well known for her establishment of the court of Areopagus in Athens. Jurisprudence and the functions of cultural law (*nomos*), rather than the laws of nature (*phusis*), are a synthesis of Zeus and Metis in the form of Athene.

In another union Zeus and Semele produced a son, Dionysos. When Semele, pregnant, asked to see Zeus in all his glory, she was reduced to a cinder by his manifestation as a brilliant lightning-bolt. Zeus saved the foetus and sewed it into his thigh, later giving birth to Dionysos. The child was carried off to Mount Nysa where he was raised by satyrs and nymphs, and taught the use of the vine and ivy. His arrival in Greece was heralded by a cult of maenads or bacchantes, women who partook in ritual ecstasy. The Dionysian cult of *ecstasis* is literally a 'standing outside oneself, a condition induced by imbibing wine and gaining *enthousiasmos*, or being filled with the god. That these rituals took place in the mountains, away from the city, indicates that natural surroundings are necessary for one to experience the god within, for one must distance oneself from cultural influence (the mores of the day) to participate in this religious experience. This state might be reached in many parallel modern ways, but wine was the way of the ancient worshippers. Aristotle likened this state of *enthousiasmos* to *katharsis*, by which watching a tragedy performs a psychological healing function, an expurgation of the soul, bringing relief to the observer through vicarious participation in the drama.

As an agent of Zeus, Dionysos' ritualistic purging acted as a homoeopathic vehicle for abdication of all responsibility. In *The Greeks and the Irrational* E. R. Dodds says, 'its psychological function was to satisfy and relieve the impulse to reject responsibility, an impulse which exists in all of us and can become under certain social conditions an irresistible craving.'

2 This form of 'madness', of possession by a god or the entering of a god into one's soul, is related also to other forms of divine madness which lift consciousness outside self-awareness. One is out of oneself, beside oneself, beyond oneself.

The daughters of Zeus by Mnemosyne, the nine Muses, lifted artists, poets and thinkers out of themselves and dictated inspired knowledge. Although the Muses were consulted, and did not appear unbidden, Plato included their presence in his analyses of divine madness. However, tradition has the Muses give information, not necessarily inspiration. Jupiter is also associated with poets and artists, those individuals who must encapsulate themselves, removed from society's influence and mundane experience, if only for brief periods of time, in order to receive correct (divine) information.

From the earliest times Zeus has been known to deliver justice, but he himself often appears to be a self-indulgent and autocratic god. From evidence presented in ancient literature it seems that the justice of Zeus is of a rather specific kind. Zeus did not have to behave according to the dicta 'know thyself' and 'nothing too much', as inscribed on the arches of Delphi, for he was an immortal. He did, however, ensure that all mortals, heroes too, remained

within their *moira*, their lot. For 'know thyself' meant, not psychologically but mortally, 'know your dimensions as a mortal', and 'nothing too much' was an injunction against hubris, something from which Zeus was exempt, for his was the domain of the immortals. The justice of Zeus then is really a divine inhibition of human encroachments beyond the human sphere.

Overblown 'Jupiterian' traits are characteristics much like those of Zeus - where we feel immortal and cannot be undone, where everything is possible and nothing is too much. Overdoing it, being prodigal, excessive and challenging to the gods are adolescent privileges, not to be carried into adulthood. Indeed, we often compare the Saturnian qualities of the senex to the Jupiterian qualities of puerility. These profligate traits are the prerogative of Zeus/Jupiter, not of a sensible, mature mortal, if he or she values life.

In the passage from the *Odyssey* quoted at the beginning of the chapter Zeus is complaining to the other gods that mortals blame them for sending them evil, while the truth of the matter is, according to Zeus, that they have only themselves to blame because the gods always send a messenger to warn mortals of impending dangers. Often the messenger would be Hermes, but, for example, it was Athene who guided Odysseus through the mire of his journey home from Troy. It is well known that the gods help those who help themselves; the subtext of helping oneself states that one must recognize and take responsibility for one's actions. There are always unwritten rules applied to behaviour and actions, as well as tacit implications around one's motives for action. The archetypal Zeus can 'take one's wits away', thereby inducing ruin, and in the same breath reward a hero for right action. In modern life as in mythic life, these mysterious and tentative rules for motive and behaviour are often discovered by trial and error - rather like walking through a minefield relying wholly on instinct to prevent explosion.

Zeus/Jupiter also embodies issues around guilt and shame. These loaded terms were applied to a cultural transition from an Olympian, hierarchically dominated culture to a human, mortal-based, democratic society. Differentiating between the two, anthropologist J.K. Campbell writes (my italic):

Both guilt and shame are internal states of conscience, but whereas shame is concerned with a man's failure to approach some ideal pattern of conduct, the reference of guilt and personal sin is to the transgression of interdicted limits. *Shame relates to failure, especially in comparison with the achievement of others.* It has an external sanction in the social abandonment which in some degree always accompanies public shame. The *sense of guilt*, on the other hand, *is the consequence of acts which defy the commandments of God*, whether they concern the relations between man and God, or social responsibilities that follow from common membership in a group. An act may, of course, provoke both a sense of guilt and a sense of shame. Which term will be used depends on whether the act is more generally regarded under the aspect of transgression or of failure to live up to an ideal pattern of behaviour.

3

Jupiter as well as Saturn may be an influential factor in the superego, the part of the psyche that dictates to the Self and the ego how it is to behave within the context of prescribed family, social and religious mores. Differentiating between what is shameful and what is guilt-producing can become a time-consuming business. Strong Jupiter features in the horoscope can indicate a preoccupation with issues around morality,

religion, ethics, social conscience, justice and equity. These are the basis of feelings of shame. We normally associate the astrological Saturn with guilt, which I believe is true, but both Jupiter and Saturn have to do with our relationships within society. In some important way, guilt (Saturn) and shame (Jupiter) create a structure within which we build our perception of the world out there. These ancient associations with Zeus as the supreme social arbiter form the underpinnings of the Jupiter-Sagittarius-ninth house connotations around law, justice and retribution for transgression.

Some psychologists might say that mothers elicit guilt and fathers produce shame. Clearly in our age these feelings are complex webs, not easily assigned to one or other parent. However, Zeus is the celestial father archetype, and as such occupies a psychological zone which is elevated beyond the reach of an ordinary father. In this zone also lie moral and religious codes, deeply embedded in the psyche, dictating from an order older than time itself. Jupiterian guilt is more bound up with religious matters, themes of transgression or blasphemy or betrayal, than with guilt for having stolen sweets, pinched one's baby sister, or run off with flowers from an

old lady's garden. A deep sense of moral decay and fears of supreme reprisal are more associated with Jupiter's domain. The planet instils a fear of being a polluted vessel or the victim of *miasma*, which leads us back to the idea of ritual expurgation or vicarious participation as a homoeopathic remedy for going completely over the top and losing all boundaries around one's ego.

Another of Zeus' domains was protection of strangers. This is appropriate in the light of traditional astrological delineations of Jupiter, Sagittarius and the ninth house having to do with foreigners, intercultural and international activities, long-distance travel, linguistic abilities, ethnic concerns and such. In this guise, Zeus was called *Xeinios*. Those who injured a stranger or rejected a supplicating visitor to their home offended the honour of Zeus *Xeinios* and were duly punished. Aversion or openness to foreigners are features which we automatically assign to the Jupiterian realm in the horoscope.

Jupiterian people often feel like foreigners themselves, as if they are visitors to the planet - it is often a signature of *puer* or *puella* types, men and women who travel through life unconcerned about age, race, time, laws, circumstances; indeed, they might well be mortal representatives of Zeus *Xeinios*. Zeus and Hermes have subtly similar roles in that Zeus is the protector of strangers and visitors, those who are in between two known places, heading firmly on track to a goal, whereas Hermes is the patron of the journeyer, that hapless individual who finds himself somewhere *en route* but without a known destination. It might be easy to confuse the roles of Jupiter and Mercury in the horoscope because of these similarities in intent, but Jupiter always has a moral or principled tone to it; there is a higher implication of honour involved with Jupiter than with Mercury.

JUPITER AND THE SUN: HUBRIS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS

Jupiterian traits moderated according to acceptable social behaviour, are in tune with the cultural mores of the time. What was once madness might be today's 'self-expressiveness'. This definition immediately suggests that what is considered personally self-expressive might be in direct conflict with the prescribed social, religious or moral issues of one's family and society. Regardless of the degree of individuality that is consciously ascribed to, there is always the unconscious aspect of Jupiter to attend to.

That Jupiter assists the Sun in development of the ego is without question - all planets do this. However, once we begin our trek out beyond Mars we enter the symbolic realm that specifically concerns society and its needs, which is related to the development of our superego. The super-ego is dependent upon externally imposed dictates and limits, as well as the areas in which exploration and expansion are sanctioned by voices outside ourself, such as parents, family and the social *Zeitgeist*. In the absence of such influences, we could not begin to relate to issues around guilt and shame. As mentioned above, Saturn is most frequently associated with feelings of guilt, but Jupiter plays a strong role in the dimensions pertaining to shame. When we are small children, our exuberance and hubris are alternately found charming and alarming. Running into the street without looking, downing bottles of cleaning fluid, pulling boiling pots off the cooker, climbing the stairs without concern for the return journey - all are normal activities for the young mortal. Childhood knows no limits. Left to their own devices children would, by arbitrary design of the gods, discover their dimensions and capabilities but may not survive. However, if we explain the natural laws of the universe in a reasonable tone, and encourage our offspring to understand why cliffs are dangerous, they learn not to step off into the abyss. By shaming them with their own innocent behaviour (remember, there is no motive here) they then begin to form a distorted view of crime and punishment, as well as of their own ability to perform and achieve. They also begin to form a distorted view of god power in

the form of mortal control, feeling unclean and sordid. Conversely, they could also grow up with a deity complex or 'divine child' syndrome, where everyone but them is wrong.

Sun/Jupiter relationships in the natal horoscope symbolize our inherent desire to achieve our allotted potential. They can also indicate a tendency to overreach. Also, the relationship between the Sun and Jupiter speaks of how we perceive ourselves as being received by our environment as contributing, original, growing social beings. Are we naturally expansive and experimental, extraverted and energetic? Was that inherent adventurousness encouraged with supportive applause, or was it squashed by an over-fearful, hyper-authoritative, or simply very busy, parent? Or, are we a cautious type, not particularly interested in travelling outside our own garden? Was that innate contentment with our own play-space looked upon as antisocial, rude or embarrassing to a more gregarious, ambitious or extraverted parent? The 'Jupiter within' contains all the nascent aspects of personal justice, awareness of what is right and wrong for the individual. The Sun and Jupiter in Capricorn, for example, might be very curious about what is beyond the garden fence, but may not wish to travel out. Eventually such a person may take up, say, the study of ancient anthropology, remaining in the confines of the university rather than travel extensively from site to site. Sun in Aries with Jupiter in Cancer may have a strong pull for adventure but feel happier by turning the home into a stopover for distant friends who travel. These types will have had to find a way to be both Sun and Jupiter, ways of not feeling badly about their own personal style of growth.

With Jupiter as the vehicle not only for solar expansiveness but also for the desire to see some form of divinity in nature, it becomes a more complex symbol. It appears to be a tribal planet, in so far as it functions instinctually as a homing device, a sensor for us to find our own kind of people. Being naturally sensitive to strangers and foreigners, it guides us towards our natural social groups. That these groups and tribal collectives might fall outside normal social values is not at issue - punks, hippies, skinheads, yuppies, aristocrats, artists, intellectuals, revolutionaries, and so on, all have their own ethics and confines. Jupiter's radar finds our collective identity and slots us into our comfort zone. Moreover, we find individual identity within those boundaries by expressing our beliefs, codes and biases. This automatically identifies Jupiter as an elitist - the hierarchic and autocratic planet within.

JUPITER RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

The separation of the Sun and Jupiter when it is retrograde is balanced almost perfectly between the stationary-retrograde trine

and the stationary-direct trine. As soon as Jupiter makes the first trine, moving into the opposition zone from the Sun, it is within only a few days of the actual station and virtually motionless.

Of all the retrograde positions this one seems the least malefic, if only because of the diversity of its possible external expression. The polymorphic nature of the god Jupiter, his depth and breadth of influence, all contribute to the difficulty in isolating characteristics and definitive traits to assign to the astrological planet. Most of Jupiter's keywords and traits are abstract and philosophical, easily translated into a variety of expression and not easily delineated. This is partly due to the fact that Jupiterian traits transmute through cultural eras, and its influence seems to change with social fluctuations and beliefs. For instance, what is thought of as 'Bohemian' in one culture is another culture's easy peasant life. Likewise, Bohemian in one era might become middle-class in the next generation. Even though, as the supreme deity of the Greek pantheon, Jupiter's position was absolute and his word ultimate, the implicit rules that cultures and societies embody always fluctuate with the religious and moral ethos of the time. Boundaries and definition in the form of creeds and laws do change.

The relationship between the Sun and Jupiter is mutually supportive and complementary - indeed, we find that Jupiter/Zeus was a dispenser of laws, representative of Helios, just as Apollo was. The Sun appears to collude more happily with Jupiter, even when in quincunx or opposition! Jupiter's role in the development of the ego might well be to overinflate it periodically in order for it to experience limits and mortal definition. The strongest common threads found in horoscopes with Jupiter retrograde are: a split social or religious background; a revolutionary parent; a restless, unsatisfied home background, or one in which social status was acutely important, either positively or negatively; an overinflated sense of adventure or valour; tunnel vision about education, either feeling inferior intellectually or being obsessed with research or single-focus education; passionate identification with tribalism.

Jupiter retrograde is frequently found in the charts of those who respond to an instinctive sense of justice, one at odds with the family's idea of proper behaviour. They find they must leave their birth background, sometimes literally emigrating or abandoning their cultural surroundings, to find their own, personal 'tribe'.

Both trine aspects promote an easygoing type of person, one who feels gifted in some way and frequently is. An inner sense of propriety and righteousness may occasionally manifest as complacency and lack of ambition, a preference for allowing the gods 'to will it', rather than work assiduously at long-term projects. The deep inner knowledge of being privileged, if not balanced by other more humble aspects in the horoscope, emerges through the personality as the 'special one' or the 'divine child'. Being internally confident of support from the immortals can result in hubris -overextension of one's true boundaries and an exaggerated sense of omnipotence.

The opposition of the Sun to Jupiter manifests in inflation, where the Sun's power as a vehicle for the ego is magnified, and feelings of omnipotence charge the system. The manic phases are often balanced by the extreme opposite - an inordinate sense of inadequacy or, positively, humility. The moral tone can be quite vibrant in the Sun-Jupiter opposition, but the undertone may be fear. Out of this anxiety can arise great work and tremendous courage and optimism; a solid, working faith in a supreme deity or power; and the capacity to inspire others by transferring an inner spirit across matter. Humour, a form of cosmic healing, is not unavailable to Jupiterians who recognize their relative unimportance in the greater scheme of things.

If the natal Jupiter is direct at birth and will turn retrograde by secondary progression in the course of one's life, the year that it stations-retrograde will begin a time of gradual withdrawal from old, outmoded beliefs and mechanical behaviour. Superficial values may be cast off, or those which are not true to a central belief system. One might leave a profession which has outlived its purpose perhaps, or re-enter the education system to acquire greater knowledge or advance one's already established career.

Conversely, one may enter the world, if one has been living outside it in some way, for the inner experience needed to balance out and properly embody one's spiritual or religious path. Some form of internal initiation rite takes place. If one has blindly followed an externally ordained path, redress may be required in the form of a series of tests of faith, to see if it is authentic to one's own

centre and sustainable as the outer world becomes ever less significant. A serious injury or wounding of the spirit may require exploration, especially if one has been hubristic and assumed that the Sun or the ego controls the soul. Retrogression implies that the planet bows to the Sun, giving back power to the source, and of all the planets, Jupiter can allow one to lose perspective on one's relative importance in the universe. The station-retrograde is followed about four to six years later by the progressed Sun's trine to Jupiter, which marks the point of incorporation of the newly explored territory. By this time, one feels more in tune with the shifting reality and the inversion of egocentric values. Ideally, this is a time of great peace, a time when the world of form and social values is of little importance and one has learned some valuable lesson about humility - not humiliation -that adds depth, strength and authenticity to one's philosophy. It may no longer be necessary to adhere to a chosen path, or speak avidly about one's beliefs, it being sufficient just to live them, happily, peacefully and in harmony with the laws of nature. People might find themselves more comfortable with the basics of life, such as the body and its demands, in a simpler, less complicated lifestyle which reflects an inner harmony, or a heartfelt relationship based on equality rather than dominance-submission complexes.

If Jupiter is retrograde natally, and will turn direct by progression in the course of the life, the year in which it stations-direct marks a turning-point in one's life path also, by urging more extraverted participation. That is, it will seem as if everything one has done up until that point has been an experiment and untried in the world. The station will have been heralded by the progressed Sun trine to Jupiter about three to five years earlier, and would have prepared one psychologically for the release. A growing feeling of confidence and maturity is part of the process of the station-direct, a new sense of liberation and freedom, experimentalism and excitement.

There may need to be a test of values; one may have to live out one's beliefs by paying back to the collective some due. One's 'apprenticeship' may become 'journeyman' status, and in the few years following the station, once Jupiter moves out of the stationary motion, a great surge of power and enthusiasm for life and its benefits propels one towards one's destiny.

Jupiter's direction can be a release from morbidity or unproductive introversion, as one becomes more externalized and less egocentric. Broadening horizons and exploring new lands, either literally or metaphorically depending on one's lifestyle and age, brings the mark of experience to theoretical meandering.

Marlene

In the case of Marlene, with a Leo Sun and Pisces Moon, the thread which is woven through the family dynamic is a religious one. She has Jupiter retrograde in Capricorn in the first house, sitting in the opposition

zone to a great stellium of six planets in the seventh house, beginning with Uranus at 3° of Cancer through Saturn at 6° of Virgo. Her mother was a strict Baptist, while her father was 'open-minded'. This I say with reservation because he made no attempt to stop or ameliorate the rigorous and often cruel treatment that Marlene and her sister received at the hands of their Godfearing mother. When they were adolescents, the girls were not allowed to wear make-up or fashionable clothes, and were forbidden to go to the cinema or the usual school parties. In short, they were alienated from others by their mother's moral restrictions. Marlene's sister, two years younger, also has Jupiter retrograde, but in the exact opposition to Saturn from 7° of Aries to 7° of Libra.

When Marlene broke out of the family she went to fashion design school and trained as a consultant and designer. She then taught at a fashion training college herself. When her progressed Sun made the trine to Jupiter, three years before it stationed and turned direct, she bolted out of a marriage which had been restricting, and when Jupiter actually did station-direct, she went back to university to fulfil her intellectual needs. Part of her Jupiter complex had to do with her fear of marrying a man who dominated her just as her mother had, but it also manifested in feeling intellectually undernourished and inferior.

Marlene's early reaction to the imposed religious doctrine had been to rebel against it, going into the fashion business, but the release point of Jupiter's station delivered a more mature, 36-year-old reaction: to further her knowledge. She decided to take a degree in religious anthropology. By the time she had seen some of the world and its wonders, and matured to the extent that she could

consciously recognize what her upbringing had left cloistered within her, she realized that the religiosity of her mother did run through her, although the more objective nature of the father was becoming increasingly apparent. The subjectivity of the adolescent rebellion became the objectivity of her mid-life awareness, and the parental split began to be integrated as Marlene began to discover ways of incorporating the separated Jupiter into the whole of her Self.

Diana

Diana has a singleton retrograde Jupiter in Capricorn in the fourth house, Sun in Leo and Moon in Sagittarius (see [fig. 8.1](#)). She felt swallowed and repressed by her family values and stifled by their attitude. She separated from her parents after a great flare-up in 1985, and completely lost contact with them; indeed, she was even unsure of their whereabouts at the time of consultation in 1990. As for her sisters, none of them keep in touch with one another, although each knows where the other is. Diana is the eldest of three sisters, and her Jupiter in Capricorn, especially retrograde, has contributed to her feeling that her 'treasure' has been swallowed, or at least buried, by the pressures of the family dynamic. Her flight from them is to find roots deeper than those of blood.

There are some dimensions of life which can only be attributed to fate, and Diana's search for roots and values which are more specific to her inner self, rather than to what society deems fit, have led her to complete a BA degree in women's studies at university. She specializes in nineteenth-century women's history and the historical social position of women. As a feminist lesbian, she has clearly found her tribe and spiritual affiliation, with codes, ethics and dynamics with which she can truly identify.

In 1993 the progressed Sun trine to Jupiter heralds the progressed Jupiter station-direct in 1995, and this should bring her closer to the expression of her deep, inner desire for liberation from oppression not only of her family but of what she rightfully perceives society to have done to the status of women. I would be very comfortable in predicting that Diana finds great reward in what she has accomplished for herself by that year, having not only slain a dragon but retrieved her treasure. In the course of ritual expurgation, her inner sense of power will no longer be dependent upon rebellion and anger but upon incorporation and integration of personal values resulting in a strong, healthy ego. Only then will she be free of her family, and the likely result will be safe reunion with them.

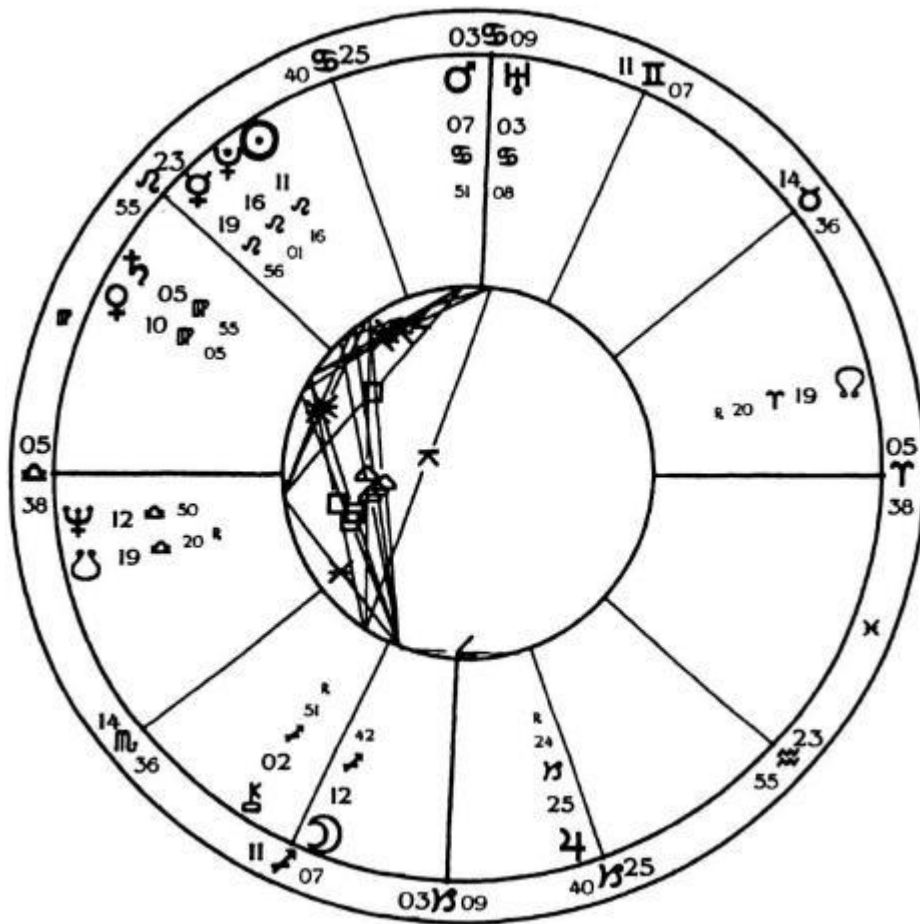


Fig. 8.1 Diana

Helena Blavatsky

Helena P. Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, had an exact opposition from the Sun in Leo to Jupiter in Aquarius

conjunct Uranus. In *Profiles of Women* Lois Roddin notes that there were widely divergent reports of her private life: ‘. . . that she had two celibate marriages, or that she secretly had a child; that she communed with the revered masters of the inner world government, or that she herself was a master of psychism.’ Marvellous! Undoubtedly all these exciting possibilities are exacerbated by the Jupiter-Uranus retrograde conjunction in the eighth house, but Mme Blavatsky performed a number of Sun-Jupiter opposition activities both authentically and well.

Her horoscope is one of tremendous and focused power, not one given over to frivolity or light-hearted Sun-Jupiter activities. Her genuine allegiance to an omniscient organizing principle based on secret (Moon opposite Pluto and trine Jupiter) but natural laws (*phusis*) arises directly from what could equally have been an over-inflated sense of personal destiny. The fact that her teachings have been, and continue to be, such a rich source of inspiration demonstrates a mysterious factor at work: one cannot tell from the horoscope alone how the basic tenets of planetary influence or arrangement are going to manifest.

Mme Blavatsky was very likely a difficult person to live with, dogmatic and obsessive, working towards a destiny, one which would brook no interference from mere mortals. She was a controller, an individual with little patience for boring tasks - at least boring to her. The scope and detail of her work and researches show the capacity to do boring things, but what she did with that gathered information rests in the amazing volumes *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. The assistance of the Virgo Mars, Saturn and Mercury stellium in the third house, which could easily have acted as a deterrent or as an intellectual inferiority complex, manifested in meticulous organization of detail. It seems evident that Jupiter acted as a lens through which knowledge might be gathered, sorted and disseminated, becoming, finally, a doctrine.

If she ever succumbed to hubris, it must have been mildly or briefly, for there are numerous examples of what happens to ‘spiritual leaders’ when their ego is identified with a god. None of the retributive action of a god importuned fell upon Mme Blavatsky’s head. It becomes evident that she kept respectfully within her mortal dimensions, perhaps propitiating her daimon through the serious, hard work necessary to fulfil the orders from on high.

That Jupiter retrograde is in Aquarius - the sign of the collective - disposed by Uranus, as well as being the ruler of her sixth house of tasks and mundane work, ties in her vocation with the slog necessary to any accomplishment. The Sun being in Leo, her personal identity was indeed bound up with her purpose in life, but enacted in an admirable way.

Jupiter retrograde as a singleton, or sole retrograde planet

If Jupiter is separated from the main gestalt of the horoscope, and forms a handle to a bucket or funnel pattern, it manifests more dramatically than if it is at the end of a line of planets in a locomotive chart. As a separated planet its *modus operandi* fluctuates wildly, resulting in bipolar moods and outrageous visions, not all of which are mad. It can be the source of tremendous inner inspiration to lead others in the same fantastic dance which they perform. People with this Jupiter have inspired many others to view the world with a new eye and to charge towards new horizons in pioneering religions, artistic visions, musical genius, philosophical schools and, in the cases of two Americans, J. P. Morgan and Randolph Hearst, capitalistic creativity.

Those with less of a vocation for reformation, Jupiter singleton leads far from their homeland. Sometimes this is literal: they feel cut off from their roots, religion, race or country and wander, looking for the new homeland. The configuration manifests in what astrologer Isabel Hickey called 'divine homesickness', where one is unaccountably homesick for wherever one is not, quite unaware of the source of this deep alienation. The individual is required to find an interior home, regardless of the exterior environment.

In contrast to the lonely wanderer are those individuals who feel that they are planetary citizens, comfortable in any culture, happy to be seeing new ways of behaviour and experiencing genuine participation in humanity as a family of diverse individuals. These people are not travelling to avoid themselves but journeying to complete themselves. They are armchair philosophers, people of great inner wisdom and at ease with that position of alienation. The sense of alienation within their own nuclear family drives them to explore far and wide for their family, often to find a network more

emotionally and psychologically nourishing than the exclusive, cloistered, family ethos. Jupiter singletons rarely feel a part of their own cultural and familial history, but part of a larger metahistory, one which they will circle the globe to connect with, either intellectually through studies or literally through travel.

The configuration can be behind religious fervour and fantasies about finding the perfect guru - always a Jupiterian danger, but particularly complex in the singleton situation. Conversely, one might find oneself the focus of other people's religious and spiritual fantasies, where one receives the projections from others - Jupiter out of the astrological round is a hook for divine projection, and the bearer can become the screen upon which others see their own divinity. The difficulty with being a spiritual leader is the potential for being sacrificed, to pay off a collective spiritual or moral debt.

Great consciousness and awareness of the potential for self-inflation and hubris are required, and it is therefore essential that people with an alienated Jupiter find work or a project that is genuinely altruistic, where their gain comes through the work, rather than as profit. In this way, they pay the debt to the collective and truly experience the generosity and benevolence that is inherent in Jupiter. If others might benefit from their profit, then that too must be taken into account.

Another problem that arises with a cut-off Jupiter retrograde is moral angst: undifferentiated guilt or shame which emerges out of a powerful Old Testament god complex. It is too easy for the singleton Jupiter to constellate all the guilt of the centuries and experience it as a personal flaw. Too often, the Jupiter singleton person was seen in the family as the divine child archetype, which vests far too much responsibility in the child and provokes much anger in the adult. If the special child fails at something, then he or she interiorizes the shame, knowing full well that divinities do not cry. Internalizing the sins of the collective or the family, which can result in self-abnegation and self-punishment, is a pathology inherent in this position. It can result in symptoms such as substance abuse, eating disorders, fanatical athleticism, self-abusive behaviour, obsessions and Zeus-like sexuality.

The converse of this is the moral arbiter - the self-appointed, self-anointed leader of the masses - where grandiose self-images

contribute to inflated claims of power and resources. Not that there may not be an element of truth in the claims, but the danger lies not in the power, but in the use of power. Ideally, a young flamboyant individual with this feature matures to find a special path through which he or she might develop potential into active talents.

If Jupiter is attached to the gestalt of the horoscope in a way which engages the ego in a recognizable working fashion, then highly visionary and pure experiences can be channelled through the individual. The

individual in turn transfers the vision to others. The planet's singleton power, then, can operate as a lens through which all ideals and morals are focused, creating a remarkably warm, sincere, magnetic individual whose presence lends courage to others.

Well-known people with Jupiter retrograde:

Angela Davis

Betty Friedan

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Mary Shelley

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

as a singleton:

Princess Anne

Susan Atkins

Robert Burton

John Calvin

Miguel de Cervantes

Jean Cocteau

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

William Randolph Hearst

Hermann Hesse

David Hume

Jean Jacques Rousseau

Richard Strauss

August Strindberg

9

NATAL SATURN RETROGRADE

Then, as each child issued from the holy womb
And lay upon its mother's knees, each one
Was seized by mighty Kronos, and gulped down.

Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. Dorothea Wender

THE MYTHOLOGICAL SATURN

With the arrival at Saturn, we begin to encompass large, generational groups born with the planet retrograde. With a retrograde Saturn, psychological episodes and inherent traits remarkably parallel the mythological background of Kronos/Saturn.

Saturn is chthonic, not celestial - an Earth god who temporarily held position as a great ruler over the peaceful Golden Age, but lost his celestial status at the decline of that halcyon era. His golden reign had followed the castration of his own father, Ouranos, and he was himself subsequently overthrown and succeeded by his son Zeus, an authentic sky god.

By the act of swallowing his own children, Kronos functioned as a surrogate mother for five of his six devoured offspring. Those children, having been born once through Rhea, became twice-born through the entombment in Kronos' body. His motives for the secondary gestation of the children were fear of losing power and ruthless determination to persist in an outmoded style. Imprisoning his own creative issue, Kronos' actions exemplify our own fear of delivering a new aspect of ourselves and risking the rejection or misunderstanding of others. People 'swallow their fear', 'choke back emotion', 'devour their loved one' - there is nothing new in this behaviour. Oddly enough, often the more intimate the relationship the greater is the fear and anticipated risk of showing one's weakness or vulnerability. The archetype of the swallowed or undelivered creative issue is a drama which we all, to a greater or lesser degree, enact at times of change.

In many ways Saturn retrograde poses as a pregnant man. The true crime of Kronos/Saturn was his attempt to preserve the status quo by suspension of natural gestation cycles, thwarting natural evolution. Unless Saturn reigns supreme he is disgruntled, jealous, confused and ineffective, assuming roles that are not designed for his talents. An unhappy Saturn in the natal chart often presents itself as a distorted or unnecessarily bounded ego; conversely, it manifests as an infantile lack of effective boundaries, resulting in the construction of unnecessary walls, defensive barriers and chilly reserve.

Traditionally Saturn is aligned with the masculine function, specifically the father principle, but there is reason to believe that it is a collusion between both parents that produces Saturn issues or boundary issues in human psychology. Kronos/Saturn, in swallowing his own offspring, feared their eventual maturation and ego separation from him. This is a chilling myth, but one which continues to be demonstrated repeatedly, in myriad ways and in greater or lesser degrees, in more modern times.

The fusion of fourth and tenth house, mother and father, that Saturn embodies is inferred in Manilius when he writes:

Where at the opposite pole [the IC] the universe subsides, occupying the foundations, and from the depths of midnight gloom gazes up at the back of the Earth, in that region Saturn exercises the powers that are his own: cast down himself in ages past from empire in the skies and the throne of heaven, he wields as a father power over the fortunes of fathers and the plight of the old.

1

The *imum caelum*, or fourth house, in Manilius' dodecatropos doctrine was called Daemonium, and was the temple of Saturn, governing both parents. Its opposite point at the *medium caelum* was the temple of Fortuna, dominion of Venus, and governed marriage. These temples are not the older, traditional houses but sectors of the sky in which particular gods held dominion. It is not traditional astrology, but it is an interesting system when we consider the IC and the fourth house as the temple of darkness, the mysterious witness and the place

in which one's legacy of family myths and secrets is contained.

The fourth house is associated with the Moon and the womb in traditional astrology - the womb and the tomb are closely aligned by their very nature, both holding the unborn. Saturn entombed his offspring in his pseudo-womb and refused delivery of them, indeed, an induced delivery was necessary. There is much about Saturn that speaks of this phenomenon: muted boundaries and over-bounding are features and flaws of Saturn. Suppression of creative issue is a Saturn feature which can be both necessary and problematic, depending on the circumstances. For mature and fully developed creation to emerge from the body or the mind a proper incubation and gestation period is required. Should that time be prolonged it then becomes pathological and needs forcible inducement.

SATURN AND THE SUN: CONTAINMENT OF THE EGO

The Sun and Saturn are natural polarities, each complementing the other. They are by nature brother and enemy, Sun and shadow. A healthy, contained ego structure is the positive essence of the Sun-Saturn collusion, but this state is never a static balance. Relative to ego development, the primary function of Saturn is to contain and define the Sun, and lend it viable form through limitation and distinction between 'out there' and 'in here'. Saturn is the homoeo-static principle in the psychic system and struggles to maintain the status quo in all situations of psychic distress or challenge. When there is no such adversity to incite activity, Saturn offers a conservation of energy, a regulator to the boundless radiation of the solar principle. That the Sun is both the ego and the deeper Self attests to its omnipotence and versatility of expression, but Saturn acts as a governor over the solar function and allows only discrete particles of radiation to emanate at specific times, thus identifying the ego and funnelling it through distinctive channels which then become incorporated into what we call our personality.

The Sun-Saturn polarity is the distinction of incarnation which brings conscious awareness to individuals of their objective separation from the area in which they participate:

The ego is born when a conscious separation of the observer from the observed occurs. An infant only begins to develop an ego when it recognizes its body as a separate entity from its environment, its mother in particular . . . An individual continues to develop an ego as he increases his differentiation of self from others. The distinction of self from others is solar consciousness asserting itself over lunar consciousness, bound by Saturn.

2

In the lifelong course of self-identification it is required that we separate and differentiate ourselves from many collectives - from the family, the community, the culture, the country itself, the global collective and from the unconscious impulses stemming from the deepest recesses of the collective human pool. That we are both protectively contained and entombed in these collectives is descriptive of Saturn's ambivalence. The function of Freud's super-ego, the external reminder of our limits within our environment - family and society - all sounds very Saturnian. Our instinctual responses are unconditionally condoned for a very limited period of time, usually early infancy, but as we become increasingly conscious of our external world that Edenic state begins to recede into the unconscious and we are increasingly constrained either to define

or to repress raw instinct. The solar-Self is defined by Saturn to become the solar-ego, through parental teachings initially, then via all social contact. The Saturnian super-ego is the aspect of the unconscious that has subliminally accepted definitions and rules, not those arising from within oneself but those which have been derived from agencies of the environment and incorporated as personal values. These are the values which are weakest and are crushed and broken during times of self-doubt. Generally, our inherent values withstand examination, but the adopted ones crack and shatter. We change largely because we tend to define ourselves through our super-ego, that is, the aspect of ourselves which will be accepted in a particular society, whichever one we wish to be enfolded in. Every confrontation with prescribed parameters in life, from birth to death, invokes the Saturnian archetype.

Saturn's role in ego development is as both guardian and gaoler. While Mars acted as the externalizing force for ego expression, and Jupiter as the moral arbiter, Saturn is the definition point beyond which no mortal values apply. Contained within Saturn's boundaries

are the Sun and inferior planets (the identity trinity), and the inner superior planets, those which are shaped and defined according to social dictates. The contributions of each planet towards civilizing the ego are regulated and checked at Saturn. Clearly this means that periods of crystallization occur which freeze development, subordinating the ego to pressures from the outside world.

The entombment of Kronos' offspring and their subsequent release precipitated a long battle resulting in the establishment of a new social order - the release of the swallowed offspring heralded the birth of a new pantheon. Within our own psyche are all the participants in this myth - the incipient pantheon, the encapsulation of multiple forces contributing to self-identification, the interior battle for the right to self-rule and self-expression, and, of course, the first cause: Saturn.

SATURN RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

In her book on Saturn, Liz Greene points out that the Sun and Saturn are always in combat in the horoscope regardless of whether or not they are in aspect, but that when they *are* in formal aspect the process of ego development is quicker, or felt to be more urgent, than when they are not.

3 The only major aspects that can be formed between the Sun and Saturn when it is retrograde are the trine, sesquiquadrate, quincunx and opposition (see [chapter 6](#) for specific delineations of the major aspects between the Sun and superior retrograde planets). When the Sun is square Saturn, it is at either end of its slowest motion and in preparation either to station-retrograde or station-direct. The squares, sextiles and conjunction with the Sun are reserved for the direct-motion Saturn.

The two antithetical but symbiotic forces of Sun and Saturn are in a head-on confrontation, a power struggle for supremacy and authority, striving to achieve a workable balance between raw power and mature control. Whether or not there is exact angular contact between the two is irrelevant, because we know that retrogression is in itself an aspect with the Sun. Saturn naturally contains and limits for the purpose of gestating or creating a continually maturing ego. Saturn retrograde individuals are particularly responsive to the environment and its subliminal messages. The ego screen has minute holes in it, allowing free passage between their self-identity and socially defined identity. There is often an underlying anxiety about being accepted and loved for who they really are, which can barely be assuaged by reassurance from others of their worth and value.

Creative people with Saturn retrograde often complain of their inability to believe in their creations. It is terribly important that their offspring be accepted by others, that their inner self be reflected in the environment and validated by objective measurement. Their ability to deliver their creativity is dependent upon whether or not it will be incorporated into the status quo. If left alone too long, they begin to disbelieve their own existence and withdraw into a womb-like state. To balance the isolation which seems necessary to their creative process, there is often a reactive behaviour pattern of extraverted socializing. Inevitably the indiscriminate socializing leads to exhaustion, and the cycle of withdrawal, loss of ego, emergence and redefinition of ego begins again.

The whole function of the birth process for these individuals is often stressful and tentative until a vehicle for creative expression is developed, *or* until they are liberated from an overly constrained self-conscious and egocentric viewpoint, bound by social acceptability. The house in which Saturn retrograde is located will isolate the area that is most insecure and inhibited and in need of stimulus and incentive to fulfil the person's creative abilities. Conversely, the Sun's sign and house position highlight where the creative spirit might be best explored and delivered, by working in or creating avenues of expression which exemplify the realms of experience located in the house. The Sun is the focus, the lens through which the retrograde planet can demonstrate its 'direct' side, solarizing the creative blockage.

The fluctuating boundaries of the Saturn retrograde person might be partially attributed to how he or she experienced the father. He is often absent - either physically or emotionally - and looms mytho-logically large by his absence. In this way the power of the father is less diminished than strengthened, though frequently a healing occurs later in life between the individual and his or her father, particularly if Saturn stations-direct by secondary progression. That

the father is the personification of the family satellite, with his prerogatives being superior to other members of the family, sets the tone for the idealization of the man himself, whether or not he himself is superior. To the small child, he comes and goes at will and plans revolve around him - he is both centre and circumference to the family unit. His position in the family is very like both Sun and Saturn in the solar system; in the family of planets in the horoscope, Saturn is the perimeter of the inner circle, and the Sun the centre. If we were to personify Saturn retrograde, he would feel some resentment of this central controlling figure, while experiencing guilt for those selfsame emotions.

Individuals who have Saturn retrograde often vacillate wildly between feeling powerful and centred, capable of handling any obstacle put before them, and being infantile and impotent in the face of life's challenges. This results from a complicated set of defence mechanisms designed to protect a growing ego from undue pressure or attack. These defence mechanisms are inherent in human nature, but the retrograde Saturn tends to be unconsciously inconsistent and ambivalent about the employment of these natural shields. That Saturn retrograde individuals retain a visible measure of undeveloped ego well into adulthood is the key to their seemingly strange pattern of strength and vulnerability.

This pattern can manifest, especially in the Sun-Saturn opposition, as a strong, contained and well-directed ego that protects and defends the infant within. Individuals with this aspect (and, loosely, having the Sun and Saturn in opposite signs) find that they periodically experience a shattering demise of what was once a useful persona and set of standards. Unconsciously there is a powerful fear of losing one's grip, of failing to be contained and subsequently of dissolving and disincorporating, which results in an unduly strong shield against invading forces, such as new ideas, untried activities, distant horizons and all forms of adventure. The reaction to the fear of dissolution is often to create a system or dogma which will lend support to and verify one's existence. Very early in life, Saturn retrograde people start to establish some organizing principle which will validate their inner perceptions. As children they are often observant and quietly discerning, attempting to understand the behaviour of others in the hope of understanding their own wildly unstable sense of authority. This is particularly so when Saturn is a singleton, or situated quite separate from the gestalt of the chart-pattern, even if other planets are retrograde and the opposition is not specifically to the Sun but to the main body of planets.

The more conscious one is of this natural function of the opposition, the less likely it is to be projected on to various forms of authority, resulting in self-defeating habits. The Sun-Saturn opposition contains all the necessary ingredients to be authentic in its supremacy and mastery of worldly matters, but one must always keep in mind that in the process of becoming more of oneself, one must meet one's opposite. Knee-jerk reactions are based on rigid, uncompromising sets of rules which prevent smooth transition into new systems of order. The secure, bounded façade of people with Sun-Saturn opposition masks a deep-seated fear of being overthrown and superseded by new (or younger) systems and more contemporary ideas. Hence, their preoccupation with the development of authoritarian systems. They will be more than usually aware of the authority of Time and its relentless scourge of the old, the tired and the worn. Ironic humour and cynicism are often present as a defence against what they fear might be a profound superciliousness lurking beneath their exterior armour.

The trines of Sun and Saturn occur twice in the retrograde cycle: the stationary-retrograde trine is about twelve days after the actual station date and the stationary-direct trine is about twelve days before. The trines are the slowest moving phases of the Saturn cycle and are the most deceptive of the Sun-Saturn retrograde aspects. About trines, Rob Hand says in *Horoscope Symbols* [my italic]:

Whenever one chooses to act according to the nature of the energies combined by a trine, there is ease of action and lack of difficulty - *so long as one chooses to act within the framework of a status quo in one's life*. Trinal action does not readily alter whatever circumstances may be in force at a particular time, except to restore balance after a previous state of imbalance.

4

In general the Sun-Saturn trine hopes to maintain the status quo and keep externally imposed disruptions at bay, perhaps complacently being lulled into a false sense of inner balance. This all lends a flat note to the ego's expression; one might feel an inner sense of

containment and harmony as long as no fate strikes from without, but should it do so, the tenuous interior calm can fragment. There is no inherent sense of mastery over anything in particular and it must be created with tremendous conscious effort. This aspect has manifested more often than any other in what I call 'The Imposter Syndrome'. The bearers of the Sun-Saturn retrograde trine have little discriminating power against their own internal energy devourer.

The mythic disgoring of creative issue is an apt allegory here, as the Sun-Saturn trine person must force out his or her creative issue. Other more challenging aspects from the Sun to other planets, especially Jupiter, or strong Aries, Scorpio or Plutonian traits, will assist the creative expulsion, but the 'pregnant' Saturn will retain its issue, hoarding nascent energy and creating a sense of psychic inflation and pre-creative depression. Once fully engaged in active creativity, the ego shines and is fully balanced, but this aspect requires extra effort and discipline.

It may be that the father played a passive role, serving as a gentle but ineffective hero. The feminine side of Saturn is quite strong in the trines, symbolically subordinating itself to the domination of the Sun, resulting in a shaky container for a strong ego drive. The abreaction in this case is megalomania, obsessiveness with one's ego development and a striving for acclaim, with the secret fear that if anyone found out who one really was, all the awards would be withdrawn and one would be divested of one's stripes. So, although there is an inherent stasis between ego and container, there is also a soft shell, a delicate buffer between inner and outer balance. Externally imposed stress is not relished because the system is in a constant process of homeostatic regulation and any distraction can break this pattern and disrupt the process of maintaining what is a relatively weak boundary system.

It is, therefore, most important that the trines achieve a sense of true inner authenticity, that they see themselves as the author of their own destiny, utilizing their inner harmony to create a sound and secure outer world for themselves. If the trine is the one which occurs at the stationary-retrograde, it will never go direct in the course of a lifetime, so the only progressed aspects between the Sun and Saturn will be the quincunx and opposition. The years of those progressions will mark significant turning-points in their creative and productive patterns. However, if the trine is the stationary-direct trine, then by secondary progression Saturn will turn direct in a few years (twelve if the trine is exact), marking a significant couple of years when a re-evaluation of power and authority and externalization of inner creative forces begins to occur.

The quincunx - that aspect which the ancients felt to be most malignant because planets in it cannot relate - can be the most paralyzing of angles between the Sun and Saturn. That the Sun and Saturn cannot 'see' each other implies a deeply unconscious and therefore largely unrealized desire for power and control. I have often thought that a periscope was needed to utilize the quincunx; certainly it requires major adjustments in one's perspective on one's effectiveness in carrying out even the most mundane chore. Frequently it indicates a unique talent that needs highly specialized tools to be realized, and a long apprenticeship towards mastery of the gift.

Men with Saturn retrograde are often very close to their feminine function and do well in caring or helping professions. Their sensitivity to nature and the evolutionary aspect of life-cycles is highly creative, and they can act as midwives to others' creativity. In contrast, women with Saturn retrograde find the loss of their fathers excruciating. They frequently have had very warm contact with their fathers in early childhood, but as they mature the contact is broken, either through circumstances like divorce or death, or psychologically when he pulls away from his woman-child. This can result in a particularly harsh animus function, where the woman is racked by a sense of inadequacy and must work extremely hard to compensate for her vulnerability to criticism.

Leyla

The following case history is of a singleton Saturn retrograde in Aries in the ascendant with the seventh house Scorpio Sun in the decelerating quincunx (see [fig. 9.1](#)). A 23-year-old woman whom I will call Leyla came to have a chart done just as she was about to quit her art college; she was depressed and angry about the feelings of responsibility she carried surrounding the 'art theme' in the family, all the members of which were in some fine arts or advertising medium. Saturn rising is frequently found in the charts of elder children, and although Leyla is not the eldest, she is the one who *feels* the responsibility for carrying the family myth and has unconsciously assumed the elder or only child syndrome.

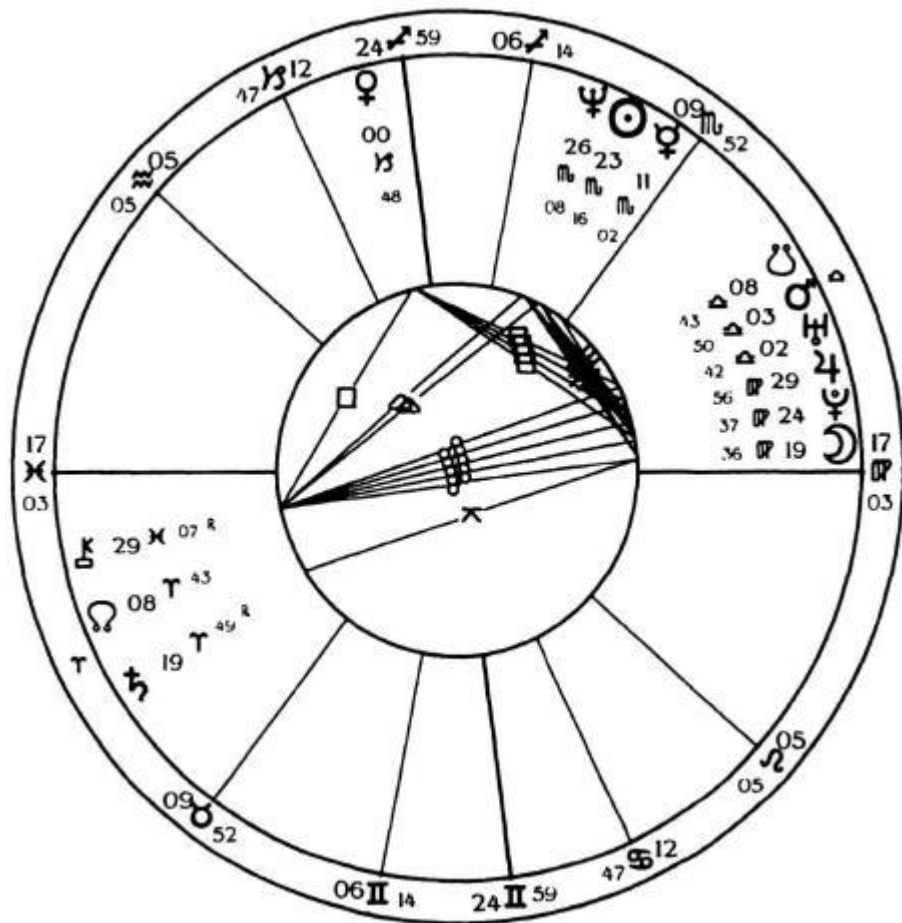


Fig. 9.1 Leyla

That Saturn is isolated in the oriental hemisphere and on the ascendant amplifies Leyla's feelings of separation and alienation not only from her father but from her own sense of inner authority and authenticity. Although her father and brothers have all pursued careers in artistic media, they have done so out of choice and do not feel burdened, bounded by and responsible for this family theme. Leyla is artistically oriented and quite talented herself, and therefore inherently carries the aesthetic values that thread through the family, but in the course of the consultation she stated that she wanted to break out of it.

Her parents divorced when she was fourteen and she did not see her father much after that. She still remains distant from him, yet it was he who arranged for Leyla to come to me for a horoscope analysis. When she spoke of her father she said he had great faith in her and was supportive and obviously caring, but she found his attention burdensome and unwelcome in a very uncomfortable way. Also, her father had a habit of seeing her mother through negative vision, that is, in terms of what she failed to do and what her flaws were. Undoubtedly, as the only female child, Leyla unconsciously identified with her mother and felt an indirect rejection of herself via the mother.

Saturn is also quincunx the Moon at 20° Virgo. Saturn retrograde sits on the inverse midpoint of the Sun and Moon, which is her descendant and forms the base of a yod. Not only does Leyla feel the distance from her father traditional with Saturn retrograde (quincunx the Sun), but the configuration serves as an obstruction between her own inner union of masculine/craft and feminine/art (quincunx the Moon) nature. Ebertin lists these attributes of the Sun-Moon midpoint with Saturn: 'Inner inhibitions or repressions, the state of feeling depressed, increasing loneliness, separation from the community, renunciation, difficulties in the relationship with the other sex, joint and shared suffering, illness, divorce.' Also, about the Sun-Moon midpoint as the meeting-place of the conscious and unconscious, he identifies: 'Disharmony between parents or partners, differences caused by inner tensions, dissatisfaction and the ensuing difficulties.'

5

Leyla is alienated from both parents through the Saturn retrograde because of its intimate contact with both Sun and Moon. More importantly, she feels disconnected from her own inner creative spirit, which distorts her view of her parents. Her feelings about her father perfectly illustrate the possibility that how we view our world may not coincide with what is actually happening. Her

father's encouragement and 'great faith' in her is felt as a burden and distances her from his affections; he inadvertently swallows her creative issue before it is full term. The distance between Leyla and her father was enforced by his departure when she was fourteen. At twenty-three he is now more actively involved in her life, but *she* is not there emotionally.

At the time of the consultation, Saturn in transit was crossing Leyla's MC, signalling a transition into a new world of adventure and experience.

6 In the course of the session, she became acutely aware that she now had to undertake responsibility for the union of her creative nature with herself. It was the very lack of boundaries between herself and the paternal-family myth (the Artist) that created the feeling of intense pressure to fulfil some obscure obligation. The inverse principle applies too: she created inappropriate boundaries within herself to compensate for the lack of a strong ego structure, which led her to feel that she was overpowered by the tradition of the family and was therefore unable to recognize that independently of the family she had her own artistic daimon. This compensatory boundary prevented her from contacting her creative spirit. When she realized that it was herself- her own daimon - that she was rebelling against, she stopped rejecting her own talents and saw that she did belong in an artistic field (Sun conjunct Neptune sextile Moon-Pluto, with Venus at the MC) and must now answer the call to adventure (Saturn transiting the MC) and venture out into her own - as yet unknown - field of creative work.

Sandra

Sandra, almost thirty years older than Leyla, with her Sun in Leo in trine to Saturn in Aries stationary-retrograde, felt alienated from her father (Saturn in the twelfth house) most of her life. She nursed him at home when he was dying and found a renewed strength from that experience. He told her that she had always been his favourite and that he never felt he had to speak about it or say anything to her directly because they had a 'psychic connection'. This revelation shocked her, bringing her to realize that she herself had erected walls between herself and her father, assuming his silence to mean that he did not see her. Her natal Sun in the fourth house, with

Saturn in the twelfth house, does indicate a strong, supportive bond - emotional and unspoken - between father and daughter. His error was a sin of omission, hers was one of assumption.

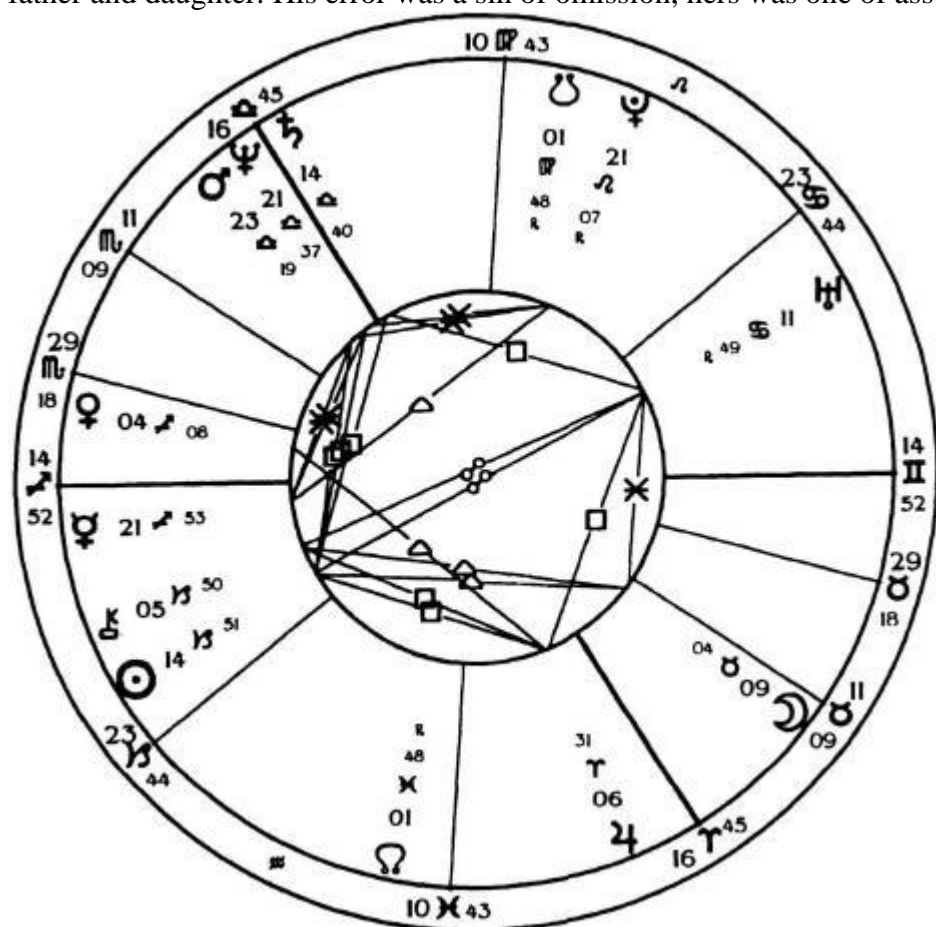


Fig. 9.2 Sandra

Sandra was born with the exact square from the Sun at 14° of Capricorn in the first house to Saturn at 14° Libra in the MC (see fig. 9.2). When Saturn stationed and turned retrograde by progression at eighteen, she

married. Descriptions of Sandra's erratic and unconventional lifestyle do not correspond to the more traditional interpretations of conservative actions, depression or overweening ambition that are associated with Capricorn typology or Sun-Saturn squares. However, having avoided assuming any form of identity which she could call her own, the 'imposter syndrome' manifested in her mid-life.

Keeping in mind that squares from the Sun to outer planets mean that they are at their slowest motion, we might see how Sandra retarded her ego development by transferring or projecting her Saturn on to her husband. In the first nineteen years of marriage she and her husband moved seventeen times (this does not suit the traditional delineation for her fourth house Taurus Moon, either!). When her progressed Sun formed the opposition to her retrograde Pluto she fell passionately in love with another man. Concurrently, in 1987, her husband lost a fortune in the stock market crash and her own joint holdings diminished simultaneously (Pluto is in her eighth house).

Sandra has lived her adult life vicariously through her husband, developing no skills she can call her own. At thirty-seven she came to that frightening realization, and she found herself anxious, deeply unsatisfied and unable to contemplate her future. At the time of the session (and her self-realization) her progressed retrograde Saturn had moved slowly back to the exact minute of its position at birth, evoking recollection of the natal repression. Although the gestalt of the entire progressed chart is very different from the natal picture, when progressed Saturn retrogressed back over its birth minute, it awakened her from a lifetime of denial.

She was an only child whose father was away a lot, working and providing for her. Her mother was a nurse and 'kept busy', that is, did not show the child any affection and paid her little attention. Sandra says she came to terms with being lonely by building walls around herself and encasing herself in a protective barrier. Now that Saturn was sitting back at the natal place, while the Sun moved on to 24° Aquarius, Sandra no longer felt she needed these barriers. The station and retrogression of Saturn in her eighteenth year, coincident with her marriage, implicated her husband in her continued attempts to protect herself from the world. She has always lived within the protective walls of the marriage and considered her affairs as secondary, but what was really lacking in Sandra's life was the capacity for true commitment. The husband is a figure, not a relationship, a human shield against the real world. The meeting with passion in the form of the lover, who appeared in the year of the progressed Sun opposite natal Pluto retrograde, brought this home to Sandra. She considered leaving her husband for this man who awoke latent feelings of passion and ambition, but eventually declined to do so in the knowledge that it would mean committing herself to a full-blown relationship. This is how the natal Saturn square blocked her ego development. Sandra described the end of the relationship as being due to her 'independence', that is, her not wanting to share a house with her lover, but it more likely reflected her deep fears of intimacy. Her ego structure is still bound up with the husband with whom she shares little but material things, but who nevertheless leaves her alone and requires little intimacy.

The year that Saturn retrogressed back to its natal place by secondary progression she found herself deeply unsatisfied with her accomplishments and sought ways of furthering herself in a professional way.

Donald

I met with Donald about nine months after he had attempted suicide. With his natal Moon in the eighth house at 9° of Capricorn, he had been assaulted by Neptune, Saturn and Uranus in late 1989 and early 1990 and had found his anyway rather tenuous grip on his ego completely dissolved. Donald was born when no planets were retrograde at all, but Saturn was in the stationary-retrograde position, and the first planet to turn retrograde by secondary progression (see [fig. 9.3](#)).

Donald's family dynamics are complex. His natural mother was only fourteen when she had him, the father was unknown, and he was adopted by her aunt and uncle, raised as their child and not told about his origins until he was twenty. When he was four, natal twelfth house Uranus stationed-retrograde in his progressed chart and he fractured his skull in an accident. Throughout his long convalescence, his adoptive father, a smallholder, provided all the care. Donald had a very close, loving and enjoyable relationship with his father (Sun in Virgo in the fourth house trine the Moon in Capricorn). He recalls his adoptive mother as being cold and unresponsive to him, and they never really established a warm or close relationship. In the following year, Donald's progressed Mars stationed and turned retrograde (his natal Mars is sextile Jupiter natally, but past the aspect and lacks other overt contacts

to planets) and it is likely that he began to introvert his aggression around this time, an issue that comes up later in his life.

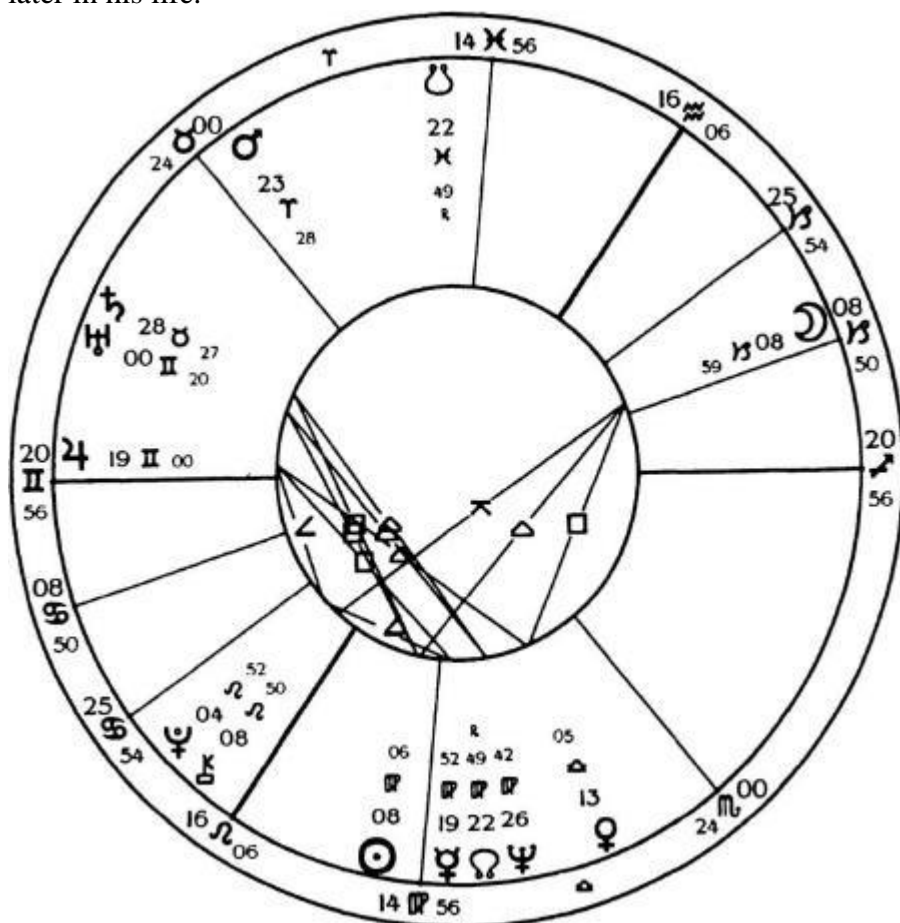


Fig. 9.3 Donald

With Donald's Virgo Sun in the fourth, his Capricorn father was the benevolent Kronos, the Golden Age king. He was virtually mother and father to him, providing not only love and nurture, but protection and companionship too. Father and son also had the Sun-Moon conjunction between them (father's Moon was in Virgo), showing an abiding friendship as well as father-son relationship.

When Donald was nine, Saturn stationed and turned retrograde by secondary progression, and there was critical upheaval by transiting planets as well. When looking at a station-by-progression in the horoscope it is most important to see it in the context of the natal chart as well as of the major transits. The interior experience — the progression - may not be externalized unless transits indicate an environment for the inner shift. Looking at the transits to Donald's natal horoscope for October 1950 we see: Uranus stationary-retrograde at 9° Cancer in opposition to his natal Moon; Saturn transiting the conjunction to his natal Neptune; Jupiter stationing-direct at 28° Aquarius, exactly square his natal Saturn in the twelfth. Along with progressed Saturn stationing-retrograde, there was also a succession of life-altering planetary transits that year, as well as two significant transiting stations.

At this time Donald and his father were working around the property when his father fell from a ladder, dislocating a vertebra in his neck. Though he knew there was an injury, it was not known how serious. A few weeks later he experienced pain, was admitted to hospital and died immediately. The broken vertebra had shifted, cutting the spinal cord.

Donald lost his father the year Saturn turned retrograde, and the literal interpretation 'Saturn retrograde in the horoscope means the father is absent' became sadly true. However, the retrogression of Saturn is not the whole story, we cannot pin the blame on this symbolic movement alone; it describes how Donald felt about his loss, not the loss itself. The devastating removal of his loving father effectively left him bereft of both parents. His mother withdrew into her own mourning process and his father had anyway been his surrogate mother. Two years later Donald was shipped off to boarding-school, severing the tie to mother permanently. The sudden, weird way of dying seems mirrored in the transits:

1. Transiting Uranus stationing-retrograde opposite the Moon in the eighth house: a shattering and internalizing of the emotional sphere through death (eighth house Moon). This transit will leave

an imprint on this degree (9° of Cardinal), which is recollected when Uranus transits Donald's Moon in 1990, as we shall see.

2. Transiting Saturn conjunct Neptune in the fifth house: a cutting off of the psychic anaesthetic; a sudden, abrupt ejection from the womb; expulsion from Eden (which occurs with any Saturn transit to Neptune at any age, time or circumstance).

3. Transiting Jupiter square Saturn in the twelfth house: premature delivery of the child's own Saturn creating profound distance between himself and the world; an insurrection of dark, ominous forces lurking in the unconscious. Jupiter prematurely induced maturity in Donald, far beyond his capacity to cope with it. It was at this tender age of nine that Donald 'shut down', only to be periodically jolted awake at important junctures in his life. At forty (1981) his progressed Jupiter stationed-retrograde and at forty-five (1986) his progressed Mercury stationed-retrograde. At that time he left his accounting job of twenty-five years to do contract work.

In 1990 Uranus transited Donald's natal Moon again, this time by conjunction. For two years the ninth degree of Capricorn had been assaulted by Saturn and Neptune, alternately dissolving and reincorporating emotional issues and recalling that precedent experience of Uranus opposite the Moon. I saw Donald first in October of 1990 and he said that in January of that year he had reached a suicidal point in his life. He became very rational about it, contemplating the detail seriously and with intent. He said that 1990 had been a 'watershed year' and that although he had worked through the seductive suicidal thoughts he was still processing the material that the loosening of his grip on his ego had allowed to surface.

The repeated direct and retrograde transits of Saturn and Neptune had worked both to loosen old memories and deep wounds that he had buried in his eighth house Moon, and to crack the wall erected around his feelings. The advent of Uranus brought the whole system crashing down, fragmenting his already weakening ego. In April of 1990 Uranus stationed-retrograde at 9° Capricorn, the exact opposite station-point to that forty years earlier when Donald's father had been taken so ruthlessly from him. It blew the protective coating from his vulnerable ego, which had been undergoing quiet, interior reconstruction for the two years prior. Humbled and

renewed from his sojourn in the dark valley of his eighth house Moon, the spring of 1990 began a slow process of reorientation and gradual selection of new priorities and life options.

Saturn retrograde as a singleton, or sole retrograde planet

With Saturn isolated or split off from the gestalt of the horoscope there is a strong awareness of one's responsibility to others and a terror of the personal invasion that can come from that obligation. The most important thing for a Saturn singleton is to know the difference between accountability and responsibility and never to confuse the two. The nature of the configuration, which segregates Saturn on the opposite side of the main gestalt of the horoscope, isolates the individual in lonely splendour, enclosing him or her in a psychological tower or fortress.

The intense desire to understand everything and to give everything form can be a positive stimulus towards formulating systems and providing logical explanations. The desire to organize might lead to obsessive disorders in the extreme negative manifestation, but it certainly assists the individual in understanding protocol and natural hierarchical position. By nature such individuals are isolationists and, regardless of wealth and status there is a regal aura about them.

Saturn constellates the shadow function in the psyche in any configuration, but is particularly efficient in doing so when singleton. People with this placement might find themselves inadvertently acting as devil's advocate, creating a structure to contain the unspoken adversarial position. By nature they are aligned with the dark side and rather enjoy the morose, singular life that Saturn proposes. In extreme cases, Saturn singleton can constellate the collective shadow, so that bearers espouse a philosophy of eugenics or racism, projecting all of their own unconscious inferior traits on to certain types or collectives.

The ability to deal with gut terror and fear is assisted by rationalism and existential philosophy. People with Saturn singleton are acutely aware of the absolute boundary surrounding individuals, cultures, ideas, and philosophies and are superbly equipped to cope. Coping becomes a virtue with this placement: this is not the martyrdom of Neptune but of the Stoic who instinctively knows that the Spartan life is the path to enlightened existence.

Saturnian melancholy is inherent in people with the singleton, it is part of their personality. They are not depressives necessarily, but they are serious, reserved and, at worst, paranoid about invasion. Being deeply philosophical and fatalistic they are protected from the foibles of human hurt. Their boundaries are extremely difficult to break down and they are difficult to establish intimacy with. Once established and

secure within a friendship or love relationship, their tendency is to withdraw overt gestures of intimacy and to revert to appearing cold and distant, sure that the friend or lover will understand. It is important, therefore, that the singleton person should learn to make exceptions to his or her general rule of distancing any advances.

It may seem ironic, but there is the nature of the adventurer, explorer and experimenter about Saturnian people. Their ability to stand alone, or to be the first in new surroundings without suffering the pangs of homesickness or insecurity - whether those surroundings are ideological, psychological or geographical - is profound. Their capacity to contain anxiety is boundless. As a result they can adhere to a new principle faithfully, argue its premise and never renege even in the face of the most adamant disapproval, derision or criticism. Because they innately feel isolated from and peripheral to normal mortal emotions and needs, their strength of character does not fail them in adverse situations where they must carve out a new lifestyle or system.

With such deep reserve these people are difficult to contact on an emotional level and can turn their loneliness into a system, a code of ethics. Indeed, the pathological side of the Saturn singleton is sadism, a cold, ruthlessly cruel streak which sucks the emotional vitality out of people who come into close contact with them. The perverse enjoyment of other people's suffering assuages their deep loathing of themselves, allowing them to be convinced that if they feel such pain, then others must need to as well.

Well-known people with Saturn retrograde as a singleton:

Francis Bacon

Daniel Boone

Lewis Carroll

Rene Descartes

Queen Elizabeth II

Havelock Ellis (also JU station-direct; UR retrograde)

Anne Frank (also ME retrograde)

Greta Garbo

Allen Ginsberg

A. E. Housman

Christine Jorgensen

Stanley Kubrick

Marilyn Monroe

Jacqueline Onassis

Marcel Proust

Peter Paul Rubens

Bertrand Russell

Eric Satie

Neil Simon

Jules Verne

Andy Warhol (also UR retrograde)

Colin Wilson

Frank Lloyd Wright

Wilbur Wright

10

THE TRANS-SATURNIAN PLANETS

The gradual assimilation of new and more advanced information, along with rapid changes in processing such information, occurred with each successive discovery of the planets beyond our visual scope in the solar system—Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. Each sighting coincided with a major leap in global and societal (collective) progress, but those experiences, initially considered dramatic and alien, gradually became more accessible, manifesting in individuals in unique and wholly personal characteristics. To sweep the trans-Saturnian planets into a pile of collective imagery is to deny admission to deeper, more profound ways of experiencing life. Indeed, to deny individual accessibility to outer planetary experience is to deny the obvious: they work, however primitive or exalted their manifestation might be.

Dane Rudhyar, writing in the 1940s, called the outermost planets ‘transpersonal’, implying that their content and intent reached beyond the personal conscious ego. He felt that they were of a galactic nature, and not ambassadors to the Sun as the seven classical planets were. They were, therefore, not applicable to solar individuation but acted as stimuli to greater collective consciousness.

2 Alexander Ruperti, carrying on the Rudhyarian tradition, points out that Uranus, Neptune and Pluto may not affect individuals during the retrograde cycles because the planets' motions are operative in a global or even galactic sense. However, he further states that individuals who are representatives or voices of the collective can embody these more esoteric motions and be quite responsive to the transpersonal cycles.

3

That these planets are beyond the bounds of Saturn, which acts as the interface between the ancient and more readily accessible planetary symbols and the relatively newly comprehended planets, whose characteristics and impact continue to evolve today, suggests that collectively our global ego is still in its nascent stage. Trans-

Saturnian planetary assignments develop simultaneously with our collective and individual capacity to apprehend a rapidly unfolding new world-view. With each new sighting of a planet (with a known history of 250-odd years as opposed to about 4000 years), tremendous upheavals, revolutions and remarkable growth spurts have occurred in global affairs, which greatly affected individuals and their quality of life.

Individuality as we now experience it was an unfamiliar concept before the early 1600s. The word then had more of the sense of ‘indivisibility’. The OED shows that by 1605 the term had evolved to define a single object or thing apart from a group of objects, or a single member of a class. However, it was not until 1626 that the term ‘individual’ specifically referred to a single human being distinct from his family or society. From the days when we proudly identified ourselves as part of a collective—be that family, class or culture—to our current obsession with individuality, individualism and *individuation*, no less, we have come to the point where the individual is considered to be a cosmos with its own organizing principle, and one with a profound effect on the collective.

The birth of ego and individualism has a long history. Individualism became a conscious concern at least 2500 years ago as the philosophers of ancient Greece grappled with the concepts of personal responsibility, volition and religious observation. With the establishment of democracy in fifth-century Athens the idea of individual effect on a collective psyche became accepted, though elaborate laws were formulated to govern individual behaviour within the context of the state. For individuals to be without position in a hierarchy was considered a dangerous condition, and so began the long struggle for emancipation in which we still find ourselves engaged.

In our most recent history, we have moved from a world-view in which the collective is the individual and intrinsically governs it, towards a philosophy in which individualism inspires and affects the activities of the whole. This concept implies that the individual not only contributes to but *controls* the collective. This transition has been quickened in the last three to four hundred years. On 13 March 1781 Uranus was accidentally sighted, and was finally named after the Greek word for sky, *ouranos*, the mysterious place ‘out there’ in the upper ether. After Uranus, two more planets were discovered:

Neptune on 23 September 1846 and Pluto on 21 January 1930. Since the discovery of Pluto, the comet Chiron has also been assimilated into our astrological framework, sighted on 1 November 1977. In the two hundred or so years since Uranus' sighting the globe has become a community in which an event in South Africa can be known in western Canada within minutes. With the shrinking world, the prerogative of the individual has grown in leaps and bounds. The social philosopher Marshall McLuhan's ‘global community’ has been achieved.

Since the 1950s, astrologers have begun successfully to incorporate the trans-Saturnian planets into personal horoscope interpretations, integrating them into the whole of the personality. Rather than saying to a client, ‘Oh, billions of people born between 1914 and 1939 have Pluto in Cancer; therefore it only means that you are part of a generation who struggled to build the foundations for the nuclear family under the most arduous and trying social circumstances,’ we now see how the outermost planets increasingly operate within consciousness. Not only do the outer planets have individual meaning, they also have meaning for the individual. So, although the social impetus to destroy the past and create a new future is bound up with Pluto, we now see how each person harbours this urge as well. The same is true of each of the outer planets. The connecting link between the inner solar system—Sun through Saturn and Chiron—and the outer realm has now been made secure quite successfully, because the doors of perception, once opened, cannot be closed. Until the late 1900s we have variously described the trans-Saturnian planets as: collective,

generational, unconscious, galactic, transpersonal, esoteric, primordially archetypal—all of which they are—but we are now seeing how they function integrally in the gestalt of the horoscope, the psyche and the whole person. They are no longer relegated to the ether, darkly foreboding in their unexpected and catastrophic action. There are many ways of viewing this phenomenon, and equally numerous explanations as to why the individual is increasingly more consciously connected to the outer reaches of inner space. This does not much diminish the degree to which we all, as individuals, remain politically and socially responsive and often subordinate to collective movements, but it does mean that we can find greater meaning and deeper inner resources while participating in our world.

The discovery of Chiron was one of the links. Its eccentric orbit and inclination to the ecliptic are such that it appears to be a wanderer across the boundary between the social and outermost planets. It inclines 6.9 per cent to the ecliptic (as compared to Mercury at about 7 per cent and Pluto at 17 per cent) so that its apparent position relative to our view of other planets is elongated in some signs and foreshortened in others. Its orbit allows it to travel back and forth between Saturn and Uranus when it is at aphelion in Aries, and then between Jupiter and Saturn when at perihelion in Libra. For instance, it is between the orbits of Saturn and Uranus from December 1970 to July 1996 (from Aries to Virgo), then crosses into the orbit between Jupiter and Saturn for July 1996 through to 2020 (from Libra to Pisces). It spends half its time beyond Saturn and half its time within the boundary. Chiron is, therefore, both an inner and an outer planet, depending on where it is in its orbit. For some individuals natively it is an inner planet and for others an outer planet. However, its pattern shows it to embody not only the characteristics of both inner and outer planets but also some other, mysterious factor pertaining to one's personal fate. Chiron acts as a bridge between one's personal consciousness and the unconscious, linking fate and free will. The development of the ego in Chironian terms means coming to grips with the inevitable, experiences which cannot be processed through solar system individuation—that is, the process of becoming as described by planetary symbolism from the Sun through Saturn—but must be employed as a wounding-tool to accept and incorporate that which *cannot* be explained or altered.

4

There are distinctly personalizing features relevant to the outer planets: first, they are placed in the confines of the chart by house position; secondly, they are aspected by inner planets; and thirdly, they have a relationship with the Sun regardless of whether the Sun is in classical aspect or not. We know that Kronos/Saturn severed Ouranos from Gaia for ever, establishing the boundary absolute. The outer planets are the realms beyond the boundaries of fixed forms; they represent, on the psychological level, options in consciousness and the potential for expansion within the individual experience. These planets might well be *more* individual and *more* personal than any of the classical planets. It is through these three distant bodies that we find potentially greater avenues for personal ego expression, precisely because they are less bound up with the strictures of societal expectation and more connected to vast, sweeping change. These planets require us to stretch beyond prescribed traditional values to become more distinct, unique and individual.

The impact of the discovery of each outer planet is in proportion to the development and preparedness of the collective unconscious for its 'appearance'. The planets were always there, lurking unseen in the heavens, obscured by our visual limitation. Placing those planets in horoscopes which antedate their discovery has proved to be revealing.

For example, Marie Curie was born in 1867 with the Sun in the stationary-retrograde trine to Uranus in her chart. We knew about Uranus then. We also knew about Neptune in her time, and it was aspected by her natal Sun in the decelerating quincunx, calling her to an unknown destiny. Neptune rules chemistry and she was a chemist—so far quite good. However, Pluto was *not* sighted, and we did not know then that Marie Curie had an exact opposition from the Sun in Scorpio to Pluto retrograde in Taurus from the eighth to second houses! The insertion of Pluto into her horoscope is certainly revealing considering the long-term results of her experimentation. That she, with her eighth house Sun in Scorpio opposite to Pluto, would unveil the future death-weapon by her discovery of radium would not have been known to her or any astrologer in 1906.

Uranus is associated with original ideas, discovery and invention. After the sighting of Uranus, new reaches in collective and individual freedom unfolded, sometimes in a revolutionary fashion. Similarly, the subsequent discovery of the other trans-Saturnian planets—the unveiling, as it were—was synchronous with an explosion of collective awareness. As the archetypes inherent within the image of the planet become more essential to collective evolution, they also become more accessible to individual consciousness. The

outer planet discoveries celestially externalized the birth of new collective consciousness. As the collective began increasingly to manifest that which had been only symbolically associated with the images vested in the planet, individuals began to incorporate those energies into a central, personal experience. With each successive discovery, new horizons emerged on a global scale. Once something becomes collectively incorporated, it necessarily becomes an individual

option. It is often through an individual that collective values or viewpoints are altered—via the inventor, the innovator, the discoverer or the pioneer. When we begin to think in this way, the line separating the individual from the collective rapidly loses its definition.

There is a collective interpretation for all planets, as well as the personal identification that each of us has with their general traits. For example, some keywords for Venus are ‘values’, ‘relatedness’ and ‘love’, but they remain generic expressions until they are personalized by saying, ‘I love you’ or, ‘my values are such and such’, or when talking about ‘my capacity for relationship’. The same can be said for the trans-Saturnian planets—yes, they are collective and yes, they are personal. There are core essences in planetary symbolism which are differentiated and individualized through the psyche and consciousness of a person. They remain theoretical until they are humanized.

In the millennium transition, we are becoming alarmingly familiar with the once mythological and symbolic renditions of Pluto. For instance, the old saw, ‘Pluto is connected with, and connects, sex and death’, is chillingly real—this is now no more symbolic or metaphorical than flying to the Moon was before 1969. The correlation between those words is not only collective, and not only psychological either; it is extremely personal, wholly tangible and, in the light of the HIV virus, affects every individual on the planet today. With that in mind, we might consider that individuating through the outermost planets is no longer a particularly esoteric exercise, or somewhere in the distant future when we arrive in the Age of Aquarius. It is here and now.

THE TRANS-SATURNIAN PLANETS, THE SUN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EGO

On a general level, humanity is and will continue to be required to accept information and knowledge which is highly specialized and technical. There once was a time when a Book of Knowledge contained all that was known to mankind. This is now impossible. We are almost entirely dependent upon experts and feel by turns frustrated, relieved and amazed at this experience

This degree of specialization requires a certain humility to accept. That we do not all have knowledge of a higher order, and must rely on experts to organize the more complex aspects of global coordination, has created a new form of neurosis—millennium angst -whereby individuals personally experience collective anxiety in their daily lives. The knowledge that we *are* all one, simultaneously supports us and feeds existential anxiety. Therefore, humanity must find avenues of extraperception which include a strong, well contained ego. It becomes obvious that we all, individually, now need further interior resources to contain our collective anxiety and transform it into personal growth. With respect to the outer planets and the ego, it is clear they demand we find further ways of differentiating ourselves by creating options within our personal boundaries of experience.

On the personal and individual level the outer planets conspire with the natal Sun to develop the ego in myriad ways. Frequently we experience an outer planet through a test of endurance, and are required to make a quantum leap in courage and faith. It is in those times, of psychological, spiritual or physical pain, that we are compelled to draw on resources which are deeply hidden and held in psychic reserve. People ‘grow into’ the power of the outer planets, much like one grew into the new winter coat that mother bought in the autumn, whose arms were too long and shoulders too broad but magically fitted by spring. To engage the high charge that is held in the outer planets needs maturity. People with strong personal planetary contacts to the outer planets are usually compelled to take great risks in life, either psychologically or physically, and these risks tend to be unconscious until they reach their thirties, upon which time circumstances usually alert them to the necessity of becoming aware of their compulsions.

Once we cross Saturn's boundary, the symbolic container for the ego, we enter a realm without clear definition. The outer planets are the easiest to project because there is less experience with them than with the more personal planets. This is why they are so often associated with events beyond our control. When we face our darkest hour and feel the mainstays of the most fundamental structures in our life collapse, one by one, or perhaps all of a moment, we feel that we have lost our ego. When fate strikes and no prayer

is answered and the Dark Night of the Soul is no longer a metaphor, we undergo a disintegration of what was once a well established, contained ego structure. It is a rare individual who does not experience this annihilation of well-known reference points and teeters on the edge of the abyss.

The most mysterious of these experiences is the internal episode, where the ordeal is not evident to an outside observer, and goes uncomprehended even by our closest and most dear. Most often there are no words for this catastrophe, so people finding themselves in this maelstrom appear, or feel, incoherent and irrational. Behaviour in a descent of this type is not considered normal even by the standards of the person experiencing it. People do not necessarily lose their concept of 'I', their ego, when they are interacting with the planets from the Sun to Saturn, but they can indeed undergo a form of ego disintegration in relationship with Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

Certain people find that they regularly undergo such experiences, and feel called towards a constant checking and re-checking of the ego. They tend, or perhaps are compelled, to divest themselves of the trappings of personality and ego on a cyclic, rhythmic basis. Other types of individual are not so highly charged, and find simple routes for growth and change, moving in more traditional ways, experiencing life in a less dramatic fashion. Neither of these types is necessarily more profound or evolved than the other. However, those people who have strong aspects or several contacts between their natal Sun and the outer planets do fall into the category of compulsive transformers.

The impulse for change can manifest as a chaotic characteristic, where tearing down structures is done simply for the act of destruction, or unconsciously, manifesting in despair. However, with conscious awareness of the need to change it becomes transformative. There are many brilliant people, geniuses even, who never find an avenue to express their extraordinary powers. According to outer planet definition they are hypnotics, mystics, poets, musicians (Neptune), organizers, inventors (Uranus) or crowd-controllers (Pluto). They are fascinating, charismatic and compelling, but they are also highly self-destructive and inadvertently other-destructive in their behaviour. They are hooked on transformation but never find a focus for it. Their ego remains embryonic and, incapable of discerning their own boundaries, their responses to challenge are infantile and without reserve. They often begin their sentences with, 'I could do . . .', ending them with, ' . . . if I wanted to.' Quick to criticize, slow to act, they frequently introject all the aspects of the collective *doppelgänger*, harbouring the pain of the world and suffering the chronic alienation of the perpetually misunderstood.

Accessibility to the outer planets is not confined to a particular period of life but the ability to use them consciously and productively increases after the Saturn return at twenty-nine. By the age of thirty-seven to forty-two, when Uranus opposition to itself occurs—the astrological entry into 'mid-life'—there is an increasing urgency consciously to attend to the processes that the outer planets induce.

THE TRANS-SATURNIAN PLANETS RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

Having reached this realm in the solar system, we are now completely aware of the retrograde pattern. We are also in a zone of the solar system which finds the planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto not far in zodiacal longitude (geocentrically) from their heliocentric position. Uranus is about 2° less and Neptune and Pluto only 1°. That heliocentricity 'rids us of the problem of retrograde planets' is quite beside the point; in fact, the opposite seems to be the case. Not only are we not rid of any problem, but we must now consider the fact that the outermost planets are retrograde almost half the time. Understanding their significance when retrograde is therefore just as important as understanding them when they are direct. Let us now examine some features common to all outer planets in retrograde.

Constellating inner planet complexes

Should a horoscope have an outer planet retrograde, as many do, it should be focused on from several perspectives, but the first things to consider are aspects from the Sun. In [chapter 6](#) all major aspects from the Sun to superior retrograde planets were outlined in detail, including the special configurations found within the Sun-retrograde planet syndrome. In the following chapters we will find some key interpretations of each outer planet when it is natively retrograde, but there are other classic patterns that should be considered here with all retrograde outer planets.

That a retrograde outer planet sits in the opposite side of the horoscope to the identity trinity of Sun, Mercury and Venus serves several purposes: to gather about it many unintegrated psychic factors; to act as a distraction away from self-awareness and towards collective consciousness; to serve as a vehicle for

transforming the mundane into the sacred; periodically to disrupt personal growth patterns; and to polarize egocentric energy around two foci—the personal and the collective.

The outer planets do not support the ego; they must be incorporated into one's whole self and be contained by one's ego. The greatest psychological danger arising out of retrograde outer planets is losing touch with one's heart-centre. The alienation that individuals inherently feel with this gestalt is profound and it requires tremendous conscious effort to contain the existential angst and remain deeply connected to their basic feelings. The types of complex which are constellated around the retrograde planet or planets are specific mirrors to inner-soul needs which one has feared to face.

A complex is not necessarily a bad thing. It is not just found in neurotics driven by factors in the unconscious that have gathered together to present an autonomous, split-off sub-personality. A complex is a highly specialized function that acts as an impulse to act out an aspect of the personality in a highly subjective but creative way. Complexes can be terribly interesting and can add a certain tension to the energy which lies at the base of one's creative force. Outer planets are often found at the core of a complex, especially when they are in strong orb of aspect to one of the inferior planets or the Sun.

The retrograde planet requires individuals to ask themselves repeatedly, 'Is this characteristic, habit, feeling, or behaviour pattern really *mine*?' For the impulse to take on a higher cause or to be a proponent for some form of revolution of society or ideas can

simply be another way of subscribing to the status quo and not a personal calling. However, by contrast, many are the times when I have talked with sincere individuals who feel strongly a calling towards a healing or spiritual profession but are locked by circumstance into jobs which bore and frustrate them. Yet others find their mundane job serves their 'higher' purpose quite well in that it allows them freedom to follow their calling while having the security of a regular income. It is a very fortunate person who discovers the integration of vocation and job naturally and instinctively. The rest of us must depend not only on fate but also on courage and discipline to make the necessary connections.

These complexes are often described as 'karmic', or as cosmic fields of influence over which one has no control. There may indeed be little control over one's reactions to a maverick outer planet sitting way opposite to the identity trinity, but a degree of awareness provides that much more influence over one's actions. For example, perfectly healthy people with Neptune retrograde singly in the chart may be compulsively drawn to social failures, alcoholics, hysterics, or emotionally disturbed people. Unconsciously identifying with these sad people, they are magnetized by their succubus energy and drawn into experiencing their condition vicariously. By consciously recognizing their saviour complex and understanding that it is the *doppelgänger* of their own sane self, then the complex can become a strong motivating force behind a profession or calling. In this way they occupy their inner-victim space with activity, and are less inclined to have it bleeding into all aspects of their life. If Neptune retrograde is trine Saturn or sextile Mars or in any helpful contact with the socially active planets, then there is a potential channel for redirecting energy.

This follows for all the outer planets; when a social channel is present, the retrogression is not as difficult to use in a pragmatic way. This does not mean that a really 'way-out' retrograde is not possible to manage. By 'way-out' I mean when the retrograde outer is isolated and singleton, or conjunct the angles of ascendant and MC with no classical aspects to other planets. In the lists of well-known individuals with singleton or multiple retrograde planets it is evident that retrograde madness can be not only useful but also socially acceptable.

What does seem apparent is that a certain degree of personal comfort, stability and security must be forgone in order to come to terms with the demands of an outer planet retrograde. A measure of self-sacrifice comes with the shouldering of responsibility for acting out what millions of other people think *they* would like to do, 'if only . . .' Being a mouthpiece for the collective can mean being a martyr to the collective if a strong, well-contained ego is not developed. This means being acutely aware of the more simple things in life, of one's personal values and the soul of one's most personal life. When the outer planets are in the opposition zone to the identity trinity, the danger of losing one's perspective on the basic fundamentals of life, like love, sex, food, house-payments, pets, children and friends, is highly possible. Becoming separated from oneself means succumbing to the victim side of the power invested in the retrograde position. The potential for complete disengagement from one's core self is very high and requires conscious, consistent affirmation of the importance of simple things.

Tangents off the spiral of sacrificing one's ego for the sake of the collective come from many sources, but astrologically the main keys are contacts from the retrograde planet or planets to 'grounders', that is, the

socially active planets, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. When the retrograde outer planet is in a trine or sextile (and often opposition) to one or more grounders there is a better vehicle for transmitting the inner charge outward to something substantial. At the least, they connect the unconsciousness of the outer planet to a conscious body which, as one gets older, one is more capable of employing. The social planets facilitate transmission of the high internal charge when their aspect comes from another angle. In this way, a complex is more likely to become a creative force, and less likely to subsume the ego.

However, if the social planets are *also* involved in the retrograde position, as in many generational configurations, the person may experience a sense of inner frustration. For example, the Saturn-Uranus conjunction in late Taurus early Gemini in the early 1940s precipitated a revolution in social order; all those with that aspect natively experience a dread of tyranny and dictatorship. They are anarchists by nature, but not all those with charts with Saturn-

Uranus conjunction are consciously, actively aware of that anarchist within. Instead, it might manifest as its inner opposite, a tyrannical guard over one's impulse to change. Those with that conjunction retrograde will have the Sun somewhere in the range of the signs Virgo through Capricorn and will have had to fight the shadow function of being ultra-conservative and fearful of change. The incorporation of inner superior planets with outer planets is an even more urgent message to be accountable for compulsive desires for radical change.

Constellating collective complexes

Certain pairs or groupings occur periodically, such as Pluto-Neptune (in Gemini, late 1800s); Saturn-Neptune (1918–19 and 1952–3); Saturn-Pluto with Mars (1947–8 and 1981–2); Uranus-Pluto (1964–8); Jupiter-Neptune (1971 and 1983–4)—Jupiter-Uranus-Neptune in Sagittarius/Capricorn formed a cluster from 1983–5; Saturn-Uranus-Neptune—by 1979 Uranus began to close in on Neptune, being one sign apart, but by 1989 all three were conjoined in Capricorn till 1991; Uranus-Neptune (1989–96). These clusters can be retrograde for entire generations; since 1939, Pluto has often been in the retrograde configurations because it has maintained an approximate 60° angle to Neptune, so the Sun in a 120° aspect to either of them on the opposite side of the zodiac will produce the retrogression of both planets. Looking at these planets as pairs or combinations of influences is enlightening, and I recommend *The Combination of Stellar Influences* by Reinhold Ebertin for further illuminating study of collective complexes.

5

As a brief illustration of a collective complex, the most recent Uranus-Neptune conjunction in Capricorn tied in with a number of themes of the late 1980s and 90s: fear of the world disappearing through pollution or nuclear holocaust; holy wars; a distinct rise in phenomenology; much media publicizing of the imminent 'New Age'; a resurgence of 'crucible consciousness' in the form of ostensible shadow Christianity (Satanism) in both the US and UK; and a new science which proposes a 'true' metaphysics and introduces an organizing principle around chaos.

Ebertin says about the Uranus-Neptune combination:

Principle: The elimination of waking consciousness.

Psychological Correspondence:

+ The development and growth of the sub-conscious powers or forces, inner vision, inner illumination and enlightenment, inspiration idealism, an interest in spiritual subjects, religious problems, mysticism, art.

- Lacking control of the waking consciousness leads to want of clearness. Instability, lack of emotional balance, nervous sensitiveness, wrong ideas, one-sidedness.

Combination: Extraordinary and unusual inclinations.

Sociological Correspondence:

Mystics, people engaged in psychical research, mediums.

Probable Manifestations:

+ Peculiar psychic states, inspirations, spiritual cognition and understanding. Long journeys and contacts with foreign countries.

- Lack of stamina and of vitality, confused psychic states, peculiar inclinations, losses.

6

Furthermore, Rob Hand attributes the Uranus-Neptune pair with: 'Loss of consciousness, altered or alternate states of consciousness, the mystical or occult. Revolutionary ideals. Sudden disappearances, the transition into the beyond.

7

With the addition of Saturn to the keyword essences listed above, we bring everything down to earth and find that the manifestations of mysteries are incorporated into the status quo. Though this is a transiting global and social phenomenon, it will become a personal issue for those born under the (Saturn) Uranus-Neptune conjunction, and is imprinted in the psyches of all individuals who live during its time.

When a natal chart incorporates a collective complex by outer planets retrograde, individuals find that they must work towards unifying the characteristics into their own personal framework. The configuration is too easy to ignore or more difficult to engage consciously if there is no contact between the retrograde planets and other planets in the chart. A split results which, when it emerges, can be terribly destructive to the integrity of the ego.

Either that, or the complex is projected and one attracts what the outer planets embody through relationships, social experiences or identification with mass psychology.

Some people are quite alarmed when they discover that they have three or more retrograde superior planets, and more so when Mercury or Venus is retrograde as well. Realizing that whole masses of people, many of them highly productive, have four or more superior planets retrograde, tends to calm their fears. Since all individuals manifest their horoscopes in their own way, there really is no way of conforming a general meaning. However, when superior planets are retrograde it is important to note the sequence of each planet as it turns direct by secondary progression. Each planet, as it stations, will tick off a new level of awareness of what was once a mysterious inner impulse. To speak of the unconscious as something one can 'get in touch with' belies its nature—you do not get in touch with it at all, it gets in touch with you. Small particles intrude into the consciousness and become quite ordinary after a period of assimilation. Each time an outer planet stations and turns direct, a new vista opens up and expands the possibilities for utilizing the outer planet in a new way.

11

NATAL URANUS RETROGRADE

mens sana in corpore sano

Juvenal, *Satires*, X

URANUS, THE SUN AND THE EGO

As with all the outer planets, Uranus is retrograde for a little less than half (41 per cent) of a twelve-month period. Whole groups of Sun signs, therefore, will have Uranus retrograde in the natal chart. It would be misleading to lump such a large percentage of humanity into a category, but there are dimensions of retrogression which can be delineated to some degree, and [chapter 6](#), on aspects from the Sun to superior planets, will help define a particular energy associated with a retrograde planet more precisely.

When a planet is retrograde it does seem to 'behave' in a more mythological fashion; that is, it seems to be more archetypally active. By retrograde position it is distanced from the solar individuation function and thus operates more as a renegade energy than as an integral part of the horoscope. This phenomenon occurs regardless of the number of aspects the outer retrograde might receive from other planets. Although contacts from other planets (inner superior or inferior) do bring the outer retrograde into a more tangible realm, the effect is to render its manifestation more erratic.

In ancient Greek myth, Ouranos, the sky, was not a god but a realm, a place that was not Earth but the whole of the heavens. He was never worshipped as a god, no cult surrounded him and his domain was the *aither*, the upper sky. Even in the earliest records Ouranos was never wholly personified as other deities were, including

Gaia his consort, who was translated into various Earth goddess characters. This lack of personification subsequent to the castration has interesting implications in the light of his permanent severance from Earth. In the myth of Kronos/Saturn we learned of Ouranos' castration and subsequent separation from activities on Earth. Our astrological Uranus behaves in much the same way: divorced, amputated, severed, castrated and disembodied. This is not always negative, for objectivity, genius and illumination often stem from Uranian sources. However, so do madness, existential alienation, hierarchical elitism, anarchic tyranny and perverse behaviour.

The distance between the Sun and Uranus can manifest in various characteristics being split off until one learns to incorporate disembodied ideals or to recognize their place in the more human sphere. Jacques Lacan once said that the soul with an idea is like a fish with an apple—it doesn't know what to do with it. The function of imagination plays a tremendous role in the development of a strong ego structure for Uranus retrograde individuals. Even though it is frequently a creative signature, Uranus needs a solid grounding

factor elsewhere in the horoscope to contain the maverick genius, or it will serve to splinter the ego. If the Sun is in an exact aspect to Uranus retrograde, the characteristics will be more sharply defined and a stronger bridge between Uranus and the Sun is created. It may then offer a structured vehicle for manifesting creative imagination.

In the origin myth, Ouranos prevented the birth of the Hecaton-cheires, the hundred-armed monsters whom he suppressed in the womb of Gaia. The ‘crime’ of Ouranos was élitism, of finding his own progeny unfit and imperfect according to his own imaginings. Gaia, being the ideal mother, loved and wanted these monstrous babies regardless of their flawed natures, and coerced her son Kronos into castrating his father Ouranos, thus separating the heavens from the Earth for ever. This brings to mind the clear demarcation between something ideal in the imaginal realm and its defective physical manifestation—the idea being totally removed from the reality. Plato's concept of the Ideal Form, from which all creation is replicated imperfectly, is quite analogous to the Uranian archetype.

URANUS RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

The area of the horoscope in which we find Uranus retrograde describes where the person hopes to find objectivity and cold, hard clarity. Whether it is found or not depends on many other factors, but the desire for separation from the world of feelings and sensory responses lies here. Uranus retrograde people need to discover systems of thought that allow them to maintain and develop their ideals while still enjoying participation in the mundane activities of daily life.

The position can be an angry, revolutionary one, especially if found in the opposite sign to the Sun, in which case the need to find a unique stage or arena to display solar talents can argue with an unconscious desire to give oneself over to collective ideals. However, this same capacity to identify personally with collectivity or with symbols in the unconscious also has much to contribute to the world of ideas. Certain individuals literally are voices of the collective and take on the responsibility for interpreting or translating an idea into useful philosophy or science. Helena Blavatsky had the Sun in opposition to both Uranus and Jupiter—her masterwork, *The Secret Doctrine*, shows the most marvellous organization of arcane material. With Uranus and Jupiter in the eighth house, she revolutionized occultism and founded the Theosophical Society with her husband. (See [chapter 8](#) for a fuller treatment of Mme Blavatsky.)

The stationary trines are equally powerful, allowing radical and innovative individualism to be expressed creatively. Breakthroughs in ideas, coupled with focused will, can be the mark of the ego being a stable vehicle for one's particular genius. Pearl S. Buck, author of *The Good Earth*, won the Pulitzer prize in the year (1932) that transiting Uranus was exactly conjunct her natal Jupiter in Aries. Her ninth house Cancer Sun was in trine to her first house Uranus singleton in Scorpio—the only retrograde planet in her horoscope. The child of missionaries, Ms Buck grew up in China speaking English and Chinese. She went to America to attend university, but returned to China where she taught at university near Shanghai and broke all convention, both as a woman in society and as a writer. In 1938 she received the Nobel prize for literature for her work, in the years of transiting Uranus opposition to its own place. *The Good Earth* was an apt title, containing an obvious message to those with Uranus singleton; Ms Buck saw the beauty and simplicity of rural Chinese life, extolling its virtues eloquently in her subsequent works.

Einstein, who had Uranus retrograde in 1° of Virgo and Sun in 23° Pisces (158° apart—no special contact) replied to the remark that all his ideas were brilliant: ‘No, I have a lot of ideas, some of which are brilliant.’ Einstein's Uranus is rampant. His inability to perform simple maths, while seeing elegant, mysterious energy patterns, his abhorrence of study, and his propitiation of the intuitive function are descriptive of an ‘unconnected’ Uranus. The strongest aspects to his isolated singleton retrograde Uranus are a (decelerating) quincunx from Mercury in 3° of Aries, and quincunx from Saturn at 4° of Aries. His Saturn-Mercury conjunction is the container for the Uranus retrograde—his single-mindedness and abstract conceptualism is not only contained, it is encapsulated by Saturn. Genius is like an electrical impulse, undifferentiated and potentially dangerous unless grounded or channelled properly through the correct conduit and with the right voltage. Many factors must contribute to the manifestation of potential.

Marie Curie had Uranus in the stationary-retrograde trine from the Sun at 14° Scorpio in the eighth house to Uranus at 12° Cancer retrograde in the fifth house. With Aquarius rising, Uranus was also her chart-ruler. Her Scorpionic scientific mind earned her two Nobel prizes, for physics (1903) and chemistry (1911), but she was never admitted to membership of the Academy of Sciences because she was a woman. She and her husband Pierre were drawn together by their mutual interest in magnetism (Uranus in the fifth house!) and worked together isolating radium and polonium.

Alfred Adler, the psychologist, had an exact quincunx between his 18° Aquarius eighth house Sun and Uranus on the ascendant at 18° of Cancer. His orientation and view of the psyche led him away from his contemporaries, and the adjustments in ideology and psychology made by him revolutionized psychology and instituted an entire new school of thought.

Though these dramatic examples of Uranus retrograde seem to imply that some form of conventional genius abounds as a

characteristic, this is not always the case. Certainly, in the truest sense of the word, Uranus is the *genius*, the spirit or daimon that each of us has within us—an inner spiritual mentor or personal guide—but not all of us with Uranus retrograde will be able to apply the necessary discipline to give a form to the urging of the genius. However, Uranus retrograde people have an overwhelming desire to discover something different, to head off towards a distant horizon, to explore the unknown and make it known. If there is no vehicle for this inner drive, it will express itself through irritability, erratic moods, unreliable behaviour passed off as an artistic temperament, and feelings of dissatisfaction and unexplainable anxiety.

These difficult traits are exacerbated if Uranus retrograde is not tethered by other planetary aspects that support and contain the Uranian impulses. A sextile, trine, or semi-square from Saturn to Uranus, for example, would allow a practical and disciplined, if plodding, channel for the genius to work through. Also a combination of a Sun trine and a Mars sextile or trine to Uranus would offer focus or direction, and a contact from Mercury, for example, could facilitate the genius of Uranus. A totally disengaged Uranus can pose real problems in connecting the instinctive process of individuating with conscious will. As we get older we become increasingly aware of what is 'ours' and what 'others'. This consciousness becomes especially acute in mid-life, when transiting Uranus begins to oppose natal Uranus. One begins to separate characteristics that are truly of one's own self and one's own daimon from what has been imposed by the pressures and influences of the world. When Uranus is retrograde and neither aspected by the Sun nor connected to any personal planets, or is a singleton or isolated in one hemisphere or quadrant, it could pose very difficult problems in coping with this process of becoming as fully oneself as the inner drive desires. This results in the extreme negative manifestations—irrational and self-destructive behaviour, violent mood swings, black depressions, sporadic bursts of energy, flashes of unfocused brilliance, cold, even cruel actions, isolation tactics, and feelings of being cut off from reality or from the emotions.

The innovative Ronald D. Laing, the psychiatrist who postulated the 'relative norm' and enlightened the psychological world about what normal behaviour in a psychotic was, had a very complicated Uranus retrograde. By the end of his life he had suffered from many of the negative manifestations mentioned above as well as having enjoyed the positive attributes. His Sun in 13° of Libra was in the opposition zone to his Uranus in 0° of Aries (which was conjunct Jupiter retrograde at 26° of Pisces). The Jupiter-Uranus conjunction would form the handle to a bucket pattern except that his 29° Aquarius Moon (opposite to Neptune and Venus) occupies that hemisphere as well. Laing virtually revolutionized attitudes towards psychosis. Unfortunately for him, he also experienced bouts of severe anxiety and depression himself. However, he was able to utilize his personal experiences and to ground his own form of 'madness'—Saturn at 4° of Sagittarius formed a trine to his Uranus—as well as giving weight and substance (Saturn) to original, creative, but radical and existential, ideas (Uranus). He was not only a prolific writer but versatile in expression too, which I believe to be an aspect of the Jupiter-Uranus conjunction (Jupiter-Uranus is shared by Blavatsky as well). In *The Divided Self* Laing developed the concept of existential phenomenology and its invaluable contribution to clinical psychiatry stands today. He abhorred clinical terms which categorized patients and introduced the stunning premise that it was possible to understand a patient as a human being rather than as a classified instance of disease. Again, as with Pearl Buck, the title of the book epitomizes the struggle for consciousness of its author.

The transiting Uranus opposition to itself in mid-life metaphorically catapults one into the zone of the outer planets. As the first of the three outers, it makes perfect sense that the half-way mark of its orbit splits the life path into two: the 'lived life' and the 'unlived life'. The Saturn return at twenty-nine begins the natural process of incorporating adult responsibility into heedless wanderings among the plethora of potential inherent in all of us, but the Uranus opposition (between ages thirty-eight and forty-one) is a death-knell, reminding us how much real time we have left to actualize and embody our potential. We become more discriminating and aware of what we cannot do. The mid-life transit of Uranus is relevant here because people with Uranus retrograde natively find their response to mid-life particularly fraught. This is because transiting Uranus is in the personal side of the horoscope, and may

be connecting to one of the personal planets by conjunction. It will certainly be awakening such individuals to their unlived life, forcing integration of split-off ideals into the whole of the psyche.

Uranus retrograde speaks of a restless, distant father, one who cannot be typecast. His role in childhood is frequently unconventional, even unreliable. He often offered no support for the individuating child, but acted instead as a rebellious child himself. Even though he may have been conventional on the surface, his energy and undercurrent were unsettling and abstract. He may have found it particularly difficult to relate to children, but preferred the adult-child, with whom he could relate in a non-emotional way. Uranus retrograde people often experience their fathers as gods, yet this could hardly be true. When they ask for consolation, reassurance or advice the chances are they receive a philosophical diatribe. This can result in an extremely self-sufficient and courageous adult, but only after much trial and error in which the developing ego encounters many unexpected turns in the path to adulthood.

The development of the ego of Uranus retrograde individuals is sporadic and erratic—they usually encounter too many alternatives in life direction and are forced to become decisive. Although often drawn into humanitarian causes, they can be attracted to the dark side of life, identifying with the outcasts of society. Their urge to transform society into a clean ideal is largely because they have seen the sordid, corrupt and horrific side of human nature. Wishing to counter this in themselves, they turn to the collective to work through individual processes.

The ego must learn to contain Uranus, which in itself is not conducive to integration but to segregation. One of the most convention-bound individuals with a singleton Uranus is the Prince of Wales, heir to the British throne. Prince Charles's Uranus is quite separate from the gestalt of his horoscope, in exact opposition to Jupiter (which is near natal Mars). The Sun at 22° Scorpio is in a wide accelerating quincunx to Uranus at 29° of Gemini. Charles is known as a 'radical' in that he espouses peace, is deeply committed to ecological concerns, is vocally active in the concerns of the globe, is supportive of alternative medicine and has shown marked interest in Jungian psychology. His role as prince has not checked his humanitarian action, but the split-off Uranus serves his role as a

distant person—a royal figure, an archetype of monarchy. His humour and compassion is evident, but his dignity is not impaired by this show of feeling (Scorpio). One might suspect, however, that Prince Charles has a hard time of it on the deeply emotional level, that his capacity truly to connect with his personal feelings is limited and constrained, not just by convention but by his own innate character.

PROGRESSED URANUS

The years in which the progressed Sun makes exact aspects to the natal Uranus are times of massive change and reorganization. If the progressed Sun will eventually oppose natal Uranus retrograde, that opposition marks a year in which the lives of individuals with the configuration are torn asunder, and they experience a completely new aspect of themselves. It will be increasingly difficult to live in the manner to which they have become accustomed—the types of change that occur have more to do with an inner crack, through which aspects of the nature which have been consciously or unconsciously suppressed will begin to seep out. Ultimately it is a liberating experience because the compulsion to live a lie, or a superficial life which does not include heartfelt, intrinsic values and beliefs becomes virtually impossible.

The progressed opposition begins a period of a few years (usually about three) where cold reality challenges one's fantasies. Usually the fantasies have been called 'reality', and indeed they were, but no longer will the old way of viewing the world support the existing structure. The ego runs up against an immutable force—the power of truth and fact. A time begins of conscious analysis of all facets of one's nature and one's unlived life. This contemplation will often involve one's relationships and it is often easy to think that the disruption that occurs is the fault of others, but if this is the case, then those people are colluding and participating unconsciously in the necessary transition in one's own life.

On the other hand, if the progressed Sun forms a quincunx (either before or after the opposition) it often *is* the environment that is creating the chaos. One must endure and experience tremendous upheavals in one's relationships with the surrounding world. This aspect often feels more fated, and one can often work very productively with this by allowing the break-ups to occur and attempting to remain as conscious as possible of one's interior responses—witnessing one's own experience and learning a profound lesson in how to go about making unprepared-for adjustments. In the case where either the quincunx or the opposition occurs early in life, then it is likely that a family situation has broken apart in a fundamental way, changing the family dynamic permanently. The family slowly reorganizes around another central focus, but has sustained an experience which one feels in one's core. A loss, death, divorce or

relocation might create a temporary loss of ego for a young person, making an early introduction to interior examination, turning him or her into a premature philosopher.

If Uranus stations-retrograde in a natal chart that has Uranus direct, the person experiences a forced withdrawal of hopes and expectations from the world and begins to recoil, developing a chrysalis within which a new idea or philosophy begins to incubate. The station may coincide with a breakdown of hope, loss of innocence or experience of betrayal. The experience is relative to how deeply the person has sought 'truth' and how connected he or she is to the intrinsically idealistic root in the psyche. The station works to enforce a deeper awareness of the natural law of independence. For ever after, one is acutely conscious of one's own unique individuality and can become highly effective as a leader. However, at the same time one must become aware of the human quality, and not become too isolated. This stage is followed in about eighteen years by the progressed Sun trine to natal Uranus, when the shock of inversion has matured to incorporate a fully developed system of analysis. On the one hand the system serves as a solid defence against further wounding of one's ideas, but on the other it can indicate a sufficiently matured system which the ego can embrace, thereby allowing Uranus to serve the ego in a humanitarian way.

Should Uranus station-direct in a progressed chart, it is followed by the progressed Sun in square to natal Uranus about fourteen years later. The station-direct precipitates a time of chaos, out of which is generated a rapid attempt to organize aspects of one's life which seem disparate or have been amputated from the whole of

one's self. The chaos is a product of Uranus suddenly joining the family system of the planetary gestalt and disrupting all that is internally known and habitual, sending the individual into a tangent of experimental options. It can be an extremely creative station, precipitating a fourteen-year reorganization of one's ideals, philosophy and relationships. Both stations (retrograde and direct) are subtle but effective, casting a new light on the activity within the entire horoscope, so may take a year or so to become recognizable as a watershed experience.

The progressed Sun square to Uranus is likely to be notable primarily because it terminates any experimentalism initiated at the station-direct. The Sun constellates all that has been learned since the station and forces manifestation. It can be quite pronounced, requiring one to let go once and for all of pretentious, superficial or outmoded beliefs and ways of behaving. One may be called towards a more isolated life, where activity is pared down to the essentials and all that is redundant falls away, leaving only the most meaningful core beliefs intact.

Uranus retrograde as a singleton, or sole retrograde planet

Uranus moves more rapidly than the other two outer planets (spending seven years transiting each sign) and is therefore found far more frequently as a singleton or separated from the main gestalt of all other planets. When it is segregated in this way, it serves as a hook for Uranian complexes, both innate and collective. It can assemble the collective madness and drive the individual into extremes of unconscious behaviour, or it can serve the ego as the perfect vehicle for helping others move more quickly through personal conflict—and, in the case of individuals who are very active and socially influential, serve to encourage them to move their society rapidly through transitions.

The loneliness of Uranus retrograde is not the encapsulated isolation of Saturn, who is emotionally engaged with his removed status, but the lofty, upper-air realm of the idealist, who thrives on detachment and distance from the *hoi polloi*. This position favours the ultimate élitists, those who do not even know that others or other systems exist beyond themselves or their own beliefs. They identify with the iconoclast and revolutionary and are bound up with any societal transformations. Even the person-in-the-street who has Uranus singly feels somehow part of the natural cycles of decay and renewal within his or her society. By nature, such people are philosophers, and will have spent much time processing their inner world, looking to find rational reasons for patterns of behaviour common to humanity.

Uranus can collect all the interior anger of an individual and splash it out around him or her, thereby projecting any unresolved revolution on to friends or upon society. Adolf Hitler is a chilling example of this function, whereas Charlie Chaplin, his astrological 'twin', is another illustration. Though Hitler is known for projecting his own unresolved but highly differentiated hatred on to Jews, and for being *creator* and mastermind of the second world war holocaust, Chaplin was the *recipient* of collective madness and was blacklisted by Senator McCarthy during the 'Red scare', at which time Chaplin exiled himself in France for the duration of his life. One of Chaplin's most notable and brilliant performances was in the film, *The Great Dictator*, in which he meticulously portrayed Hitler.

The greatest challenge for people with Uranus retrograde as a singleton is to combine their vision and imagination with some capacity for realizing that ephemeral ideal. They also need to be at one with their body, experiencing it as a temple of the imaginal realm, rather than seeing it as an inconvenient and rather nasty organism filled with a lot of sensate compulsions. In the course of working with one's body, one's mind is balanced equally. *Mens sana in corpore sano*: Juvenal's dictum sums up the lesson for Uranian individuals—a sound mind in a sound body.

Well-known people with Uranus retrograde singleton or prominent:

Evangeline Adams

Ray Bradbury

Giacomo Casanova

Catherine the Great

Charlie Chaplin

Ray Charles (handle)

Jacques Cousteau

Olivia de Havilland

Ian Fleming

Henry Ford II

Edward Heath (handle)

Katharine Hepburn

Adolf Hitler

Howlin'Wolf (handle)

John F. Kennedy (handle)

Marshall McLuhan (handle)

Charles Manson (singleton in twelfth house; also PL retrograde)

Princess Margaret (with SA retrograde at MC)

Thelonious Monk (handle)

Nelson Rockefeller

Gertrude Stein (also JU retrograde)

James Stewart

Margaret Thatcher

Prince of Wales

Barbara Walters

12

NATAL NEPTUNE RETROGRADE

Planets might be looked upon as 'places', compartments which hold memories or experiences. That we always associate the Moon with the womb as well as a mother-symbol is not incorrect, but it is incomplete, because Neptune is the 'Great Womb' or collective womb. There are evolutionary theories about humanity arising out of the primordial brine which, hypothetical or not, can be certainly and absolutely true with respect to our births as individuals. We emerge from mother's body, the protective container (Moon) within which we were even more deeply guarded and sustained, suspended in the womb (a state of Neptune). That this moment of expulsion from the dark and timeless fortress is traumatic, both physically and psychologically, cannot be doubted—but *how* is it traumatic if we cannot recall it? In what way does this primal trauma affect the consciousness in an everyday fashion?

It is Neptune that guards the memory of the pain of separation from the mother-womb, never fully releasing it to consciousness. It also acts as a repository for all subsequent births or losses, rejections and severings from secure, known places. Neptune anaesthetizes the pain of death-life, which is why so much credence lies in the traditional interpretations of Neptune being an escape from reality. It can be activated through various forms of transcendental activity, whether those involve drugs or meditation—those panaceas for *weltschmerz* (global pain, world-pain) which we all feel at the most fundamental existential level. The place for that pain is Neptune.

Neptune also stimulates the longing to return to that Elysian place, where we are nurtured and protected from the harsh world of reality. The planet's natal location is the area in which this longing is most likely to manifest. We might engage Neptune in our work, helping others escape from or understand more fully their need for

cosmic nurture. The desire to be helped or saved from the pains of life and to understand more about the need for a unifying principle which connects all life can equally become the impetus to help others come to terms with the instinctual craving to return to the cosmic womb.

In the symbol of Neptune's trident is the trifold mind-body-soul image; incorporated in Neptune itself is the boundless non-image, that which cannot be contained. There must be an aspect to our existence which identifies with excorporation or excarnation. The difficulty with Neptune is attempting to embody it in some tangible way. From Neptune come poetry, music, art, esoteric physics, but also unconsciousness, hysteria, infantilism and fusion complexes.

As a Greek god, Neptune's realm was not just the sea but underground freshwater streams and tributaries, and earthquakes and other unexplained earth traumas. Though his role is not as clearly defined as that of his brothers, Zeus and Hades—theirs were realms most concise—his activities in Greek religious lore were numerous. Yet despite being as prolific as Zeus, his offspring numbering thousands, his actual presence was confined to the sea.

There is an underwater river which, though not traditionally Neptune's domain, sounds suspiciously affiliated with the planet and its oblivious aspect. In Plato's *Republic*, at the end of Book X, there is an allegorical tale about a man named Er who was privileged enough to die and then return to his body with total recall of his soul's experience of trekking through Hades. For Plato believed in the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. After many tests and selection processes, the immortal soul reached a vast, stifling plain which it had to cross before re-entering the body. Upon reaching the edge of the plain, the soul came upon a river from which it was encouraged to drink a measure, to slake its thirst. However, Plato says, 'those who were not saved by prudence drank more than the measure, and whoever drank forgot everything.'

1 Those, however, who drank only moderately were allowed a measure of recall, a recollection of all that their soul knew. The river's name was Lethe—the lethal river of oblivion or forgetfulness. Neptune sounds very like the River Lethe, where we drink and forget; individual recollection lost to the womb.

The river of forgetfulness flows through our subliminal region, disconnecting us from our soul. Neptune in the birthchart is where we anaesthetize ourselves from the pain of birth. The shock of emerging from the unified body-soul state experienced in the womb is so great that the memory of it is totally subliminal. This is the source of the unconscious desire to return to Eden, to reunite psyche with soma, and this longing is fundamental in our consciousness, provoking a desire to fuse with *something* again.

Regardless of whether or not we believe in reincarnation, there is something inherent in human nature that recalls a safe, warm, nurturing place where we were so bonded with the source of nurture that we were indistinguishable from it. The loss of that security brands every incarnate individual with his or her own pattern for reclaiming it, through relationships with others or via a spiritual path. Neptune seems to have less to do with the hard edge of incarnation than with the unbounded aspect of the infantile psyche.

A loss of contact with the soul produces an insatiable yearning to descend into darkness again and find solace — a strange, alluring, seductive power leads us to seek ways of reconnecting with our soul. The contained Neptune leads us to our religious roots. The search for spirit leads many an individual down the Neptune trail: drugs, alcohol, meditation, ecstatic religion all have a common link, the search for cosmic love and universal bonding. That these searches can be vain, misleading or dangerous is evident. At first glance it might seem incongruous that Neptune symbolizes both the drug-dealer and the religious leader, but each offers a panacea to the trials of the world.

The ocean of Neptune's domain symbolizes the sea of the collective unconscious, holding the 'other half of life, that which is mysterious and unknown, a non-participant in Earth-bound activities. We all know that the sea is a soothing place to be, where our troubles are washed away and we are lulled, if not by the waves, by the sheer distance of the uncluttered horizon.

NEPTUNE, THE SUN AND THE EGO

There is no ego without consciousness, for the ego emerges out of the fused bond with the mother and later from the child as it begins

to identify itself as distinct from other things. Therefore, there is no ego if it is not contained and shaped and defined. Neptune symbolizes the pre-egoic state, when there is no separation of subject from object, and there is no 'identity' as such. What contribution, then, has Neptune to offer the ego? Perhaps little in the way of support, but it does contribute a dimension to the inner Self which is then enfolded into the ego, adding a mysterious depth, a level of sensitivity and feeling to one's conscious statement of, 'I am.' Neptune is soul, it is intangible and cannot be quantified. One cannot stand up in a room and say, 'I have a lot of soul, more

than most; aren't I a deep, mystical and profoundly sensitive individual?' I am sure people would turn away in droves from such a claim! However, we always 'know' when we are in the presence of someone who does have a contained, contented soul, whose sense of self is secure and enriched by some mysterious inner charisma or force. Their soul is not wandering, lost and lonely against an ever-receding horizon; it is contained within their being. We can only sense this feeling from others because Neptune emanates, vibrates, exudes, insinuates, permeates and infuses. It does not 'happen' as other planets do.

A healthy ego contains a great portion of Neptune, but that is not the overwhelming characteristic. Sun-Neptune contacts are very slippery and difficult to embody and characterize firmly, for the ego is a shape-shifter, like Proteus. Proteus was a minor, sea god, shepherd of the sea-creatures, endowed by Poseidon with the gift of prophecy and also the power to change his shape until firmly held. The key to having a conversation with Proteus was to be able to hang on to him until he stopped metamorphosing and settled into one shape. The Protean character is polymorphous, ambiguous, ephemeral and chimerical; Sun-Neptune must work hard to retain its shape in the face of others.

The difficulty with Sun-Neptune is not its evil, for that is rarely the case. The problem lies in its empathy with and sympathy for its environment and the people it is relating to, which can be most annoying if a symbiotic relationship is required with every individual one comes up against. Woody Allen's movie *Zelig* portrays a man so egoless that he literally *becomes* who he is with after a short period of time. He metamorphoses into the individual with whom he is relating. It is a brilliant personification of the Protean ego.

Sun-Neptune is an ego in itself, but defined according to its shifting reality. This is potentially dangerous and sinister in two ways: first, if it is consciously used to manipulate others and gain their resources, whether those are psychic or material, and secondly, if it is a deeply unconscious feature which renders one infantile in one's needs, with no boundaries drawn between self and others and, like a baby, everything in one's power is done to get one's way.

Does this mean that whether Neptune is conscious or unconscious it is dangerous? To a certain degree, all the outer planets can be destructive, but those very traits mentioned above can also become healthy ego vehicles. The manipulators can use their skills in artistic and creative ways, compelling us to view things through their eyes in art, music, poetry or prose. The Neptunian therapist or physician can insinuate new information or ply the individual with subtle prods to birth a new way of being. To be able to evoke moods, feelings and experiences in others can be a divine gift.

It can also be hell. Should the Sun-Neptune ego be submerged in the unconscious infantile state, then it will twist, distort, confuse, obfuscate and nullify all other possible viewpoints. This state can clearly be ruinous not only to the individual but to all who become intimately and emotionally involved. Neptune's shape-shifting creates the possibility of *folie à deux*, the phenomenon of transferring madness from one individual to another, the second person being basically healthy. Analysts and psychotherapists are in the position where they must consciously contain their own Neptune so as not to be infected by the possible transference of their patients' undifferentiated Neptunian states.

Neptune offers a positive experience to the healthy ego. Creative people draw on the ability to recollect the Edenic state where all was perfect and harmonious. One's identity remains intact although one might endure various life difficulties which bring pain, sadness or loss. There is no unrealistic vision of what is going on; the pain or loss is contained and seen in its appropriate context—it does not bleed out into the environment, contaminating everyone and everything with its misery. Neptune is also the opportunity to connect to collective mourning, longing and desire to fuse with the divine source, and in a contained ego structure it finds its place through a strong faith or belief system.

Though the only place where two hearts beat as one is in the womb, we long to re-create that fused bond in our relationships. There is a degree of that in all relationships, both healthy and pathological. It is knowing the distinction between self and others and being aware of the beauty in the temporary fusion of body and soul, but knowing also that it is illusory. Having the bond in a love relationship requires the Neptunian fusion—that is part of romantic love—but for it to be all-consuming, obsessive and compulsive kills individuality, and eventually the relationship. The illusory aspect is not itself the negative aspect, but rather not knowing where the illusion ends and reality begins.

So Neptune has much to offer the ego, but not as a container or as a vehicle. Essentially, the ego must contain Neptune, finding appropriate places for it to flow into the collective pool but also recognizing that state as being potentially annihilating, anaesthetizing the will beyond its capacity to function in a conscious way.

NEPTUNE RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

When Neptune is separated from the Sun by 101° on either side, it is retrograde. Its distance is such that all personal contact is diminished, and a more universal or collective application occurs. The planet might then act as a lens through which one objectively views the world of mystery, or it can become a repository or collector of mysterious symptoms. Since Neptune (and Pluto) is rarely singleton retrograde in the natal charts of people born in this century, it is difficult to observe its characteristics through individual example. However, there are certain potentials locked into the Neptunian archetype that can emerge through individuals and manifest as personal traits.

When Neptune is in the opposite hemisphere to the identity trinity of Sun, Mercury and Venus, it may be very difficult for individuals to identify themselves as separate from their families until they come to self-realization. It may be that they could not perceive themselves clearly and allowed others to influence them in ways of thinking and perceiving. Complexes which cluster around the family, myths such as 'the self-made man' or 'the artistic family'

or 'the working-class lot' or 'everyone in the family goes into medicine', are more readily fobbed off on and accepted by people with Neptune retrograde. It may well be that they are so inclined, and do have the various skills and talents that are the family legacy, but what if they do not?

Being ultra-sensitive to the needs of others, Neptune retrograde people are born sensing immediately what is expected of them, and proceed to act accordingly. At some point, when they emerge from the womb of childhood and enter adolescence, embarking on a new stage of life, it may come as a shock that they have been subordinating their own longings and needs in favour of others'. The sacrifice of one's own soul may go unrewarded until such time as one 'enters one's own body' and stops living through others.

The trines seem to invoke mediumship, though often inadvertently. If the chart as a whole has an earthy tone, which includes solid Saturn contacts as well as air (for a bit of reasoning), then the Neptune retrograde trine can be well directed in the form of artistic or inspirational work.

Some cases

One well-known improvisational actor has Sun conjunct Uranus in 1° of Cancer. Both are sextile to Saturn in 1° of Virgo, and Neptune is stationary-direct at 12° of Libra. By the time she was eleven years old she was acting on stage and in television productions—in that year her progressed Sun had moved to square her stationary-direct Neptune from 12° Cancer. Her capacity to 'become' the audience was stunning, and her ability to portray anything at any time was grounded through the Saturn sextile.

Oliver, a poet who aspires to a musical career, has Sun at 2° of Cancer trine Neptune retrograde at 2° of Scorpio (it is not the only retrograde planet in his chart—Saturn is retrograde in Sagittarius, and Jupiter was direct seven days before his birth, so still virtually stationary). His talent is obvious, his will to power is yet nascent. Because his Sun is sextile Pluto at 0° Virgo he may grow into his power, but, at the age of thirty-three, he struggles with drug addiction and deeply unconscious self-destructive motives. His Neptune retrograde, coupled with Saturn retrograde, leaves him with

few innate boundary mechanisms and he will consciously have to work hard to create some for himself. Instinctively he wants to sleep, to drink deeply from the River Lethe and forget his body and the incarnate flesh, but he is constantly pulled back, paradoxically, by his very addiction.

William Blake's chart has Sun at 6° Sagittarius trine Neptune at 13° Leo, stationary-direct and the only retrograde-ish planet. Saturn is opposite to Blake's Neptune and his spiritual struggle with the burgeoning new mechanistic philosophy is embodied through that dichotomy. He was a political, but inspired poet.

The opposition to the Sun posits Neptune as an open adversary to ego containment, rare to find as a distinct singleton though possibly more common as an only retrograde planet. Mozart had Sun, Mercury and Saturn in Aquarius, with an exact opposition between the Sun and Mercury on the one hand and Neptune in Leo on the other; he also had Mars retrograde, but Neptune was the only outer planet retrograde, segregated from the main gestalt of the other planets. As a child prodigy Mozart was exploited, his boundaries invaded and corroded by his father's management of the constant parade of performances throughout Europe. He was virtually the extension of his father's ego, which is illustrated by the Sun-Saturn conjunction and also by the Moon-Pluto conjunction in the fourth house in Sagittarius. However, we are concentrating on the retrograde Neptune. It served as a mainline tap for innate musical genius (is this an example of 'recollection'?) which was his from the age of two. Mozart's egoless child-state channelled his Neptune, but when the time came for development of his ego, it found no parameters—what might have been a container was stolen by his father (Saturn) and corroded by the opposition from Neptune. Mozart's political naïvety rendered him a

social pariah, inept at the 'graces' of contemporary society and psychologically incapable of currying favour among the élite who tacitly governed artistic success. He died, an alcoholic, at the age of thirty-five.

The opposition zone itself holds a special charge, one which requires a tremendous sense of pragmatism and consciousness to contain. Alan Watts, a proponent of Zen Buddhism in the 1960s and 1970s, has Sun-Mercury at 15° Capricorn exactly opposite the midpoint of Pluto and Neptune, which are respectively 0° Cancer

and 29° Cancer. His Sun 'captures' the meeting-place of power and soul, funnelling his mystical, religious vision through the earthy, contained ego. Watts has an academic history in theology, but left the Christian Church in 1948 to pursue his interest in the philosophy of eastern religions, avoiding sectarianism.

Richard Alpert, a.k.a. Baba Ram Dass, has Neptune retrograde as the only retrograde, though not a singleton. It is incorporated into the main gestalt of the planets (Moon and Saturn sit away from a bowl of planets). As a PhD Harvard graduate, he participated with Timothy Leary in the early intellectual LSD experiments. Jim Lewis notes that Ram Dass has a rare occultation between his Sun and Uranus (they are both conjunct in longitude as well as declination) at 15° of Aries.

2 Ram Dass's Sun is sesquiquadrate Neptune at 3° of Virgo—a particularly tense aspect, one which needs tremendous humour to utilize. For grounding, Sun-Uranus is square to Saturn. This is an important feature added to Ram Dass's Neptune, because it allows for a truly unique utilization of collective energy. As Richard Alpert, he was the explorer of chemically altered states and new dimensions of the mind; as Ram Dass, he continues his vision-quest, but with the grace and maturity of his years. He has been deeply influenced by eastern mysticism and has an uproarious sense of cosmic humour, which he unabashedly shares with his audiences worldwide. Ram Dass's collective Neptune has been channelled through his individual persona in a multitude of ways. He alternates with Wavy Gravy (a.k.a. Hugh Romney) the position of director of SEVA, an organization based in Nepal dedicated to restoring sight to the blind. Neptune retrograde can constellate collective religious complexes, nailing the bearer to the metaphorical cross, but as we have seen by example, with effort, consciousness and a dash of Saturn, it offers the individual an enriched participation in an otherwise spiritless world. The seeking of a unifying principle finds many paths to tread, many inspirational sources, some divine, some diabolical. The word religion stems from the Latin *religare*, 'to bind back', as in to connect back to the universal principle. The challenge from Neptune retrograde is to learn to distinguish between the voices. Attempts to interpret edicts from divine sources have resulted in a myriad of religious doctrines, all of which claim to have penetrated the mystery of cosmic law. These doctrines serve a spiritual purpose, but frequently for the individual little consolation is afforded through human interpretation of divine order.

PROGRESSED NEPTUNE

When Neptune stations by progression in the chart, it means the Sun has progressed to such a point that its relationship with Neptune has undergone a subtle adjustment. It has been virtually stationary for years, anyway; the station is rarely marked by an event. The station-retrograde may be the time when one's sense of self becomes increasingly idealistic and one might find oneself longing for deeper spiritual satisfaction. Also, it might precipitate an unrealistic search outside oneself for a teacher, whether that be a lover, guru, master or leader. Depending on the major transits and other precise progressions, the return to the cosmic womb may be dramatic or subtle. A longing for romantic or spiritual fusion can permeate one's experiences for a few years following the station-retrograde, colouring one's perceptions of relationships. Those relationships which fall short of the ideal can dissolve and disappear, leaving one in a state of suspension for some time while new evaluations of love, romance, religious expression and spiritual resources are in process.

The stationary-direct year will mark a time of 'surfacing', of changing one's perceptions of reality. The reality shift can be sudden, as the scales fall from one's eyes, or gradual, over a period of three or four years, while transits or other more sharply defined progressions bring the Neptune station into clearer focus. The progressed Sun's position in relation to natal planets will help define the situation, by indicating what issues the ego is grappling with. It is often a time in which one finds an avenue for expressing 'newly discovered' personal psychological patterns, which have never been fully understood or articulated. There is a release of sadness, longing and existential pain, allowing a freer expression of creative issue, which often means that the station year and subsequent two years are filled with poetic responses to what used to be a pretty ordinary life.

The most noticeable aspect that the progressed Sun makes to Neptune is the opposition. The year in which that progression occurs is usually marked by a form of ego-dissolve. This is not always a negative

experience, since it is a natural pattern resulting from one's own inner experience of oneself. The degree to which one is committed to retaining a rigid ego and inflexible persona is the degree to which it is experienced as 'bad'. One will have to undergo a shape-shift, enter a world of rather mysterious signals and literally go with the flow. All previously well-known parameters and reference points begin to blur at the edges, resulting in a soft-focus reality. A graphic artist, who had previously been ambitious and energetic about pursuing his career, began to undergo this identity dissolve about a year or so before the progressed Sun exactly opposed Neptune. He simply lost interest in his work, and wanted to concentrate primarily on metaphysical studies, astrology in particular, and found himself inadvertently 'forgetting' to invoice clients. He also took a loss of income by choice, wanting to do only what he felt was creative.

The transition from a well-defined self-image into an amorphous being can be alarming, but it is ultimately part of a longer transition toward a more creative and more centred sense of self. This positive result occurs primarily if one is aware of the process of change, otherwise a great panic and confusion can arise. Pain from unknown sources—*weltschmerz*—can beleaguer one's soul and may result in various pain-killing rituals: alcohol, drugs, religious fervour, to name a few. Ideally, one might use the opposition year to explore quietly one's interior world and measure it against what one feels is more healing and helpful in the large picture. However, seeing the large picture through the misty lens of Neptune is rather difficult, so it might be the time in which faith rather than control plays the greater role in one's destiny.

The dissolve of the ego structure during the opposition year can be equated with the alchemical *olutio*, where the dissolution of the ego and subsequently of psychic impurities ultimately results in a dense, more unadulterated channel through which the ego might develop in future. The progressed Sun opposite natal Neptune can also reveal the worst side of one's nature—the hysterical side—where individual boundaries cease to exist and one becomes literally

one with others or the universe. It is necessary to take care not to confuse oneself with others, or to translate personal pain into cosmic pain or vice versa. This means being alert to the possibility of losing one's own boundaries in relationships—all relationships—and making attempts to contain free-floating anxiety. The ultimate purpose is towards a purer vessel, one in which the ego can contain cosmic truths and wonders without losing perception of the immediate present.

Well-known people with Neptune retrograde:

Robbie Burns (wide opposition to Sun, handle of funnel)

Bob Dylan (only retrograde, end of locomotive pattern)

Paul Gauguin (singleton)

Alec Guinness (only retrograde, end of locomotive pattern)

Richard Nixon (opposition to Sun; also SA, PL retrograde)

Alexander Pushkin (quincunx with Sun)

Yogananda (also NE, PL retrograde)

with Neptune retrograde conjunct Pluto retrograde:

Martin Heidegger

Henry Miller

Jawaharlal Nehru

Chiang Kai-shek

13

NATAL PLUTO RETROGRADE

When you don't have this dying and becoming you are only a sad guest on the dark earth.

Goethe

Pluto is retrograde in the birthchart when it is within 99° of the Sun on either side. This is within a wide orb of a Sun-Pluto square. Pluto is moving at its slowest motion at both sinister and dexter square aspects with the Sun and, respectively, is about to be stationary-retrograde or has just turned stationary-direct.

It is uncommon to find Pluto as a singleton retrograde in the twentieth or first half of the twenty-first century. Specifically it is difficult to isolate Pluto as separate from Neptune, having been in close orb with it since around 1840 when there was a sextile from Neptune in Aquarius to Pluto in Aries. There was a conjunction in the 1890s in Gemini, and the two planets will remain within two signs of each other right through to the mid-2000s: Neptune in Libra and Pluto in Leo (1943–56); Neptune in Scorpio and Pluto in Virgo (1957–71); Neptune in Sagittarius and Pluto in Libra (1972–84); Neptune in Capricorn and Pluto in Scorpio (1984–99); Neptune in Aquarius and Pluto in Sagittarius (1999– 2008 or so—Pluto enters

Capricorn firmly by November 2008). The sextile wobbles a bit in this decade, but is firmly intact again around 2016 with Neptune in Pisces and Pluto in Capricorn.

By 2025 Neptune will be in Aries and Pluto in Aquarius. This sextile is the inverse of the one in the mid-1800s and marks the beginning of the separation of Neptune and Pluto as Pluto begins to slow in apparent motion, heading out 'away' from Earth towards Taurus, its longest zodiacal transit. Neptune and Pluto move out of

orb of sextile by 2038 and are in a square to each other by the 2050s.

PLUTO, THE SUN AND THE EGO

Wherever we find Pluto in the natal horoscope, we find the key to existential loneliness. With the luck of the draw, Hades was assigned to the underworld, his brothers Poseidon and Zeus to the sea and the sky. Though he was equal in stature and significance, his position as ruler of the realm of the shades did not afford him the same social contacts as his more fortunate brothers. In the myth of Demeter and Persephone, we find that Hades has to steal his beloved and abduct her to his domain. In the tales of the many conquests of Zeus and Poseidon, we find that their opportunities for love were many and various, whereas Hades had but one. His symbiotic relationship with the maiden Kore—Persephone, the youthful aspect of Demeter—implicates Pluto as the holder of the seed of life; not just guardian of the dead, but the conservator of the immutable soul. His connections with seasonal death and the resurgence of life are linked to the abduction myth in which he incorporates the feminine into his own realm for part of the year, releasing her each spring, restoring life to Earth. Demeter's anger and mourning over the loss of her maiden daughter is re-enacted annually each winter as the Earth dies.

What support, if any, does the astrological Pluto offer the ego? The ego is uncomfortably reminded of its mortality through the agency of Pluto. We are constantly reminded in the middle of life that we remain powerless over the inevitable *telos*, the terminus of our life on Earth. The reminder comes in many forms—through natural waxing and waning cycles of nature, through the death of others, from near escapes we might experience ourselves, and many cues more subtle such as minor losses, ego-deaths and other preparations for the big, and final, experience of life. People who have Sun-Pluto contacts are compelled to explore the nether regions and yet, somehow, retain a sense of life. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, mentioned in [chapter 6](#), had a Sun-Pluto conjunction at 15° Cancer and her life work was to walk with death, translate death and encourage others to explore the necessity of coming to terms with death.

The positive features of a profound awareness of total aloneness are present only when one realizes a fundamental truth: aloneness is not necessarily equivalent to loneliness. When Pluto is separated from the main body of planets in the horoscope, the individual is required by the force of his or her own psyche to undergo rituals of death and rebirth on a cyclic basis in an attempt to bring to the experience some form of personal meaning. The exploration of the dark side of the psyche brings insight into the immortal aspect of our nature. The strength that is gained through Pluto is ultimately liberating — one is not always stalked by death, but acknowledges its existence.

Pluto has been associated in astrology with a point of reincarnation in the birthchart. This might be quite apt, for it is through the realm of Hades that the soul must pass before it meets the Fates, the Moirai, who distribute, apportion and determine the course of the next life. The deepest region of the psyche is the repository of archetypes, the presence of which gives rise to the various metaphysical philosophies around reincarnation. The Greek philosopher Socrates called the body (*soma*) the tomb (*sema*) of the soul, and believed that the soul was free only when the body died. A birthchart can also be a deathchart because it depicts the juncture between the departure from the ethereal realm and the entry of the soul incarnate into the world. Pluto is the gateway through which we all must pass to meet death or greet life. The 'Unseen One', Hades, as we meet him in the astrological Pluto, is a state of mind.

Tartarus is as distant from earth as earth is from heaven, deep in the bowels of Hades where the souls of evil-doers endure a special kind of eternity. Specific horrors were designed unique to the transgression of the malefactor. Tantalus, for example, is there for having served his own son to the gods for dinner, forever tantalized by remote food and drink.

Within each of us is an appropriate hell, a place unique to our own version of what it is to be damned. We go there periodically, experiencing our own personal eternal horror. Jean-Paul Sartre had a Sun, Mercury and Pluto stellium in Gemini in the eighth house trined by the 230° Aquarius Moon in the fourth house (Pluto at 21°,

Mercury at 26° and the Sun at 29°). Sartre's explorations into existence in the face of death led to a succession of creative endeavours. His play *No Exit* demonstrated the personal hell each individual might experience, a sort of Tartarus in a social setting. Like Kübler-Ross, who had a Sun-Pluto conjunction trine Saturn, Sartre had a personal relationship with Pluto which offered a vehicle to carry the darkness which Pluto seems always to bring to consciousness. It is the *lack* of contact to Pluto (in other words, no exact aspect) from the Sun which appears to cause the greater amount of distress and difficulty, rather than personal contact.

PLUTO RETROGRADE IN THE NATAL CHART

As with Neptune, it serves to look at natal Pluto retrograde when it is in an aspect to the Sun, which serves to personalize the collective energy. As a collective image, Pluto symbolizes generational survival angst. Pluto and Scorpio are symbols of elimination and waste, just as they are symbols of the deepest form of transmutation. The Pluto in Leo generation, fated to have Pluto square itself earlier in their individual lives than any other generation, are inexorably bound to the frightening aspect of collective death. Having issued under the nuclear banner (some will say reincarnated out of the nuclear rubble), each individual born since Pluto transited Leo walks with Thanatos, agent of Pluto. Since Pluto's transit of Leo, Saturn contacts to Pluto have taken on a new burden, that of bringing to the boundary of consciousness the fate not only of the world but of the entire solar system too.

All individuals are aware of death and think about it periodically. It would be absurd to attempt to delineate Pluto retrograde in any specific way with respect to the philosophy of death. It is not normally a socially acceptable subject, and usually arises either in controlled social situations, such as workshops, philosophical meetings, medical lectures and the like, or when someone close is dying or has died. Despite many jokes being made about death, as a defence against its power, it is usually not the topic of the day. It is difficult, therefore, to determine—like the subject of sex which is intimately linked with death—precisely what people's ideas of death are.

The capacity to integrate mysterious experiences into one's conscious ego is very Plutonian; the sign Scorpio and the planet Pluto are frequently indicators of minds which are inherently inclined towards the unravelling of convoluted or labyrinthine subjects. Any solar contact (and, secondarily, angular contacts) to Pluto enhances one's interest in probing the depths and nether regions of life's mysteries, but lack of solar contacts to Pluto indicates a spectrum of possibilities—from not really caring about things unseen, to being obsessed with avoiding anything that might be construed as morbid.

Individuals who have no solar contact to a stationary or retrograde Pluto in their birthchart have a deeply unconscious main line into generational angst, and their personal hell is often bound up with collective issues around death and mass psychosis. Because Pluto is segregated and distanced from the ego-Sun, there is frequently a very noticeable lack of desire to explore and accept natural issues around death. We are all in a state of denial to some degree, but the degree to which an individual can become split off from all recognition of death is more pronounced with no solar aspect to Pluto. The manifestation is an unrealistic optimism, in which one denies ever thinking 'morbid thoughts' and prides oneself on being free of anxiety and morbidity. Experiences in life might take such individuals closer to their own mortality, but they will amputate emotional response and feel that they are distanced from thinking about it too deeply. There is often an embarrassment about thinking of death, and a distinct anger towards others who challenge their Pollyanna attitude. Though no abnormality may surface, there is a strong possibility of an obsession arising out of denial and irrupting into the conscious mind, manifesting in the form of terrors and phobias which are proportionate to the degree of denial. Pluto's guard against all the unrealized fears we might have can be disturbed by transits or progressed solar aspects to Pluto or progressed Pluto stations. If the progressed Sun forms an aspect to natal Pluto retrograde, an experience is likely to arise to remind one of the darker side of life.

Krista

A case I presented in *Saturn in Transit*

1 of Krista, a schizophrenic, did not include material on progressed Sun aspects to retrograde planets. Born with Sun at 5° Sagittarius and Pluto stationary-retrograde at 23° Leo, there is no classical aspect between her stationary Pluto and the Sun (Pluto had just stationed four days before her birth). When Krista experienced her first psychotic episode—her initial descent into hell—coincident with Saturn transiting her eighth house, her progressed Sun was exactly trine her natal retrograde Pluto.

Krista's descent into hell contained all the attributes of the paradigmatic spiral into the psychotic world of the demon-possessed. Though stationary planets are the most powerful, they may not manifest until a solar contact triggers the deeply interior world which retrograde planets harbour. Upon the progressed Sun's inevitable trine and the Saturn transit of the eighth house, Krista was introduced through the gateway of her personal hell. The fact that natal Pluto is sextiled by the Saturn-Neptune conjunction in Libra has served her well, since she has been able to ground her visions of writhing snakes, witches and demons through sculpture and other forms of art. However, she still has episodes during which she is snatched from her equilibrium and borne into the underworld by the chariot of Hades.

Obsessive, compulsive behaviour is one way the psyche attempts to stave off the inevitable. By engaging in repetitive, ritualistic actions one is preoccupied by banal functions which prevent deeper awareness from breaking through. The obsessive is doomed to repeat those patterns until released from the grip of existential angst. Moderate manifestations of the obsessive-compulsive disorder are enacted in countless ways; everyone has ways of doing things which simply *must* be followed. The following brief case illustrates obsessive-compulsive behaviour which manifested in agoraphobia in the year progressed Pluto stationed and turned retrograde.

Daphne

Daphne has a stellium in the seventh house completely separated from retrograde Jupiter and the Moon in Pisces (see [fig. 13.1](#)). The bunching of planets in the seventh house coupled with her Moon trine retrograde Uranus (stationary-retrograde—it had turned retrograde just five days prior to her birth) gave Daphne an intensely sensitive nature which underlies both her musical ability and her eventual loss of ego. She had been a musician since the age of three, when her innate talent became obvious to her parents, who fostered her genius in music but neglected to attend to her emotional needs. Daphne grew up in the rarefied world of the child prodigy, playing at recitals and concerts from the age of five, all of her time completely accounted for.

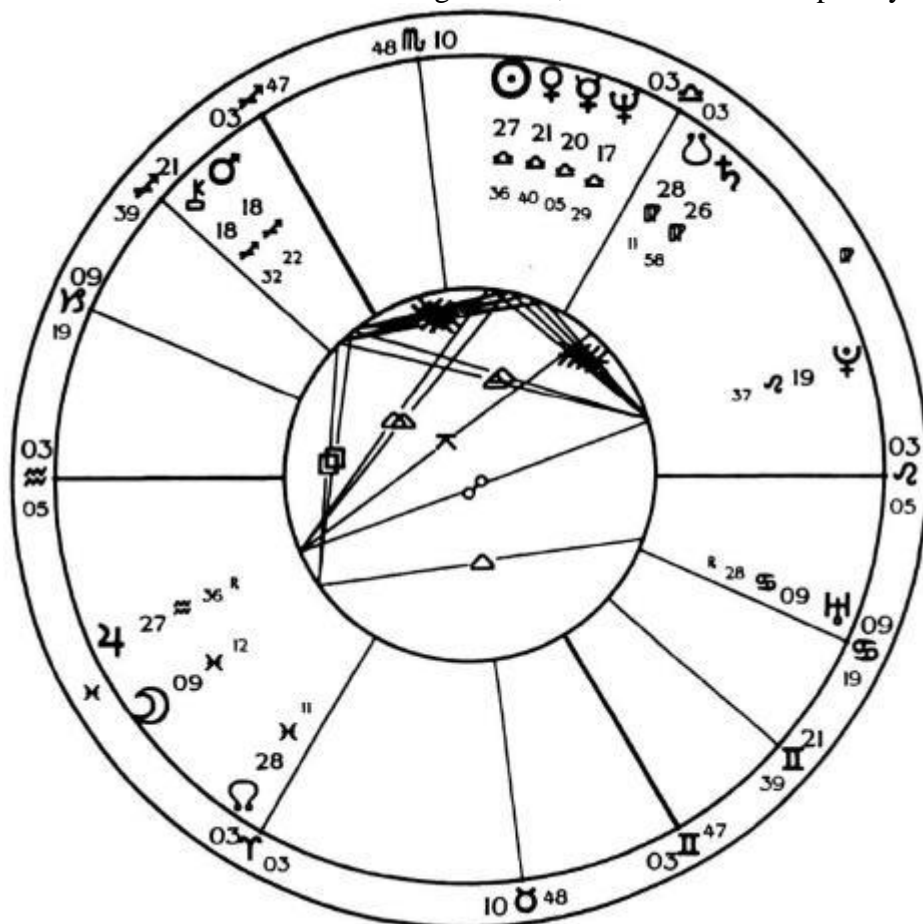


Fig. 13.1 Daphne

Daphne loves music but has no love for herself or other people. She has never found a role as a soloist and has always played in symphonic or orchestral groups. She secretly longs for recognition. She feels that her dedication to her professional life is the reason behind the lack of relationships in her life but is vaguely aware that her loneliness may have more to do with emotional barriers. When I saw Daphne in 1990 she had

recovered from a seven-year bout of obsessive-compulsive disorder (hand-washing) magnified by agoraphobia, and had only just left the parental home for the first time in her life.

The year Daphne's fears set in—1981—progressed Pluto stationed-retrograde. In March of that year she had been playing in a major orchestral production backing a musical play. The progressed Moon was within a degree of the trine to stationing Pluto, with a progressed Sun-Venus conjunction. An incident occurred where she suddenly felt removed and separated from reality; she said that as she looked about her, she saw all her colleagues as if wearing death-masks. She suffered an acute panic attack that night, silently regained her composure, but began to disintegrate rapidly over the month following. She tried to struggle on but finally her morbid visions overwhelmed her consciousness to the degree that she could not continue with the engagement and quietly retreated into her home where she remained, virtually isolated and cared for by her parents, for seven years — until 1988.

Natally there are issues around the Pisces Moon (the wish to remain unborn) and the isolated retrograde Jupiter, the 'stranger in a strange land'. Daphne's stellium in the seventh house and Sun semi-sextile Saturn hint at an obsessive, perfectionist personality, while the Moon trine Uranus in the fifth shows her capacity to become creatively fixated and express her interior emotional and psychical world in a brilliant but potentially erratic way.

The Pluto station, facilitated by the trine from the progressed Moon (which simultaneously opposed natal Neptune *and* formed a grand trine between Mars, Pluto and progressed Moon) and progressed Sun in last degree of Scorpio, plunged her into a womb of anxiety and denial. Denial of what? In the three years since she has regained her stability, she has undergone deep analysis to find the seed that grew into the massive phobia. Daphne said she could not bear to be with people or involve herself in her once-loved work, because she suddenly realized that everyone, herself included, was going to die. Daphne had experienced her Saturn return the year previous to her breakdown (1980), a time in which one normally comes to face one's mortality, but usually not to that extreme. The Pluto station triggered her descent into the underworld, where all her repressed anxieties about incarnation lay in wait. She had been protected from all the normal stages of growth available to a developing ego by having remained in the parental home, isolated from the world, never experiencing life's vicissitudes or joys, living in a total dream-world.

Essentially, Daphne was returned to the womb at the Pluto station, a most unpleasant one, to undergo a process of rebirth. In the course of that seven years, she returned to the infantile state of self-absorption and egolessness. Upon the Saturn square to itself, just after its transit of the MC, coupled with Uranus, with transiting Pluto stationary-direct at 9°; Scorpio in trine to natal Uranus, and progressed Moon in Cancer over her natal Uranus, she emerged from her shell and began intensive treatment for her agoraphobia.

Daphne resumed her musical career in 1991, shortly after transiting Saturn squared her natal Neptune, a transit best described as a separation from the womb, a time of rebirth and expulsion from Eden. She is slowly learning to care for herself and live in the mundane world.

PROGRESSED PLUTO

Changes in direction—retrograde or direct—of Pluto by secondary progression can release suppressed material which inherently is not supportive of the ego but which once made conscious and embraced, will strengthen one's commitment to awareness of one's deepest, inmost character. The stationary-retrograde is always followed by the progressed Sun trine to the natal Pluto by about twenty years. The Sun gathers hidden or repressed contents into a tangible form, and projects them into the experiential world. One meets the mysterious depths of unconscious desire and faces the unrevealed, dark side of human nature. The post-retrograde trine can manifest in an up

surge of talent that has lain dormant and untapped all of one's life. It is significant that this progression can only occur with certain signs in certain decades. For example, in the Pluto in Leo generation only those whose progressed Sun will enter Sagittarius will experience this phenomenon; the Pluto in Virgo will only experience it if their Sun will progress into Capricorn, and so on sequentially through the signs.

When natal Pluto stations and turns direct, it is followed by the progressed Sun square to it. This aspect is much more quick to follow than the trine at the Pluto retrograde station. Again, as with the post-retrograde trine, for this progressed station to occur one must be born with the Sun somewhere in the region of the sinister trine to it (four signs *behind* Pluto). Progressed Sun square Pluto follows its station-direct by anything from six to fourteen years, depending on the sign natal Pluto is in. The Pluto in Leo, Virgo and Libra generation receive the Sun square from nine to ten years following the station-direct, but the Pluto in Scorpio, Sagittarius and Capricorn must wait for thirteen to fourteen years. The square forces one to

confront one's need for control and power over the manifest world. Pluto by nature denies life and does not willingly support the ego. It works to erode one's superficial connection to life, with the intent of deepening one's commitment to one's whole self. The fact that the possibility of this progression is so limited also amplifies the fatedness of its experience. It will not happen to everyone, or even the majority, but a small minority of individuals have Pluto stations in the course of their lives.

The progressed-direction of Pluto will mark a year or so in which one must come to grips with one's conscious will to live and live deeply, with passionate commitment. One is not allowed simply to exist. The ego will meet with opposition to any constructed or manufactured philosophy which does not incorporate a death clause. Rigid, highly organized or hierarchic religions or philosophies will be challenged by confrontation with the inevitable. The year of the station should mark the beginning of a psychological trek towards the ego embracing the Self, or the subsequent square will bring forth deeply suppressed angst which will force the ego to disintegrate and reorganize itself around a new principle. The progressed Sun square to Pluto will compel one to examine ruthlessly one's superstructure and if it is not internally supported by the greater self, it will collapse.

Lurking in the underworld of the psyche are myriad monsters -triple-headed Cerberus, spinners of fate, goddesses of the night, judges of the dead—but also the secrets of eros. Pluto's abduction of Persephone is called 'the rape of Persephone', in the sense of a seizure, not a sexual assault. It results in a secret, sacred and symbolic marriage. Persephone seals her own fate by eating the pomegranate seeds given her by Hades, thus wedding her to him. Though she is returned to the world above seasonally, she is queen of the underworld eternally. Persephone is the stolen love and Hades the thieving lover; within each of us is the archetype of that primal experience: the loss of innocence, the secret lust, the stolen moment, the demon lover.

In the course of changes in direction of Pluto, or transiting aspects to natal retrograde Pluto, one can meet with a long-desired relationship. Pluto changes can bring to the surface a deeply buried longing for soul-mating, and one may find something different lurking in one's soul to what the ego says is right for society. Much pain and burning attends this type of experience, but the depth of truth and integrity resulting from acknowledgement bring the reward of collusion between the ego and the deeper Self. This meeting is also a feature of transiting Pluto, where one meets one's soul's desire but may have to sacrifice something to capture and mate with him or her.

Perry

Perry's Sun at 17° of Aries progressed to 8° of Taurus, triggering Pluto stationary-direct, at the age of twenty-two. In that year he came to the absolute, conscious realization that he was homosexual, but could not find the inner resources to open up and tell family and friends. Fearing the worst, Perry married his close woman friend from whom at first he managed to keep his secret, and they had two children. He continued to have clandestine sexual relations with men until the progressed Sun reached 19° Taurus, square Pluto at 17° Leo. For three years previous to that his wife had shared his secret and had been emotionally supportive, but it was

not until the precise square that Perry had the courage to separate from his wife, tell his children and branch out on his own. It was the year in which he last had sexual relations with a woman.

Although it caused much soul-searching and pain, Perry was compelled to be true to his deeper Self. It is never easy to achieve deep, integral honesty, for one must always face that part of one which is unique to oneself only. The purge that results from such deep honesty cleanses the soul. Those who choose to acknowledge this aspect of themselves inevitably receive blessings from those from whom they have hidden—for everyone on some level knows when another is lying. Perry remains very close to his children, who admire him tremendously, and his wife, who has since remarried.

The rare changes in progressed natal Pluto's direction always bring about extreme experiences, some more desperate than others. None that I know of has caused death, but many have nurtured a fundamental and truly unique characteristic which has been held in captivity until such time as Hades struck off the shackles of ego preservation through the station-direct, or abducted his subject from superficial existence in an insubstantial world at the station-retrograde.

Well-known people with Pluto retrograde isolated or prominent:

John Jacob Astor (singleton)

Nathaniel Hawthorne (Sun trine)

D. H. Lawrence (Sun square; also NE retrograde)

Franz Liszt

Isaac Newton
 Elvis Presley (also NE retrograde)
 Jonas Salk (exact conjunction with SA retrograde)
 Percy Bysshe Shelley (opposition to Sun)
 Yogananda

14

A NATAL CASE HISTORY: OSCAR

Oscar's chart illustrates explicitly the multiple retrograde phenomenon and the systematic release of internalized energy through the progression of the Sun (see [fig. 14.1](#)). A well-known playwright, Oscar came for an astrological session just prior to a major Broadway production of his latest play. He was not concerned about the success of the play, his artistic nature or relationships; he was interested in a psychological issue that had arisen in the last few years, and was very curious about why it was occurring and what, if anything, it might mean astrologically.

Oscar's horoscope shows the identity trinity in the lower hemisphere of the chart, while the planets Mars, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto are in the upper hemisphere. The Sun forms the opposition to Saturn and is the focal point of a yod with Neptune and Pluto. All the planets in the opposition zone to the Sun are retrograde, with the exception of Uranus which had gone direct two days before his birth and is therefore stationary-direct. The general pattern is of a man who is deeply connected to collective issues, highly sensitive of mass consciousness but introverted and oppressed by forces beyond his control. The mystery of such a chart is unravelled through the course of a life—one never knows whether such a horoscope is the chart of a victim of collective forces, or of a voice of the collective, or perhaps both. An individual with a vocation embodying collective issues is both voice and victim. With Oscar, we see the gradual transition and maturation from victim to voice, while still incorporating all facets.

Let us first examine the powerful aspects from the Sun to the superior planets. The yod with Saturn at the midpoint of Pluto and Neptune is initially worth looking at from the traditional interpretation, before we delve into some of the more personal features of Oscar's chart. Ebertin says of the Neptune and Pluto midpoint:

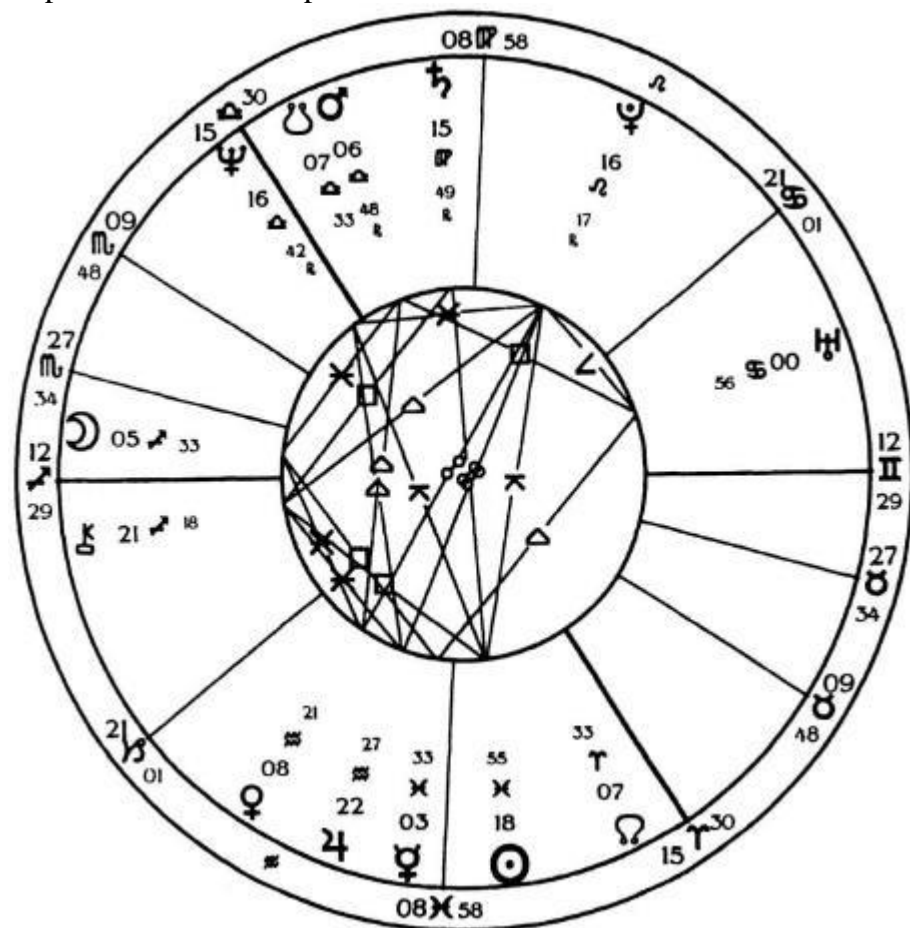


Fig. 14.1 Oscar
 Principle: The supernatural.

Psychological Correspondence:

+ An intensified and purified soul-life, a high degree of sensitiveness, a highly active imagination and fantasy, illusions, clairvoyant visions and second sight, an inclination to delve into unusual and supernatural phenomena, a love of mysticism, self-knowledge (by inner realization of truth).

- A confused and hazy interpretation of soul-experiences, a chimera or whim, peculiar states of soul-experience, juggling or delusive trick, falsehood, fraud.

Biological Correspondence:

The treacherously painless stage of disease. A lack of incentive or of will power for the maintenance of health. Disturbances or troubles of slow or lingering development. The gradual commencement of therapy. When we combine that midpoint focus for the most common yod of the post Second World War generation—Neptune and Pluto—with Saturn, which sits precisely between them, we get: ‘Dark forebodings, pessimism, self-torment. Grievous emotional suffering, the gradual decline of one’s powers and faculties.’ Then, when we place the Sun at the inverse midpoint of Neptune and Pluto, we read: ‘A sensitive physique, sensitiveness, impressionability or proneness to external influence. Peculiar diseases due to indulgences, succumbing to strange influences.’

1

Oscar comes from a staunch middle-class background with a strong religious focus. He is the youngest of four children, one of whom died before he was born. His mother taught religious education and, between the ages of seven and twelve, Oscar sang in a cathedral choir while attending boarding-school. The resonant tone of the celestial music and all the ritual associated with High Church proceedings served his deeply spiritual and sensitive nature beautifully in pre-adolescence (Moon in Sagittarius in the twelfth house). Oscar’s father was a quiet man, a weak influence, and, though not unkind, he apparently played no active role in parenting. I suspect that with Oscar’s Sun-Saturn opposition he never really consciously saw his father clearly, but rather through a foggy lens with no clear focus. It is likely that Oscar’s father internalized his own power, sacrificing it to a more extraverted and outspoken mother. Oscar responded to a much higher level of authority—a divinely ordained celestial father image.

He says he was always very easy to ‘manage’ as a child, responding well to authority, never questioning it and generally behaving

passively. He started showing remarkable sensitivity to all the creative arts at school, and studied the requisite literature and music. By the time he was eleven, he was already developing his ideas and writing. The first major aspect that the progressed Sun made was a square to his stationary Uranus at age eleven, followed by the progressed Sun opposed progressed Mars at twelve. The combination of the two progressed Sun aspects is explosive and highly charged with release. Oscar’s discovery of his sexuality and the liberation of his creative issue were both highlights of those years, explicitly illustrated by the breaking out of his shell (progressed Sun at the Saturn and Neptune midpoint, square to natal Uranus retrograde) and catalysis of his inner visions through writing his first play, in 1962. The opposition to the progressed retrograde Mars (arriving at puberty and becoming actively sexual) is a foreshadowing of the progressed Sun’s eventual opposition to the natal Mars at the age of seventeen.

So, by the age of twelve Oscar was fully engaged in his sexuality, and knew he was homosexual. It was very hush-hush, not known to the masters at the school, small and exclusive as it was, but, as he said, among the boys it was a ‘family affair’. The latent Mars retrograde was activated by the first solar aspect to it, allowing him to experience his passions fully, but it also released the creative seed and embarked him on the road to his eventual career.

The Sun-Saturn opposition is from Pisces to Virgo, and holds the archetypal religious theme fixed in the third and ninth houses, where Oscar found creative expression of his inner visions, harmonies and dreams through writing and music. He was never able to deal with the occasional involuntary rage that Mars retrograde induces, and still cannot—there is nothing for it but to internalize it or project it. However, intense fantasy and ritualistic activity often ameliorate the impotence of Mars retrograde. The manifestation of the split between Mars and Saturn is classic. Oscar was obedient, subordinating his own needs to the demands or expectations of authority, whether that was his parents, the Church or the masters at school. He was quite unconscious of these feelings until sometime later in his life. Saturn provided a strong container for his dream vision Sun, but did not offer a vehicle for his ego until much later in life.

The next major aspect was the progressed Sun opposed to natal Mars at the age of seventeen. It became very apparent that Oscar was extraordinarily talented and motivated creatively, and his parents felt a solid

training in another language would serve him well. He was sent off to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, at great sacrifice to his parents. By this age, Oscar was becoming aware of his passive acceptance of authority. Yet he was acutely conscious of the kind motives behind his parents' desires for him and, against his inner voice, allowed himself to be shipped off to school. He describes the subsequent nine months as hell. He was lonely, insomniac, desperately unhappy and eventually became ill. His body signalled his desperate emotional situation, being a natural repository for psychic disturbances or emotional upsets, with the delicately contained ego Sun overpowered by the Saturn in Virgo in the ninth. There is an inherent awareness of the ultimate divine authority with Saturn in the ninth house, as if all Saturn figures could be god. Until a measure of self-development occurs, this is a nagging, oppressive Saturn, which encases the unformed, pliable ego in a hard container of rules, regulations and unspoken, undifferentiated authority.

The years of the progressed Sun opposite natal Mars, 1966–7 were marked also by the transits of Pluto and Uranus conjunct natal Saturn, while around the same time Saturn transited natal Sun. Those aspects alone could have operated to shatter the fragile boundaries between Oscar and perceived authority as well as the thin line between his unconscious and conscious mind. Oscar broke down. He somatized his soul-crushing sadness, his illness being one of the ways a Pisces-Virgo type can manifest stress and depression. The 'grievous emotional suffering and gradual decline of power' spoken of in the natal Saturn conjunct Neptune-Pluto midpoint was exacerbated by Saturn in Pisces transiting the Sun and transiting Uranus-Pluto in Virgo sitting on that Saturn-Neptune-Pluto midpoint for about two years.

His Sun-Neptune-Pluto contact, his 'sensitive physique' and his 'proneness to external influences', along with the deeply spiritual and soulful interior life, were releasing all the pent-up rage interiorized in the natal Mars retrograde, through the decisive progressed opposition of Sun to natal Mars. The acute symptoms spoke volumes which Oscar could not verbalize

The illness, largely a psychological response to being unwillingly entombed, parallels the Sun-Mars progression. His psyche was rebelling not only against the external authorities but against his own inability to assert his needs. He was sent home, ill and bedridden. Underneath the obvious manifestation, something else was building—the forces of collective shadows beginning to assemble at the limb of consciousness, to be released almost twenty years later.

Oscar recovered, went to university, read English and graduated. By the time he was twenty-seven his vocation and work were well established, but a breakthrough occurred when he was invited to present a play at an important thespian festival in Europe. In the year of his meeting with the people who ran the festival, the progressed Sun had arrived at the IC of his natal chart, to oppose his natal Neptune retrograde in the tenth house and trine natal Pluto retrograde in the eighth. The block or decision that the natal yod (finger of God) instils finally broke—he had found a channel for his Sun, and a 'home' for his work. Neptune is the most significant planet in the yod as regards the ego, because the Sun disposes it; his fantasies and dream-world were externalized through the tenth house by the main-line channel of the opposition. Progressed Sun opposite Neptune could easily have been a time of waste and dissipation, or inadvertent invasion from collective psychic forces, and may yet prove to have been, but it was funnelled through the creative trine to Pluto. (See p. 139 for the solar yod.)

Although his work had received international acclaim as early as 1974, when he was twenty-four, Oscar really recalls the festival as the time of mature security being established. This important aspect gave power and impact, as well as the opportunity to affect the masses, rather than simply being passive. His feelings of confidence in that year took hold, and he has presented plays several times since in that venue. More importantly, however, he developed a deep friendship with the directors, one of whom played a significant, though unknowing, role in Oscar's recognition of an obsession of his—order and cleanliness. The progression of the Sun to oppose natal Neptune gave birth to the seed locked into the natal quincunx he had struggled with; the simultaneous Sun trine to Pluto in the eighth opened another door for Oscar. His developing ego—the progressed Sun—had captured the elusive Neptune and contained it in direct confrontation, while the trine to Pluto allowed him to portray his inner dream-world in concrete terms.

In that same period, he had his first real relationship and though he had never been unhappy about being homosexual, or oppressed, guilty and secretive about his sexuality, he had never experienced a full-blown love relationship with an equal. The relationship lasted for three years, from around twenty-six to twenty-nine, and was to Oscar a beautiful experience, one which unlatched the locked doors of emotional relating. His natal eighth house Pluto retrograde was released and he found his match, emotionally, sexually and intellectually.

When his progressed Sun conjoined the IC, Oscar grounded himself, for he has no earth other than Saturn in Virgo, which being retrograde, did not offer the traditional containment that Saturn is wont to do. It erected on the one hand extreme barriers between burgeoning unconscious impulses and his capacity to funnel them off bit by bit, and on the other, weak boundaries between himself and anyone he perceived as an authority, making it difficult for him to see himself as an authority, as an authentic artist. But, through his private relationship and the international exposure of his inner visions, he built himself the base which he had heretofore lacked.

By the time of Oscar's Saturn return at twenty-nine, his lover had moved to another country, a sad but necessary separation. When he was thirty, he met the man who would be his primary relationship for six years, who would die of AIDS in 1986, the same year Oscar himself discovered he was HIV positive.

When Oscar arrived for his appointment with me, he was dressed from top to toe in black leather. His head was shaved, he was handsome and he looked wholly alive, with an open demeanour. I immediately sensed a split—the choirboy was there in skinhead attire; the mystic, the visionary, the saviour was dressed to kill. He was immediately direct about what he was hoping to clarify via the horoscope. He was HIV positive, getting weaker, with an indeterminate time left to live, and he was increasingly concerned about a certain attitude, an instinctual impetus which had arisen when his lover died and was now occupying precisely one half of his

life — the secret half. Since he felt that his life was not to be the usual 72.6 years statistical span, he wanted to talk frankly about the situation so as to come to a greater understanding of it.

It seems that when his lover died, Oscar felt mysteriously compelled to shave his head. He soon discovered that he was gravitating towards, and being received by, serious skinheads, the hard, racist, violent, organized kind, not the fashion-statement variety. To Oscar's amazement, he not only identified with them, he was one. By day, Oscar was an extraverted father figure to his theatre company, rubbing shoulders with all the hierarchies associated with the arts. Smiling, open-minded, spiritual, genuinely caring and nurturing, highly disciplined and well-liked, Oscar was by night a man obsessed with violent racist outpourings. With his personal planets in the nocturnal hemisphere, opposing the outer planets in the diurnal hemisphere, the split between his conscious life and unconscious contents was beginning to surface.

Although Oscar admits that he is instinctually involved as an active participant in extreme racism, he knows intellectually it is reprehensible. His conscious mind is acutely aware of the dichotomy, and his purpose in coming for consultation was to see if something might be explained through the horoscope. It transpired that the horoscope was a perfect reflection of Oscar's inner state. All the outer planets, as well as Mars and Saturn, are segregated by hemisphere; in fact, considering Neptune to be conjunct the MC, all are sequestered in the quadrant of relationship with others. This makes those planets available as channels for collective energy, but it requires maturity, experience and age for them to awaken to conscious expression. With his Moon in the twelfth house, Oscar is also viscerally and emotionally connected to the collective unconscious, to the womb of humanity and all its potential. That it is in Sagittarius, sextile to Venus, shows the positive capacity of this to tap the collective pool and fuse it with true emotional and spiritual depth. The harmony between the Moon and Venus offers a cool, detached but inspirational anima, a Muse who dictates to him the words, sounds and vibrations which infuse his work. The dark side of his Sagittarius Moon in the twelfth holds an unborn Zeus complex—a high moral tone, coupled with Saturn in the ninth, which must come to light in

the form of a belief system, philosophy or code of ethics at some point.

Mars retrograde is the signal of a revolutionary, of the *instigation* of revolution, not the post-revolutionary status quo. Mars retrograde collects the undifferentiated rage of the underdog and worries it until it takes form, until it is born in a container which facilitates the individual's need to be dominant and superior—the retrograde function of being a channel for unconscious needs for supremacy. In the ninth house it must find a system through which global rage might be assuaged; if one does not exist, then the individual must create a religion around it.

The following are all specific aspects relating to the multi-retrograde phenomenon, and I use them to illustrate how it functions, not as a guideline for interpretation.

Saturn retrograde: collects the group shadow; the need for ritualistic discipline and authoritarian leadership; in the ninth house, needs to find authenticity via socially and religiously motivated causes.

Neptune retrograde: in the tenth house, collects pain, poison, and angst, as well as the glamour and the fantasies of the collective; it also facilitates his own detachment from pain, sorrow and loss, which allows for an objectification of archetypal issues common to all individuals but experienced in personal ways, such

as illness, loss of innocence, dreams of Edenic states, romantic associations. He or his work becomes a screen for collective projection.

Uranus stationary-direct: Uranus is quivering with tension, awaiting release through consciousness, which is made manifest around the year of the progressed Sun square to it. That it is in the seventh house points to the necessity of personal, one-to-one relationships acting as a mirror in which to understand more about himself as an individual. Individuation through experiment and intimacy.

Pluto retrograde: instinctually aligned with Hades, guardian of the dead; fundamentally existential, and thrives on knowing of the *telos*—the end—of life; attracted to the ultimate powers, those of *eros* and *thanatos*; in the eighth house, he walks comfortably with what others think is morbid, unhealthy and dangerous.

A synthesis of the preceding individual interpretations might go something like the following.

The process of becoming contained by a strong ego will involve

a time in which Oscar is enfolded in the womb of the collective unconscious, wherein he is infused with undifferentiated, primitive and very human but unconscious materials. In the course of emerging from the 'second womb' (an experience common to those with more than four superior planets retrograde) he will encounter extreme experiences which will shock him into conscious awareness of the irrevocable connection not only to his personal unconscious but to the collective unconscious. Until he reaches a certain level of maturity, with the progressed solar movement ticking off the progressive changes in the tone of each retrograde planet, he is likely to find the external world alien to his interior experience of it.

Oscar will find it necessary to undergo periods of radical alteration of perception in order to facilitate what will feel to him a 'destiny'. He will need to give birth to himself repeatedly. Although his entire life will feel like an incubation for something greater, that destiny will only be fulfilled by constantly seeking apprenticeship and by experiencing aspects of his nature which are socially unacceptable, that is, by experiencing the collective shadow.

The Self, in the interests of achieving 'wholeness', will require the underbelly of Oscar's orthodox religious, middle-class background to flip, exposing itself. Either he will take this on board and examine it consciously, or his ego will be subsumed by it and he will identify himself through the shadow side, and be incapable of separating himself from mass psychology. Oscar is aware of the split, and is intellectually fascinated by what is happening to him instinctually: he truly experiences visceral hatred of and revulsion for black people, yet his mind knows this to be *only an aspect of his whole self*.

It is possible to straddle two worlds, one foot in consensual reality and the other in individual reality. With Oscar's Sun posited precisely in the focus of Neptune and Pluto and pinioned by Saturn, it is highly likely that he would find himself standing in this precarious position. But why, when the horoscope could easily be one of a person with an infantile ego, fuzzy identity, waffling through life in a fog, fearful and phobic to the degree of being incapable of organizing his way out of the house?

The friend whom Oscar met in the year that progressed Sun opposed Neptune and trined Pluto, inadvertently midwifed an

aspect of Oscar's psyche which had lain dormant: obsessiveness, cleanliness and order (Saturn in Virgo).

These were reflections of a terror of chaos—the chaos of the collective which must find a solid container.

While decorating his apartment, the friend decided a bare white room, containing only a desk, would suit Oscar well. In fact, upon seeing the room and living in it for a while, Oscar realized that part of his Self *was* this room.

In the interests of achieving unity the Self will urge one to explore as many options as possible, and in the mid-life transition the 'unlived life' hammers its way through to consciousness demanding equal time. But Oscar's time is limited, he may not see his life through what people call 'a full term'. His full life might be now. The deepest part of him knows this, knows that maturity and fullness must be reached more quickly, and that he must achieve his end. His mid-life is bound up with maturity and old age.

The fact is that people who do not have a terminal illness or who are not HIV live in a state of denial of death—it will come someday but in an unknown time. Those who face a known terminus have a unique psychological experience. Generally speaking, their conscious knowledge of imminent death quickens the mysterious process of the Self and its natural evolutionary development. Aspects of the nature are less likely to remain repressed, emerging rapidly to be as quickly integrated. At various stages, sufferers from AIDS comes to terms with unintegrated facets of his or her nature, often processing profound psychological experiences in months, where it might take a natural period of years in a non-terminal person. The shadow emerges, as does the divine, as the soul prepares to rid itself of its burden. The emergence of a radical aspect

that has lain dormant in one's resistant psyche can happen at any time, but it will extrude itself forcefully into the conscious mind as one inches closer to death.

The Pluto in Leo generation receive the Pluto square to itself earlier in life than any other generation. For them, the Pluto square occurs around the fortieth year. Pluto square Pluto is a profound awareness of death, and many people undergo a profound psychological death when they experience this generational aspect. The occurrence of Pluto square Pluto in Oscar's chart triggered off his desire to understand what his psyche was urging him to develop through the agency of shadow-projection.

Skinhead philosophy and politics perform a function in society, a very necessary function. They constellate all the nasty side of white culture, acting as the release valve for the dark underbelly of the 'love and light' brigade, who are not in touch with their shadow but repress it, so that it extrudes itself into segments of society more than happy to act it out for them. The group shadow is no stranger in myth or history—the biblical Satan is the shadow of God; there is always a channel for the unmentionable.

I feel that the emergence of Oscar's own shadow in the shape of a collective shadow serves to bring to his awareness the degree to which he has suppressed a basic rage. That it emerges in a racial context is merely a cloak. Again, in the interests of wholeness, he needs to have contact and dialogue with the Saturnian/Plutonian element. The fact that the dialogue is open and conscious is precisely what Jung, himself a great believer in the positive side of the shadow function, postulated.

The individuation process is invariably started off by the patient's becoming conscious of the shadow, a personality component usually with a negative sign. This 'inferior' personality is made up of everything that will not fit in with, and adapt to, the laws and regulations of conscious life.

2

Certainly if Oscar were to inaugurate one of his plays with a diatribe against 'dirty niggers', there would be a problem. However, there is a place for this archetype in his psyche and a function for it in society.

Jung felt positive that by encountering, engaging with and integrating the dark side of one's nature, one does oneself and the collective a service. By not doing so, one becomes possessed by it and falls victim to illness, hysteria and attacks of phobia, among other things. A great deal of Jung's shadow work was born from his own spiritual grappling, from Christianity to be precise. Oscar's syzygy in the Pisces-Virgo axis, especially from the third house/ninth house polarity, suggests that he is constellating a religious shadow, one rather strongly affiliated with the suffering of Christ (the fishes) who was born out of the womb of a Virgin (Virgo).

As a totality, the Self is by definition always a *complexio oppositorum*, and the more consciousness insists on its own luminous nature and lays claim to moral authority, the more the Self will appear as something dark and menacing.

3

The ninth house Saturn is a symbol for an Old Testament god inhabiting one's higher mind—all rules and no mercy—a celestial, dogmatic tyrant who challenges all that the individual dreams of being. Oscar's third house Pisces Sun opposite Saturn in Virgo in the ninth is the image of the soul entombed in the body, symbolizing that the body and its vileness is inherently unclean, whereas the spirit is elevated and pure. That his body was invaded by a collective, deadly and indiscriminating virus around the same time as he became conscious of the shadow function wanting expression, fairly shrieks the obvious: that the temple of his soul had become a tomb and the dark side of the holy spirit was let loose. The Christian metaphor portrays all black people as descended from Cain, relegated to the dark continent; they are a personified archetypal symbol for the unrealized shadow of the Caucasian collective.

To speak of integration of the shadow may be presumptuous, but for some mysterious reason that appears to be what Oscar is about. First, he responded to his shadow through his night-friends; secondly, he acted upon it through the agency of his own dark side; then he began to think about it consciously and recognize the 'intellectual reprehensibility' of it, but had to acknowledge the authenticity of its origins. The next step is to have further dialogue with it, that is, to engage others in the same collective group—the skinheads who also may be aware of a dichotomy within themselves—in some kind of meaningful discussion about the phenomenon. Once this level of process is reached, the archetypal grip becomes less numinous, it becomes increasingly normalized and less of a dichotomy. Whether or not it will remain an active philosophy or not is unknown, but Oscar is less likely to be consumed by his shadow and more likely to engage it creatively. The production of his which was being premièred at the time of our initial consultation was thematic of his own sense of alienation from God. It dealt with the dark struggle towards individuation from the existential wasteland, and one man's experience of the cross of incarnate existence.

A MUNDANE CASE HISTORY: SYPHILIS

I include this fascinating chart as a mundane case in which we find a clear depiction of a singleton Mars retrograde and a stellium which includes Venus retrograde exactly conjunct Mercury direct. This astrological picture was noted by the astrologers of the fifteenth century, but to my knowledge no mention was made of the planets being retrograde, while great emphasis was placed on the Scorpio stellium. The chart of 'Syphilis' is depicted clearly in the zodiac above the etching—ascribed to Albrecht Dürer—of the syphilitic (fig. 15.1, p. 294). In the horoscope (fig. 15.2, p. 295), I have excluded the outer planets, as they did not enter into the calculations of the astrologers who were alarmed about the new moon on 19 October 1484, creating the stellium in Scorpio.

The most interesting facet of this horoscope is the fact that both (and only) Venus and Mars are retrograde, engaged in a sinuous dance in the heavens. One might extrapolate on that, calling to mind that venereal disease is named after Venus, the 'love disease'. Interaction between Venus and Mars, collusion between *eros* (sex) and *thanatos* (death), imply many things, but that the astrologers identified the horoscope depicted as the inception of syphilis shows their fears about a Mars-Venus war. At various times throughout social history, sexuality has been indicted for colluding to create not disease of the body but disease of the soul, and from that a plethora of illnesses and plagues falls upon the citizens.

In *Sex, Death and Punishment* Richard Davenport-Hines has chronicled the astonishing history of prudery, repression and projection surrounding sexuality in England. The horoscope is quite plausible, considering that syphilis was rampant by 1498. The casting of a horoscope for the inception of a form of epidemic disease shows the natural curiosity of astrologers in all ages and their collective desire to find a moment in which the heavens reflect a major occurrence on Earth. I find the segregation of Mars from the gestalt of the horoscope highly significant; when a superior planet is retrograde singleton it can constellate the neuroses or even psychosis of the age. If the configuration occurs in a natal chart, the chart of an individual, that person can throw the retrograde planet out of his or her own psyche and project it on to others or on to a social condition, so that the individual becomes either a voice of or a victim of collective psychology. In the case of a mundane chart like Syphilis, the social implications are profound. The degree of 'projectability' with Mars retrograde is demonstrated in Davenport Hines's book: in one revealing chapter he shows that the origin of syphilis was usually projected upon some other culture.



Fig. 15.1 *Syohilitic*, 1496 (reproduced from Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, Collins, 1990)

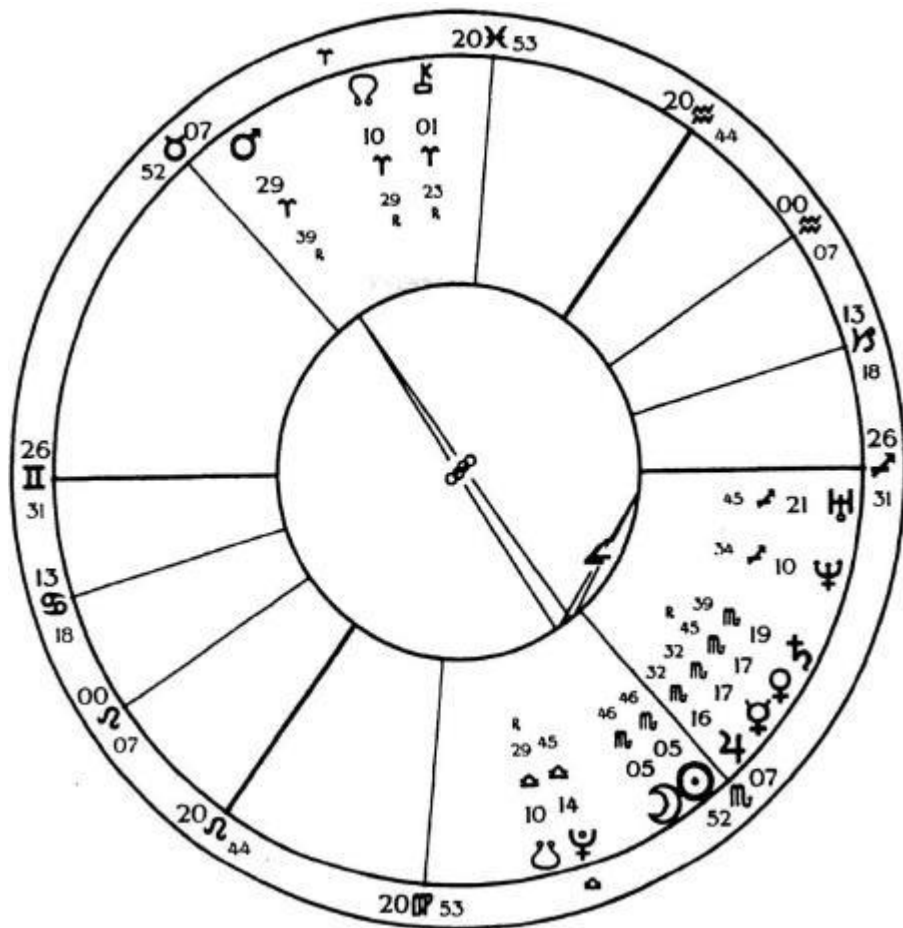


Fig. 15.2 Syphilis

He writes: 'Each nationality blamed another for the epidemic, reflecting the rapid international nature of its transmission and the instant need for easily identified bogeys.'

1 In England it was called 'the occult disease' or the 'secret disease', which for its discretion is revealing enough of the collective sexual attitude at the time. Other cultures variously fobbed it off on their own fantasy bogeys: the Portuguese called it the Castilian disease; the French called it the Italian or Neapolitan disease; the Germans had the French illness, the Polish the German disease; in Russia it was the Polish disease, in Persia the Turkish disease, and in Tahiti they had the English disease.

2 It goes on and on. Whomever the disease belonged to, it was 'someone else's'.

Along with the qualities of projection associated with retrograde Mars and the introjective powers of retrograde Venus, we also have the collusion of them in mutual reception in the signs of war (Mars in its dignity in Aries) and sex (Venus in her detriment in Scorpio). The position of Venus is that of evening star (vespertine), and it is in the phase in which the Maya goddess of love has been metamorphosed into the male god who mates with the underworld goddess of love. She wails for her demon lover. There has been a transsexual experience in the underworld and Venus undergoes mysterious preparations to re-emerge later as the goddess of war. It is the time of Venus' retribution, in whatever form she sees fit.

The positions of Mercury and Venus are also fascinating: we find Venus and Mercury to be at the same degree of the geocentric zodiac, but from a heliocentric viewpoint they would actually be found on opposite sides of the Sun. Venus is posited between Sun and Earth, in the retrograde zone, while Mercury is direct, and therefore in the superior conjunction zone on the other side of the Sun from Earth. The influence of Mercury in this case is to make a condition pandemic—spreading the Venus condition indiscriminately about. That the two planets are both found in the same zodiacal degree, the eighteenth, could further be an implication of influence from the fixed star Serpentis, located in the 'cursed degree of the cursed sign'—which was then at 19° of Scorpio—where in fact we find Saturn.

For Venus to be at war with Mars, one of her Greek mythological lovers, smacks of a retaliation against a social force, which the astrologers of the time saw mirrored in the heavens. The advent of AIDS in our own times has been called by astrologers the revenge of Pluto, which, at the time of the Syphilis chart, was unknown. The unseen Pluto was at 15° of Libra in the Syphilis chart, also in mutual reception with Venus according to modern rulerships (Uranus was at 22° 42' Sagittarius and Neptune at 10° 01' Sagittarius). With

Pluto's entry into Scorpio in November, 1983 we too have witnessed an horrific plague visited upon humanity in the form of sexual death, which in turn also has been projected on to various minority groups, though fast becoming indiscriminate and clearly not limited to 'others'.

PART FOUR

THE SUPERIOR PLANETS RETROGRADE IN TRANSIT

16

OVERVIEW

Retrograde inversion times are inevitable, necessary and useful, though often fraught with an underlying tension, a feeling that 'something has to give'. The order of priorities related to the house in which the retrograde transit is occurring begins to disassemble, resulting in a vague sensation of falsity, pretence, chaos and disorder. Often we might adhere faithfully to an outmoded value system, either out of fear of the new or unknown, or simply because it is impractical to alter radically one's circumstances at that moment. Although we are innocent of conscious deceit, we may be lying to ourselves about what we feel or need. Whether or not the reflection takes an extreme or subtle course is largely determined by factors other than retrogression alone.

If there are natal planets that will be transited by conjunction, square or opposition in the course of the cycle, the ensuing activity will be more apparent than if there are no planets in the house and no aspects made to other natal planets in the course of the retrograde cycle. The latter circumstance would, however, be unusual, especially in the case of transiting Mercury, Venus and Mars, because their cycles will all cover about 15° of arc (and Jupiter 10°) in the course of the entire retrogression period. Therefore, it is highly probable that a transiting retrograde planet will at least make a minor aspect contact to a natal planet, or hit midpoint structures.

Transiting retrograde planets contacting midpoints or midpoint clusters will loosen complex issues and open a new inner dimension. These transits are often confusing because one may find oneself reassessing planetary polarities or combinations which have not been integrated at all. The transit to a planet which is at the focal point of a collection of midpoints might also further confuse one, because there is always a natural imbalance between polarities or

combinations in the sense that single parts within the whole picture are usually highlighted, leaving other parts 'at rest' until something activates them. The transiting retrograde planet will have passed over the midpoint in direct motion at some point earlier, opening the door to the combined energy, but the retrograde transit releases the information or knowledge in a chaotic fashion. Therefore, there will be hints in the first 'hit' (i.e. direct) as to what it is that is shattering under the retrogression. It remains for the next transit—in direct motion—to reassemble that which has disintegrated. With the planets from Saturn and beyond, the restructuring process can take months to complete.

Because each transiting planet is contained by its own cycle and period of retrogression, predictable cycles occur which affect areas of our lives in an evolutionary fashion. This regular motion is most useful for looking at long-range developmental cycles, which form the 'backdrop' for the more mundane ups and downs of daily life.

Between two successive conjunctions of the Sun to a superior planet are periods of direct and retrograde motion. Dane Rudhyar saw the conjunction of the Sun and the outer planet as the 'seed' period—the 'new' phase—where a cycle of activity begins, only to undergo a revision from the station-retrograde right through to the opposition of the Sun to the outer retrograde planet. At the solar opposition point, when the Sun begins to move away from the opposition and towards the next conjunction—the 'full' phase—a change in hemicycle occurs. The period between the opposition and the station-direct has its own qualities. Then, from the stationary-direct point, the phase continues on to the conjunction. With the lone exception of Mars, retrogression is an annual cycle for all superior planets and the cyclic approach is a fruitful way to cope with retrogrades and their impact on both the interior life of individuals and the external world around them.

(Refer to [fig. 1.3](#), p. 11.)

The retrograde cycle itself is marked by two aspects between the Sun and the superior planet: the first aspect is the trine with the Sun shortly *after* the planet stations and turns retrograde; and the second aspect is the trine with the Sun just *before* that planet stations to turn direct. (See [chapter 1](#) for the number of days before and after the station where the Sun forms a trine to the superior planet. Note, again, that Mars is the only exception to this rule.) From the

stationary-retrograde dexter trine (separating from the past conjunction and heading towards the opposition point) to the stationary direct sinister trine (separating from the opposition point) is the retrograde period, which lasts approximately two months for Mars, four months for Jupiter, four and a half months for Saturn and about five months for the outer planets.

The cyclic, 'phase-oriented' approach to planetary motion is particularly valuable when applied to retrogression because it is an evolutionary viewpoint, from which the Sun and planets are seen in relation to one another, rather than as discrete, isolated islands.

1 Considering that retrograde planets are only such because of their relationship to the Sun, it is perhaps the only way to view retrogression and its ever-evolving patterns. In this light, we see more clearly that the motion of the retrograde planet in its cycle performs a rhythmic two-steps-forward, one-step-back undulation which tends to be characteristic of growth patterns.

For this purpose, the graphic ephemeris is pictured here (fig. 16.1, p. 304) for all the superior planets and on page 353 for only the outer planets. The graphic ephemeris depicts the 'big picture' for a year or years. The 360° of the zodiac is condensed into 45°, which better illustrates the movement 'forward' and 'backward'. Essentially, the 45° graphic ephemeris magnifies the path of apparent motion because the 45° vertical axis in the diagram is proportionate to the 360° circle by the ratio 1:8.

2 Direct motion is depicted when the planetary lines are moving down (increasing in degrees longitude) and retrograde motion when the lines are moving up (decreasing in longitude). The stations (retrograde and direct) are depicted at the curve in the lines as shown on the diagram.

With that in mind, let us explore the main turning-points in the retrograde transit: the station-retrograde; the subsequent trine from the Sun to the retrograde planet; the Sun-planet opposition point; the trine from the Sun to the retrograde planet prior to the station-direct; and the station-direct. The opposition marks the midpoint in the cycle, dividing the retrograde period into two phases:

- I. Station-retrograde to Sun opposition
- II. Sun opposition to station-direct.

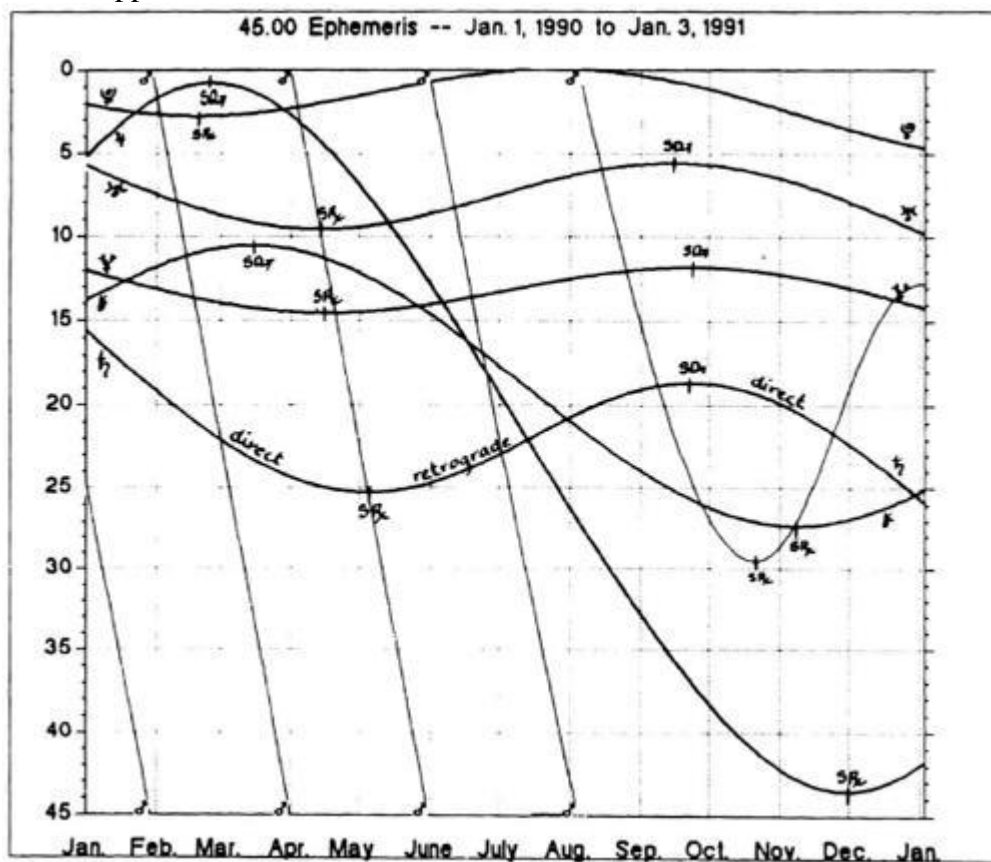


Fig. 16.1 A one-year graphic depiction of the superior planets, including Chiron

PHASE I: UNCONSCIOUS REACTION AND DISINTEGRATION

The station-retrograde is marked by a subtle retreat of overt energy and an inversion or rescinding of the power directly related to the planet at the station-point. The station heralds a reversal of drive which

resurfaces in another mode at the stationary-direct point when the Sun moves out of the opposition zone and direct motion is resumed.

The actual day of the station is technically the turning-point of the planet's motion from direct to retrograde, but the planet hovers within a 1 ° orb of its station for three weeks or so on either side of the station-point. In effect, the process of the station of a superior planet lasts for almost six weeks. The procedure of slowing, stationing and retrogression is often noted by events or inner mood shifts. Although rarely on the station-day itself, but frequently within a week on either side of it, there is a marked shift in energy patterns, both psychologically and physically. The week leading up to and the week following the station may not necessarily coincide with notable events unless the stationing planet is contacting a sensitive point in the horoscope by a major aspect, such as a conjunction, sextile, trine, square or opposition, and even within this stipulation, the 'hard' angles—conjunction, square, opposition—are more manifestly obvious than the trines or sextiles. If there *is* direct contact to natal planets, the process may still not be readily apparent until the retrograde cycle is complete and the planet has turned direct. In the case of the outermost planets, the entire process of incorporating and integrating a sequence of retrograde cycles into consciousness may take years. The station-retrograde initiates a process of reversion and reaction, often with initial confusion and chaos, followed by a hiatus in activity. The apparent slowing and stopping of the superior planet brings the image of a decelerating train to mind—the engine slowly coming to a full stop with all the cars shunting up against each other, creating a rhythmic, gradual, yet absolute cessation of motion as the entire procession halts. After the crashing and shunting and banging, a deafening silence ensues.

A frisson stirs the foundations of the psyche, loosening contents which are deeply submerged and hidden from consciousness. The disengagement of material or unprocessed inner knowledge from the inmost levels of the unconscious often results in the famed surprise results of retrogression. Particles of underdeveloped unconscious material begin to reverberate, creating a sense of fluctuation and uncertainty, weakening the boundary between the conscious and unconscious realms.

The 'boundary' between the conscious and unconscious is in constant flux anyway: doors open and close, unconscious contents become conscious, and that which was conscious can be repressed and relegated to a storehouse which lodges information not necessary at one time yet invaluable at another. Both territories are guarded, sometimes heavily sometimes not, if the guards are sleeping, or can be eliminated, or can be bribed into allowing passage. One does not gain access to one's deep unconscious by conscious methods, but the unconscious often bleeds into or overwhelms the conscious mind. The transits of outer planets are notorious for breaking down the borders and creating access between the two aspects of the mind. When the retrograde period begins, the fissure in the 'wall' is made, and during the subsequent phase of retrogression, leaks of information occur which are gradually assimilated into the so-called conscious area, soon to become integral and eventually completely comfortable, becoming what one would call normal. Previously unknown or inadmissible intelligence suddenly becomes not only acceptable but indispensable. That which was impossible becomes possible, and feelings, attitudes, moods and concepts which have not been conscious can suddenly become the order of the day! The conscious assimilation of spontaneous emissions from the unknown part of the mind is what creates the shock. The ego acts as a debriefing chamber in which all incoming information is questioned, with a view either to denying access to that information or to transforming it immediately into something recognizable and useful.

At the initial 'hit', the ego responds by making every attempt to counter the oscillation; the entire retrograde cycle subsequently centres around the system attempting to correct itself. Resistance to the process of reversal, contemplation and reorientation is natural

and instinctive, frequently occurring unnoticed in the conscious realm of everyday life except through symptoms such as anxiety, illness, fear, tension or hyper-excitement. However, one often becomes aware of the effectiveness of the cycle in retrospect, when the transit is recalled as having been the instigator of a major perceptual shift or significant life change. Because the station-retrograde only initiates the disruption but does not complete anything, a feeling of dissatisfaction and suspension (at best) is stimulated or absolute chaos (at worst) abounds.

The station-retrograde is attended by an atmosphere of confusion, introspection and sudden ambivalence about an issue or situation which had heretofore been absolute. These encounters with the inopportune might be internal, or they can be experienced in the environment when sudden reversals happen or events occur which cause one to change one's tack abruptly, in turn creating an opportunity to muse on the deeper meaning of one's life requirements.

A malaise enters the system and one can feel suddenly ill or exhausted, incapable of drawing on the usual reserves of energy. Ultimately this time could best be utilized by allowing the natural, developmental cycle of unconscious release to occur, going with the flow in experiencing new perceptions and permitting evolutionary change in one's habitual patterns. Experience has shown that during the retrograde period one's sense of timing can shift suddenly, resulting in misjudging, delaying or ineptly handling circumstances if one continues to press on under arduous conditions.

Regardless of how controlled or stable one's affairs may appear around the time of the station, something subterranean is agitating. When several planets are stationing at the same time, or within a few weeks of each other, or a long-term cycle brackets a short-term cycle, such as Mercury or Venus turning retrograde and direct within a Saturn cycle, the psyche can be paralysed, creating frustration in any activities which require initiative. The primary mood is one of waiting, as if something is about to happen. The hint of something new on the horizon is real because there is indeed a new experience lurking about, but the outcome will largely depend upon the planet involved and its aspects to the natal chart, as well as circumstances such as age, lifestyle, values, social investment, goals, spiritual needs, psychological orientation, among many other factors.

The retrograde planet itself does not alter its characteristics, but our perception of the unchanging features inherent in the planetary symbol undergoes a subtle adjustment. An inward and contrapuntal examination occurs in the areas of life (the houses) which are being affected by the retrograde transit. An intense evaluation of the house activities in relation to the planet which is transiting is inevitable, sometimes with startling results. For example, if Mars stations in the seventh house, we experience a period of intense examination of our drive, life-force and aggression in the sphere of relationships with others. It might force withdrawal and contemplation of where we project our power in relationships, creating space to examine undercurrents of anger or animosity, or conversely, arresting progress in a relationship until unresolved conflicts are aired in the interlude between retrograde and direct motion. Similarly, if Jupiter stations in the fourth house, it is likely to encourage quiet withdrawal from any hectic activities in order to come into closer contact with emotional issues around the home and family, and may bring to light historical family complexes which are inhibiting one's personal creative freedom. The entire time Jupiter is retrogressing in the fourth house the unconscious is being dredged to release repressed memories or latent talents which can become useful after the transiting Sun-Jupiter opposition point. When Jupiter turns direct those newly discovered inner traits gradually become incorporated, integrated and consciously employed.

There are times when the stationary-retrograde period manifests in a sudden withdrawal, a volte-face, which alleviates tense or dangerous conditions. If a situation has reached the explosion point and no solution appears in sight, then the station-retrograde can defuse the charge around the experience, creating a more relaxed atmosphere. The release of tension allows time for regrouping and renegotiating, creating space for natural growth and maturation. If a chart has had a repeated onslaught of high-pressure transits, a station-retrograde at the crisis point can ameliorate the situation by freeing the person emotionally to explore the meaning behind his or her predicament. By the time the transit is repeated months later when the planet is direct, the gestalt of the other transits will have changed, as will one's personal perspective, opening new channels of possibility.

Shortly after a planet stations-retrograde (with the exception of Mars) it is trined by the Sun. This is the stationary-retrograde trine and often the message of the station is triggered by this aspect from the Sun. The Sun 'collects' the station and manifests its energy, activating the retrograde period. This trine is the transition point into the full swing of the retrograde cycle—it might be said to be the conscious turning-point, when the Sun supports the renegade movement and delivers the retrograde message. The shock of the station is assimilated and quickly absorbed at the trine and inaugurates the interior or underground experience. This is partly due to the quickening motion of the retrograde planet after the trine.

The Sun trine is the foreshadowing of the eventual outcome of the entire process, from station to final passage over the degree of the station eight to ten months in the future. If the station has occurred in aspect to a natal planet, the Sun trine to the stationary planet alerts one to a particular 'lesson' or message, and is the time when events and realizations manifest.

The station-retrograde through to the opposition from the Sun is an annual cycle for re-evaluating tactics and techniques. The process strengthens one's ability to listen to the inner voice—the voice of the deeper Self—bringing greater awareness of the continuing need for development in that particular area. Because the duration of time the outermost planets spend in one house in the natal chart is lengthy, the annual retrograde cycle will re-occur for several years; the results may not be immediate and startling, but they are noticeable

over time, particularly in retrospect. The degree to which polarities in the psyche are unintegrated often becomes increasingly obvious during the first half of the cycle, and events, relationships and challenges crop up to highlight the imbalances.

Because this period—from station through to opposition—is the reactive phase, over-reaction and magnification of perceptions can distort the true situation. The tendency is to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. If one is aware that over-reaction eventually resolves itself into a more realistic perspective, then the overblown appearances can actually prove to be helpful. There is usually a grain of truth in such situations, and the dramatic reactions are often startlingly germane to a new vision after the opposition point.

The caprice of the final stages of this first half of the retrograde cycle gradually begins to polarize, bringing perspective to any unstable or wildly precarious situation. Often the best product resulting from the station-retrograde through to the opposition phase is a form of resilient stability, where confusion metamorphoses into more distinct choices; new options and directions emerge which are more tangible than in the early breakdown phase.

PHASE II: CONSCIOUS DELIBERATION AND REORGANIZATION

On the opposite side of the horoscope from the retrogressing planet is the sector of the horoscope in which the Sun will transit during the entire retrograde cycle; those three to five houses are the ones in which the most noticeable frustration may occur. It is vital, therefore, to look to the houses occupied by the transiting Sun during the entire retrograde cycle, and most importantly at the house from which the Sun will oppose the retrograde planet. This house is the counterpoint to the retrograde energy, and the Sun's position is the illumination point of the darkness and unconsciousness of the retrograde planet, potentially the area in which some of the most fruitful work might be done.

The degree in which the Sun and retrograde planet meet in opposition is the most significant time in the mid-cycle of the retrograde period (see [fig. 1.3](#), p. 11). This is when the inner drive for change is mirrored in the environment and marks a confrontation between the ego and the unconscious, provoking into consciousness that which has been in rumination and reflection. The opposition point will not only highlight the house polarities which are at odds or out of balance, but will also allude to where the fruit of the cycle is most likely to emerge. This was demonstrated by cases presented in the natal retrograde planets section (part three) where we saw events and turning-points highlighted when the progressed Sun reached the opposition point to a natively retrograde planet. *The same fundamental principles apply when the transiting Sun meets the transiting retrograde planet mid-cycle.*

The opposition of the Sun to the retrograde planet marks the 'full' phase, the point of maturation of that which has been in reflection, bringing about a new stage in the process. The second half of the retrograde cycle offers a more deliberate and useful period of reorientation, during which time one feels more effective and positive about clearing away the past or reviewing old material. There is much less panic about this phase, quite possibly because one simply adjusts to the retrograde influence, and can relinquish one's relentless hold on absolutes. Slowly, options begin to materialize and very fruitful discarding can take place, eliminating the outmoded or obsolete.

In the case of all superior planets, the Sun-planet opposition can be a point of explosion, especially if the retrogression has unearthed material totally unexpected and unprepared for. The perspective gained by this face-off between ego-Sun and internalized planet is of the utmost significance, particularly if the axis degree contacts a natal planet. Where this point contacts a significant degree in the horoscope, an awakening is precipitated and old patterns and concepts break up. At the very least, a point of separation and disintegration is highlighted between the areas of the two houses involved. In the case of the planets beyond Saturn, this confrontation occurs on an annual basis for many years, progressing slowly forward year by year as the outer planet transits that house.

The opposition point marks a transition in the cycle of retrogression, heralding a more deliberate, organizational phase. Issues that become apparent at the opposition are a key to understanding what the second half of the cycle is about. The retrograde planet begins to slow again as the Sun moves onward, preparing for the release at the station-direct.

Just prior to the stationary-direct day, the Sun makes another trine to the stationing planet. The planet is now moving very slowly, and will transit only a single degree at most between the Sun trine and the station. This trine is called the stationary-direct trine. Like the stationary-retrograde trine, the Sun collects the energy, but

whereas the stationary-retrograde trine relaxes the energy, the stationary-direct trine increases tension. The charge of energy built up during the retrogression is constellated in the trine aspect two to three weeks before the planet turns direct. This partly accounts for the build-up of tension around the release at the station itself. The Sun triggers the station-direct, gathering the force and intensifying the weeks leading up to the turning-point. If the stationary-direct degree is making natal aspects, then the Sun trine will be significant because it generates creative release. The sense of anticipation is a reaction to the Sun trine, which begins the unconscious mobilization of energy and forces in preparation for the station-direction itself.

When the planet does station to turn direct, the liberation of energy and pent-up forces can be experienced as either positive or negative, depending on what has been held in psychic storage. If one has been suppressing strong needs, or attempting to control circumstances or a situation which needs to change, the station-direction can emerge in havoc. If the need for expression is guided by the deeper Self, but dominated and subordinated by what the conscious ego has designed for its future, then the result is an external form of confrontation.

Inner conflicts arise around both station-periods if there is a lack of correspondence between what the unconscious deems necessary for greater wholeness and what one has identified as one's static persona or image. This kind of irruption of the contents of the unconscious into the consciousness is what gives the station-points their fame for being so dramatically active—they hold a tremendous charge which can magnify conditions which have been developing over long periods of time. What tends to emerge is symbolically, if not blatantly, precisely what one has been hoping to ignore, delay or control.

In mundane astrology, the station-direct is frequently marked by an obvious change in patterns of business, politics, economics and social issues, all of which were triggered at the Sun trine. Rapid reorganization and modification are frequently instituted soon after the station-point, promoting a more effective course of action. The direct motion of a planet does not always signal the release of its power on the day itself, but this will happen within a few weeks after its station, often waiting until the Sun makes a square to the planet—squares being aspects of external manifestation. The degree of chaos unleashed at the station-direct depends on a variety of factors. Particularly important are any aspects from the stationing planet to natal planets or configurations *in caelo*, and also the power of the planet itself—the stations of the outermost planets are those which provoke long-range reorganization, often lasting through to the next station-retrograde.

The retrograde phase itself might *increase* rather than decrease the psychologically useful aspect of a planet's power, in so far as added time is spent reviewing and examining the houses transited and planets contacted in its reversion. And, when the planet emerges at the station-direction from its battle with the Sun, we are renewed and strengthened by the reflective experience. The cycle of retrogression works by bringing in new perspectives gained through introspection. Hidden facets of our nature or within our environment which have been repressed, or are simply inert, become more accessible and manifestly useful once the retrogression cycle is complete and forward motion is resumed. The gestation period of the retrograde cycle is over at this stage, and the fruit of the inner reflection and outer reorientation emerges for better or worse, setting the tone for the coming period of direct motion.

At a later stage, at the point of conjunction between the transiting Sun and the planet, a new annual cycle begins. With Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto the Sun-planet conjunction is *always* within a degree of the previous station-retrograde, which occurred nine or ten months earlier. The conjunction completes the incubation period of the outermost planets. The implications are profound, the natural rhythm of conjunction, station-retrograde, retrogression, opposition, and station-direct back to conjunction is analogous to the natural gestation cycles of the human being.

It is quite practical to look towards the conjunction when making long-range plans or working through psychological blocks, because the point marks the beginning—the insemination point—of the Sun-planet evolution, if we see it as a process rather than as only a geocentric phenomenon.

THE SUN-PLANET OPPOSITION BY HOUSE AXIS

Approximately midway through any retrograde cycle, the Sun opposes the retrograde planet and highlights the two houses in the

natal chart which are being transited by the Sun and the superior planet. Though I have noticed this point as a marked phenomenon in secondary progression, the result is more subtle and not always noteworthy when the transit occurs unless amplified by other or repeated aspects in the chart, in which case the polarities are often explicitly demonstrated through relationships, either with others or in relation to the surrounding

environment. Before reading about the opposition through the houses we should look at the two sectors of the chart occupied by the Sun and by the transiting planet.

The house occupied by the transiting Sun always illuminates the area in the chart in which evolution of ego expression and creative release occurs in a natural, cyclic fashion. In the course of a year we have personal seasons of birth, growth, death and rebirth as the Sun transits the MC, the ascendant, the IC and the descendant. During a retrograde transit, including the cycle from stationary-retrograde through opposition to station-direct, the Sun will transit several houses which are in the opposite part of the horoscope to the retrograde planet. The Sun's position symbolizes the area in which we might release the internalized energy of the retrograde planet, providing a reflexive message during the entire process. Conversely, it might distract us from the issues that the unconscious is labouring to bring to the surface, i.e. the concerns of the house which is being transited by the retrograde planet.

The Sun, by creating a conscious, externalized vehicle, assists in facilitating the change that the retrograde transit gradually develops. This can take many forms, but oppositions have the quality of a mirror in which we see ourselves more objectively.

The house which the retrograde planet transits is the house in which a fundamental change is brewing. The development and evolution of this transformation is marked by the Sun's opposition to the retrograde planet as it moves through the entire house. In the case of each individual transit, the more distant the planet is from the Sun, the longer the process and the more numerous the annual opposition cycles. With the transit of Mars, the opposition will occur only once in a house about every two years; Jupiter, once in each house, annually; Saturn, twice, possibly three times, over as many years; Uranus, six or seven, possibly eight times, over as

many years; Neptune, fourteen or so times over as many years; and Pluto, which has a varied period, once a year for as many years as it remains in each house.

It is evident that the more socially oriented planets—Mars, Jupiter and Saturn—have an impact on the horoscope in a way which is digestible within a foreseeable time-frame. However, with the outer planets—Uranus, Neptune and Pluto—the transformation is lengthy and evolutionary. The further out into space we look, the further back in time we see. The outer planets gradually release uncivilized aspects deep in our inner nature, and the experience can be deeply and primally disturbing. It may be years before the full experience is embodied and recognized as a significant transition or transformation. Very frequently the retrograde cycles of the outer planets are underscored or intensified by faster-moving transits, the so-called minor transits (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus or Mars), which sharpen and direct the focus on the points of change.

The opposition point from the Sun can be explosive and definitive, particularly if it is bound up with other transits or progressions, or if it should occur in very tight aspect to certain sensitive points in the horoscope, such as a natal planet, the angles, a midpoint or the nodes. In the case of the opposition point occurring in a tight aspect (within 2° orb) to a natal planet, take into account the house axis in which the affected natal planet is situated and read that as well, incorporating both interpretations to come to a greater understanding of what is breaking apart for recombination.

Keeping in mind that the Sun's position is the focal point, illuminating the area that needs balancing out in the chart and emphasizing the area which needs analysis and greater clarity and definition according to one's deepest and innermost needs, let us explore the house axes that are emphasized by the midpoint of the retrograde cycle.

First house/seventh house: This polarity in the retrograde cycle emphasizes the need for analysis of and deeper understanding of one's relationships with others, and how to maintain appropriate boundaries within those relationships. Over the year or years that these cycles occur, there is an ever-shifting re-evaluation of one's personal needs. How to fulfil those needs with respect to important people in one's life is constantly adjusted and revised in a rhythmic fashion, but periodically the opposition will intensify any difficulty that has been incubating.

The ascendant and the first house/seventh house axis relate to our origins and our earliest relationships. How we were perceived by our family members and how we bonded to individual family members is the foundation for continuing relationships. The repeated cycles of retrogression will often disinter buried memories or relationship patterns which manifest actively through current relationships.

Second house/eighth house: When this house axis is emphasized by the Sun-planet opposition, one is slowly evolving a deeper understanding of one's true inner merit and inherent worth as opposed to the values adopted through learned responses. The cycle focuses on maintaining a strong sense of personal integrity

while still being involved with the values and substance of others. As well as one's material and financial worth, one's self-worth is accented sharply, and through repeated oppositions a fundamental change occurs slowly over time which cyclically alters one's perspective on investments of time, love or money in others. Because of the materiality of the second house/eighth house axis, repeated retrograde cycles there can substantially alter one's perspective on material dependence/independence issues. We tend to revise our approach to financial and material resources and how to handle them. On one level the second house incorporates the early foundations of ego development, and the eighth house is the manifestation of ego-merging in relationships. Therefore, any repeated cycles in this axis emphasize maturing and learning to look after oneself, thereby having more resources or worth to invest without as great a risk of ego loss.

Third house/ninth house: This axis emphasizes the shortfall of superficial assumptions and opinions in their use to the greater mind. The Sun-planet opposition period accents one's awareness of the process of integration and understanding of one's ideas in relation to their usefulness in a broader philosophy. A confrontation of opinion and truth occurs, forcing one to examine in great detail, many times over in the case of the transpersonal planets, how to blend diverse thoughts, opinions and ideas comfortably and ethically into a philosophy or belief system. A synthesis of instinctual responses and civilized action slowly evolves over the time-span that the retrograde cycle affects the houses. Personal law and cultural or social laws are often vastly different, while most of the time not necessarily being problematic except in a philosophical sense. There might be periods, however, in which the retrograde cycle creates a literal confrontation between what one feels is justified and correct and what is considered by authority to be against the law or tradition. One might feel alienated by one's own culture and find it necessary to explore more distant or foreign cultures in order to broaden the mind or home base. This same impulse often drives one to explore higher education, which may be the result of a deep sense of intellectual inadequacy.

Fourth house/tenth house: The opposition on this axis is an unsettling of what has been the fundamental base of one's inner security. It focuses on the polarities between what is truly secure and what has been created as a superficial security function. The cycle will involve a slow process of uncovering security needs and integrating them into one's life, discarding false buffers along the way. The opposition marks periods of upheaval, disruption and disorientation, but with the underlying theme of re-creating a more appropriate balance between inner and outer stability.

One tends to be more reflective on the deeper meaning of emotional and personal safety. The month in which the Sun transits the opposition point can unearth deep-seated fears which, in fact, might be related to the earliest feelings around security; the parents' attitude towards protection, and their influence on how one creates change is often very effective right into adulthood. This process highlights the home, vocation and life goals, all of which undergo progress and change in relation to each other. By re-evaluating one's balance between the need for personal adventure and solid guarantees, one opens doors of opportunity. The opposition can mark an evolution towards a new base of operations and new relationships within family and society.

Fifth house/eleventh house: Integration between the ability to give and receive love is the underlying motif when the retrograde cycle creates this opposition. It emphasizes a revolution in the area of what one considers one's most precious gift and how that gift is offered to the world. The capacity for giving and receiving love or experiencing generosity is being internally scrutinized during the opposition periods, which can provoke high-level risk-taking *or* fearful clinging to outmoded alliances and no longer creative activities.

There needs to be a greater synthesis between two connected themes: oneself as the centre of the universe and oneself as a part of the collective. It is in this house axis that one experiences oneself as an independent, creative spirit and as a contributor to a social order. It may be that major alterations in one's own creative sphere are necessary to preserve one's feelings of reward, and conversely one might need to contribute more to the whole in order to feel more worthy as an individual.

Sixth house/twelfth house: Recognizing the body as the vehicle for the soul becomes urgently necessary when the retrograde transit falls in this axis. The psyche/soma balance is never more tenuous and delicate. Health and body issues become critical if the soul is crying out for expression in a way which the body is not fulfilling. Conversely, emotional and psychological issues arise in crisis with the body's state of disrepair. The fusion or dissonance of these two houses is never more apparent than when the outermost planets perform their undulations in the retrograde cycle. If not consciously chosen, or circumstances prevent it,

forced introversion will periodically interrupt the mechanical functioning of the body in order to bring the soul to the forefront.

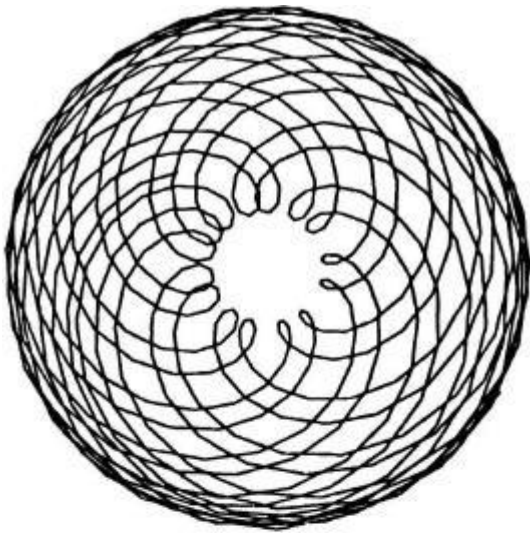
Chronic psychological and physical problems are often exacerbated during the retrograde cycle, coming to a head during the Sun-planet opposition. The opposition allows the pressure to dissipate and creates a more relaxed (or enlightened) atmosphere in which to make changes in one's personal habits and activities. The following is a summary of the stages in the retrograde cycle (again, refer to [fig. 1.3](#). P.11).

Phase I

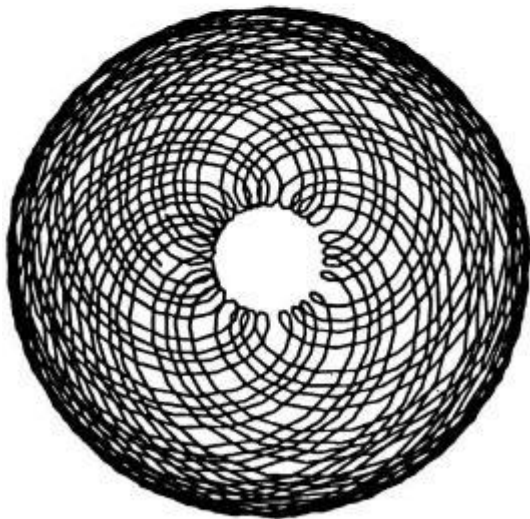
1. Conjunction point of the Sun and the planet, at the same degree at which Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto stationed retrograde last. Completion of the old cycle, beginning of the new.
2. Station-retrograde. A cessation of surface activity and an introversion of energy. A sense of internalized power with no apparent release point. (The degree at which Uranus, Neptune and Pluto station-retrograde is the degree at which the Sun will next conjoin them.)
3. Stationary-retrograde trine. The Sun trine to the retrograde planet, stabilizing and constellating the process which is to be undergone during the retrograde cycle.

Phase II

4. Sun opposition to the retrograde planet. The confrontation with the inner tyrant, point of illumination. The explosive turning point at which one confronts issues needing to be integrated.
5. Stationary-direct trine. The trine from the Sun to the about-to-be-direct planet. It assembles and constellates the energy from the retrograde period, in preparation for direction. It results in the high charge, the anticipatory mood and the tense, inflated condition leading up to the direction.
6. Station-direct. The sudden release of gathered energy, resources and information. Initially results in chaos, which is unsettling but a relief. Tension is snapped, resulting in a new liberation and greater potential.
7. Direct motion. The fallout or the results of the cycle become urgently active. Over the next few weeks entirely new avenues of possibility open up and become tangible at the Sun square to the planet.
8. Conjunction. The final results of the long-term cycle instigated back at the stationary-retrograde point. (Only for Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.)



11 May 1931 to 23 February 1964



11 May 1931 to 31 December 1996

Fig. 17.1 Mars orbits

17

TRANSITING MARS RETROGRADE

Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield, upon which your reason and your judgment wage war against your passion and your appetite.

Gibran

The fact that Mars is only retrograde approximately every two years and two months is significant because we become accustomed to its straightforward direct transits as it marks two-year ‘return’ cycles, spending about two months in each sign. There *is* a somewhat regular rhythm to Mars stations in that they are sequential in the order of the zodiac, but they are not completely regular. Retrogression might occur in sequential houses, but accidentally rather than necessarily. Over a period of years, Mars will eventually station in each zodiac sign, in the natural order of the signs but occasionally skipping one, or repeating others in that span.

For example, between 1952 and 1992 Mars stationed-retrograde twenty times—covering each sign in that forty-year period—but in Gemini, Cancer, Leo and Virgo it retrogressed twice and in Scorpio and Capricorn three times. Due to the eccentricity of its orbit, the stations of Mars (both direct and retrograde) occur most frequently in Cancer, Leo and Virgo, and least frequently in Sagittarius and Aquarius.

1 Therefore, in a life-span of 72.6 years, Mars could possibly station and retrogress in each natal horoscope house twice.

Mars is like a 'double-twin' of Earth. Its axial tilt is virtually the same and it therefore has a similar four-season 'year', but the seasons are double our own, that is, Mars has four six-month seasons whereas Earth has four three-month seasons. The Earth orbits the Sun in one year and Mars in two, so Earth finally catches up with Mars in its orbit about every two years and two months -

then, after a retrograde period of two months or so, regular direct motion is resumed.

The most significant difference between Mars and all the other superior planets is its relationship to the Sun around the times it is stationing—both retrograde and direct. Whereas all other superior planets are retrograde when in a trine with the Sun, Mars is not. The Sun-Mars trine occurs approximately fifteen to twenty days *before* Mars stations-retrograde, and about fifteen to twenty days *after* it stations-direct, depending on the particulars of its eccentric orbit.

This alters the quality of Mars' station-retrograde, in that the excitement of potential just prior to its retrogression is often over inflated, resulting in the shocking 'surprise factor' and sudden withdrawal of direct energy. Conversely, the Sun-Mars trine following the station-direction of Mars supports a quick recovery and a re-establishment of the equilibrium which may have become disorganized during the retrogression.

Station-retrograde to Sun opposition: When transiting Mars stations and turns retrograde, all externalized drive and focused energy reverses its direction. The daily progress of which one normally takes no note suddenly becomes filled with effort. As mentioned, this is a result of the excitement of the Sun trine about two weeks prior to the station, where an energy flow from Sun to Mars gives the illusion that everything is moving along quite well. The station can be quite an abrupt phenomenon, creating a cessation of interest, drive, energy and focus in what might have been an important project or relationship prior to that station. These doldrums could very well last through the entire retrograde period, past the station direction of Mars right up until it reaches the degree at which it stationed and turned retrograde. The frustrated energy will manifest around issues pertaining to the house in which it is transiting and upset the continuum of effort and plans.

Obviously this can create serious problems, especially if one is under a deadline or has limited time or funds in which to achieve a chosen direction. One must press on, regardless of the retrograde, so a change of perspective is in order. Mars retrograde frequently arrives unexpectedly; not having the regular annual rhythms of the other superior planets, one can be lulled into complacency during its long direct cycles. Consistent with Mars' characteristics, its cycle can be the most disruptive of routine and habit.

Unconsciously, we become accustomed to the various planetary rhythms as they are incorporated into our inner solar-system clock. We become inured to the cycles of planets which have a regular, seasonal frequency, as is the case with all other superior planets. This unconscious familiarity may account for why there can often be no discernible effect from the annual transiting retrogression of the outermost planets. Such is the nature of Mars that it does not conform with the annual dance of the Sun as do all the other superior planets, but has its own unique cycle. We become habituated to Mars' steady state but then are shocked into altering energy modes when the planet finally does make its two-and-a-half-month backward regression.

The station and retrogression of Mars will not necessarily mean that all activity ceases, but the change precipitates a period of reactive rather than active experiences. It might initiate an intense search into the moral and ethical motives underlying our actions and instigate an inquiry into the validity of goals and ambitions, symbolized by the house in which Mars is retrogressing. There may be no need actually to stop what we are doing, but more conscious introspection and contemplation is usually required.

In a situation where action is involved, such as working on a project with a time-goal in mind, the station of Mars retrograde can literally postpone the venture. It may even terminate it, should it have been completely inappropriate for the long term. Sudden reversals of interest (passion) and drive (ambition) are likely to occur during the retrograde phase. An internal battle ensues between the ego which wants things *done* and the Self which wants things to *be*.

Mars stationing-retrograde in aspect to a planet or angle in the natal chart can bring suppressed feelings of hostility or frustration to the surface, which occupy one's energy and delay forward progress temporarily. One's recognition of what levels of unresolved conflict have been incubating often proves liberating,

allowing one to marshal one's forces more appropriately. Often, Mars retrograde brings issues to the surface which one has either forgotten or deliberately repressed because of their disruptive qualities. Old wounds, hurts or frustrations might arise apparently out of context, but there is always a purpose for the disruption.

The past resurfacing to clear a new path for the future is illustrated by Moira's experience. Many years ago she had been involved with a religious community and had left it with deeply conflicting emotions: anger, sadness and despair all centred around the loss of faith and trust. Transiting Mars stationed-retrograde on her natal Moon in Gemini in the eighth house, provoking an interior examination. A few days prior to Mars' station (while it was conjunct her Sun-Moon midpoint) she heard that the community guru had just died. On the day of the Mars station-retrograde, Moira revisited the centre for the first time since her departure twelve years before, which released a torrent of unresolved emotional conflicts.

Clearly, the death (eighth house) of the master was significant, but primarily it acted as a catalyst for the resolution of long years of suppressed anger for Moira. Since her departure from the community, many emotional dependency issues (Moon) had lain dormant, but they had been active subliminally, serving to separate her from experiencing her feelings as they arose, and seemed indirectly related to her inability to sustain a long-term emotional relationship. She had restrained her outrage at what she perceived to be going on in the community, and subordinated her true emotional responses to oppression. That experience had set a precedent for Moira's subsequent relationship pattern: fear and anxiety about the verity of her own innate Self. During the entire Mars retrograde cycle in her eighth house, she disinterred feelings she had 'forgotten', liberating debilitating rage and releasing herself from what had become an interior prison.

There were exciting moments as well. She connected with old friends, relationships were resurrected, and insight was gained through understanding the motivations and feelings of others who had also been part of the community. Many of her own feelings were mirrored by these people, though Moira had not trusted her own perceptions and feelings at the time. Through objective analysis of the past, she was more able to discriminate. Having her past paraded before her enabled her to see more clearly that her youthful perceptions had been correct, thus restoring faith in herself.

The memorial service for the deceased master was held five days after Moira's transiting Sun—Mars opposition, exactly on her

Sun-Moon midpoint—precisely the degree of direct Mars when she first heard the news of his death. The gathering brought together many people from Moira's past, restoring some positive relationships but terminating an entire cycle of experience.

Sun opposition to station-direct: The opposition externalizes interior energy which has been gestating and cooking in the unconscious. The Sun-Mars opposition is particularly dramatic and highlights the two houses in which one has been experiencing a build-up of energy, whether hostile or constructive. The conflagration is especially spectacular if the Sun-Mars opposition is aspecting a natal planet or within orb of the angles. During the first half of the retrograde cycle much of the accumulated energy is banked, then brought to a head when one confronts past frustrations. The maverick quality of Mars, coupled with its unaccustomed retrograde motion, makes the aspect difficult to predict, but usually does not pass unnoticed.

Wherever Mars is transiting retrograde we are contacting deep seated and often disguised forms of rage, passion, heat, energy, raw libido and ambition. We might not be consciously aware of what is stirring deep within the psyche, but feelings, moods, events and circumstances that surface around the time of the transiting Sun-Mars opposition identify a specific area which needs to come to conscious awareness.

Psychologically, it is necessary to expel the festering energy in order to become a more productive person. The opposition point can be an explosive moment that clears the air or it may ignite a series of frustrations which will not abate until Mars turns direct again, exposing that which has been repressed.

An illustration of the underlying long-term intent of Mars retrograde, operating under the guise of apparent randomness, occurs in the following case. Celeste had transiting Mars station-retrograde in her natal seventh house, forming an exact sextile to her natal Pluto—not considered a 'bad' aspect. She had been having a relationship with a married man for over a year, repressing her frustration and anger about her subordinate position in the affair.

For the entire duration of the retrograde cycle, Mars would not contact a natal point in Celeste's natal chart, but it did activate the composite (relationship) chart's *progressed* composite Moon. On the day of the transiting Sun-Mars opposition an incident occurred which threatened the secrecy of their relationship, and in the following weeks continuing unexpected circumstances prevented the lovers from seeing each other. When Mars stationed and turned direct conjunct Celeste's north node in the seventh

house, she still had not heard from her lover and angrily resolved to terminate the relationship. Unbeknown to her, this feeling was mutual.

The final confrontation and ending of the affair did not, however, transpire until the day Mars in direct motion transited *back over* the relationship chart's progressed composite Moon, precisely where it had been when the unfortunate circumstance had occurred two months previously! All throughout the retrograde Mars period, the energy was working hard to demolish the relationship (affecting the composite chart) and the decisive aspect — the Sun-Mars opposition—had in fact terminated the relationship, though neither of them knew it consciously at the time.

When the Sun-Mars opposition breaks the cycle midway, a noticeable turning-point results and the ensuing period is a time of reconsidering any new directions which have emerged in the first half. Should there have been no overt directional indicators in that time, the impact of the opposition can explode the status quo and a total re-evaluation of the course of action necessary to reclaim personal power may be required.

Global tension was centred on the Persian Gulf in October, November and December of 1990. Mars stationed-direct on 1 January (along with Mercury stationing-direct on 3 January) and the possibilities for deflecting war were decreasing rapidly. Immediately following the solar eclipse conjunct Saturn on 16 January, war began, just four days before the Sun-Mars trine at 29° Capricorn to Mars in Taurus! So much for trines.

Kuwait had been invaded by Iraq on 2 August 1990, just days before the Sun-Mars square, as Mars began to slow down to turn retrograde. Uranus, Neptune and Saturn all stationed-direct in September as well, and when the Sun reached the trine to Mars on 7 October, just prior to that planet's station-retrograde, open discussion began on what was to be done if anything, about Saddam Hussein's aggression. The entire Mars retrograde cycle of 1990 was occupied by international concerns about war and peace, with the beginning of serious war discussions at the pre-retrograde trine and the initiation of the actual war at the post-direct trine of Sun to Mars on 20 January 1991.

Individuals, too might well find themselves declaring war on oppressive situations. Where normally one can deflect or displace anger, irritation or fear, when Mars is in its retrograde phase sore spots begin to fester, which erupt when Mars stations and turns direct. Because the station-direct always occurs before the Sun Mars trine, the explosion or release of the pent-up frustrations can be delayed until after the trine occurs, which is about fifteen days later. This leaves a period of investigation or anticipation between the station-direct and the subsequent trine.

Station-direct to Sun trine: The period between the station-direct of Mars and the subsequent solar trine is marked by tense apprehension. The intuitive function is running high and one instinctively 'knows' that a situation, circumstance or condition is unsustainable and that an overt, radical change must take place. A self-regulatory device is triggered off in the psyche and the system will organize around the problem to protect itself, often solving the difficulty in the unconscious. The inner Self often alerts one to an invisible yet threatening potential in one's psyche or environment.

If transiting Mars retrograde makes contacts to natal planets or a sensitive point in the course of its cycle, this can result in dramatic alterations around that point's characteristics, as in the case of Margaret Thatcher, whose status and security were fundamentally revised, with removal not only from her office but also from her home, 10 Downing Street. (Transiting Sun at 5° Sagittarius opposite Mars at 5° Gemini squared her MC-IC axis on 22 November 1990 the day of her resignation.)

Angela, who was seeking ordination as an Anglican priest, 'just happened' to select dates for her retreat of silence during the period of Mars retrograde. In this period she was to contemplate not only her vocational direction but also a potential relationship with a male priest of the same denomination. In the eight days of silence, when Mars was retrogressing in Angela's seventh house, the planet also opposed— exactly—her natal Venus in the first house, which is the ruler of her Taurus seventh house of relationship. She wrote to me about

this time: 'The retreat itself was pretty mind-blowing. The previous week of holidays with an old friend fell through [Mars retrograde], so it felt like being further thrown back on my own resources [retrograde] to get something else organized and with so little notice!'

Further, she noted that her retreat involved personal issues, serious questions around loneliness, but she commented: 'Married friends have, coincidentally, talked about loneliness for different reasons.' And: 'In a way, I felt more whole because at least the potential relationship with S. had shown me that bringing domesticity and vocation and space with another person in a relationship was/is still a possibility. I don't have to choose between poles and substitute or deny anything.'

Angela spent her retreat contemplating her seventh house/first house polarities during the latter stages of Mars retrograde, and when it stationed-direct exactly on her descendant she let go of the fantasy of that particular relationship and began to clarify what her overall needs in partnership were.

Katherine came for a consultation during the period just following a Mars retrograde cycle and told the following tale. She and her husband had bought a house when transiting Mars stationed to turn retrograde in her seventh house. The stationary-retrograde degree formed a quincunx to her natal Neptune in the twelfth house, and trined her Moon in the fourth house exactly. Over the weeks following the station (during Mars retrograde), they found it difficult to contact the man with whom they had done the transaction. When they finally did reach him, two and a half months later, Mars had just stationed and turned direct exactly conjunct her natal seventh house Mercury (ruler of her eighth house of joint resources). It turned out that the man had embezzled their considerable deposit along with several other victims' and had been imprisoned for a different crime the week before and could not be prosecuted. Not only was there no recompense possible, but court costs were awarded against Katherine and her husband!

It would be simple enough to warn people not to contract or agree verbally to anything under a stationary or retrograde Mars, but less easy for them to carry it out unless they were prepared to wait for two and a half months before considering the proposal or situation again. This poses a problem for the astrologer and the client. However, there are enough cases where such a wait, arbitrary or chosen, has proved to be a blessing. The slow burn that the transit of Mars retrograde engenders can either be corrosive and psychologically depleting or it can free up frustrated energy. The opposition will detonate any dormant anger, frustration or hostility. Certainly the cases presented have shown some remarkable experiences concurrent with Mars contacts to sensitive points in the horoscope, but perhaps there is more to learn than delineating events or predicting outcomes.

Misplaced aggression bleeds indiscriminately into areas of life quite unrelated to any specific ill. This boundary-less state creates undifferentiated discord and conflict which in turn implodes and is displaced, thus begetting bad timing, misdirected anger and guilt followed by depression. Assertiveness, however, is well-directed Mars energy, and even though aggression is part of it, it is not self-disruptive nor is it displaced, for there is a harmony of action and reaction. We might find surprising pockets of anger during Mars retrograde, which positively clear out harboured animosity.

An unrealized Mars leaves the individual open to happenstance aggression; his or her will is not personally engaged, and the predominant complaint in such a situation is of bad fate or ill luck. On the whole, astrologers tend not to put things down to bad luck but attempt to understand individuals in the context of their natural flow of energy, drive, will, ambition, passion and timing. In the personal management of energy, Mars cycles play a large role. When transiting Mars is retrograde in a particular sector of the natal horoscope it uncovers latent areas of psychic resources which are necessary to excite one into action. Some feelings uncovered during Mars retrograde may of course be uncomfortable, such as rage, suppressed memories, old passions, infantile or knee-jerk reactions, or vengeful fantasies.

Should we feel disorganized and chaotic, Mars retrograde will exacerbate that state and throw everything to the winds, creating emotional turmoil and internal riots. This can very easily spill out into our environment, forcing us to pay close attention to our internal war. There is a timing device that seems hooked into Mars, as for all planets and their retrograde cycles, but it is specific to martial experiences.

One becomes acutely aware of one's capacity for diplomacy and strategy throughout the cycle. Above all patience and alertness must be employed and sustained or exhaustion and depression may ensue.

Depression, normally equated with Saturn, is also a Mars function. Melancholy is a 'black anger', from the Greek *cholos*—the bile which chemically activates anger. People with Mars retrograde natively seem to have to cope with an underlying depression of energy and enthusiasm, and since they were born when Mars was transiting retrograde, it is logical that their energy level and assertiveness functions are in sympathy with the times when they were born. The frustration engenders a burning within the individual which must be blown out before it consumes the inner sense of self-worth.

When Mars is transiting retrograde it is an ideal time to determine the difference between depression of the senses, or psychic apathy, and simple lack of interest. To press on in a situation which appears fruitless is sheer bloody-mindedness, not brave assertiveness! It might be appropriate, therefore, to relinquish a once-beloved project, attitude, relationship or goal, rather than persist aggressively in outmoded activities once Mars completes its retrograde cycle.

Illness and weakness of constitution are Mars-related as well; an extreme disorder of inner integrity can become somatic. Although Mars is a planet of acute illness, its transits can activate a chronic problem and

weaken one's immunity to invasion, psychological or physical. The entire period of retrogression works to exacerbate cumulative stress and, if illness is lurking, an acute attack may result, usually after the opposition point and most often at the station-direct. Naturally this is dependent upon many other factors, including astrological, but the inner burn-out corrodes resistance. Illness can redress an imbalance of energy by forcing one to retire and contemplate one's direction and use of energy, whether that be passion, will or ambition.

In matters of love and war, it is said, all is fair. When the war is between love of self and self-combat I should think this axiom is apt. When Mars retrogresses, a degree of personal power and control is lost in the area across which it is traversing to and fro. This loss of command has to do with establishing an equilibrium, or creating 'fairness' in a psychic sense. Ranting and raving does not seem to be effective, whereas relinquishing what is meant to be

free does. Inspiration often goes underground, only to resurface upon the direction of Mars with a new and more realistic goal. It is as if the battle between conscious will and unconscious intent needs to take place in extreme private and secrecy, revealing itself only when the victor is assured of its supremacy. In this case the battle is between the conscious self and the unconscious Self, that mysterious aspect of the psyche which contains the power to direct one's life-force.

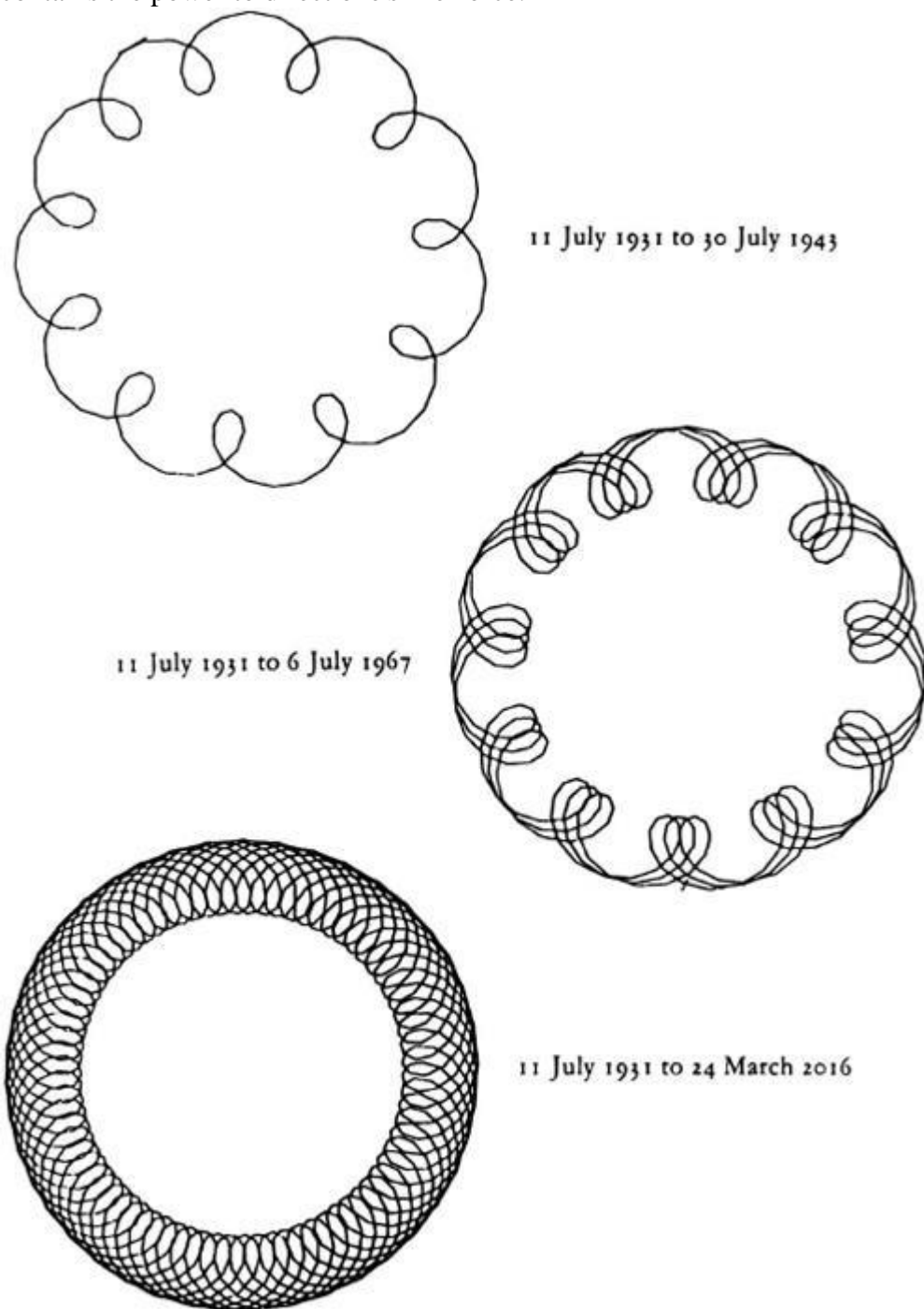


Fig. 18.1 Jupiter orbits

TRANSITING JUPITER RETROGRADE

Jupiter's position in the solar system is such that its cycle is the perfect paradigm for the cycles of all superior planets beyond its orbit. Jupiter is virtually at a standstill for about four days before it actually stations and begins retrogression, the trine from the Sun following about four to six days later. Jupiter spends almost exactly one year in each sign; its annual stations occur about one month later each year, and a few degrees later in each successive sign. Its retrograde period lasts between 115 and 120 days, during which time it backtracks approximately 10° and stations-direct about four to six days after the trine from the Sun.

Station-retrograde to Sun opposition: When Jupiter stations, the continuing growth and expansion one hoped would continue is slowly withdrawn, and an element of restraint is injected into enthusiastic progress. The circumstances under which a project had been in operation had already begun to alter appreciably, but unnoticeably due to the natural optimism and momentum inherent within the Sun-Jupiter cycle. Because the Sun and Jupiter are within orb of a trine as it stations, a build-up of hope and excitement coincides with the cessation of progress. The station suddenly arrests or withdraws the expansive mood and inverts the energy. The change in tone or pattern of growth is usually directly related to a hierarchy of some kind, in which personal decisions become impotent or insignificant. In the week or so following the exact station—particularly around the exact Sun trine—it becomes apparent that more time is likely to be necessary to evolve the idea, project, relationship or plan. It will mean that any sense of future or growth, within matters which pertain directly to the house Jupiter is transiting, appears to stagnate until Jupiter stations-direct. In circumstances where Jupiter's retrogression coincides with loss of power or personal authority, it is likely that one has lost perspective on one's capacity to follow through. It often transpires that one no longer wanted to, or could not, continue with the situation in the direction it was heading. This is not always an adverse state of affairs, since frequently when something is brought right up to the brink of completion and recedes, it proves to be more appropriate or practical upon reflection.

The station precipitates an internalization of the Dionysian side of one's nature, suppressing desire and demanding examination of one's intrinsic moral code. In the course of the time Jupiter retrograde spends in a particular house, a moral tone underlies the issues that arise. This period is best spent in exploring the source of one's own personal morality.

If planets can be said to have intent, Jupiter's purpose in its retrograde cycle is to connect one with a deeper and more personal sense of justice; not jurisprudence, but that which is correct for one's integral balance and health. Often our own inner sense of what is right and wrong is unconsciously suppressed, subordinated to accepted values and moral codes, whether these are social or defined within a specific relationship. Jupiter's retrograde cycle is the annual opportunity to contemplate and reflect upon aspects of our life in which we need to explore our personal code of ethics. In one sense, we experience our integrity more instinctively when Jupiter is retrograde, and though we may be incapable of formulating or articulating the internal review at the time, there is a correction at work unconsciously.

With this in mind, it may be that what was initially removed at the station-retrograde—be that a cherished idea, a relationship, a contract, money or time—was not altogether necessary to support one's ego, but was in fact damaging to the ego's fullest expression according to its own measurement of correctness or appropriateness. At this time the greater Self has a design not consonant with the ego's wants, and stimulates the activity of a self-correcting device. The interior life takes on a high drama and the external world appears dull or uncooperative in the areas which are affected by the house in which Jupiter is fulfilling its annual check on unmitigated progress. Ideally, the station and its subsequent adjustment period before the opposition from the Sun should bring a time of quiet, inner re-evaluation of one's ethical and moral priorities.

One of the pathologies inherent in Jupiter is inflation. In the course of its direct transit the planet can create a sense of inflated purpose, and when it is retrograde it can stimulate the opposite: ego deflation. Because one feels unable to trust one's environment to produce the desired results, external support systems become less meaningful and one's inner wisdom deepens. Circumstances might advocate withdrawal from a situation in order to receive inner counsel, rather than barrelling ahead, provoking, prodding, challenging or pressuring completion. In this instance, the swallowed Metis is Jupiter's gift of inner wisdom. Prevailing over adversity enhances one's sense of worth, but attempting to manoeuvre the impossible only amplifies a sense of failure. This does not mean that when Jupiter is retrograde one's will becomes flaccid, but accepting flexibility in

one's overall affairs or long-range planning could allow for a more natural course of maturation, aiding the process of continuity.

Periods of retrogression are subtle and evolutionary and may not manifest in direct losses, failures or reversals unless there is a direct aspect to a planet or angle. When Jupiter transits a planet or house, it expands and delivers the maximum worth that the planet or house holds at that time, but when it recedes it appears to withhold or remove that gift. Jupiter retrograde most directly affects the current affairs of the house it is transiting in the course of the cycle. The natal house ruled by Sagittarius and the natal house in which Jupiter is found are indirect indicators as to where one might find answers to questions about one's future direction once the retrograde cycle is completed. There can appear to be a conflict between what one wanted to have created or to happen and the actual results, which in the long run emerge as a lesson in humility and the limits of personal power.

Zeus was a just but ruthless god, and his legacy to the astrological Jupiter as arbiter of justice has a distinct social bias—tacit laws change with time and cultural growth, as do our inner ethics and allegiances. If a situation arises out of a Jupiter retrogression which counters either social law or inner integrity, it is the ideal time to pull back and reflect on what is true for oneself. One might explore

all one's feelings around repression—is it for the social good or does it stem from fear of reprisal?

Alternatively, is it originating from a personal source and therefore supportive of one's integrity? If nothing else, the retrograde phase offers a period of time in which to contemplate the source, or hidden cause, of one's motives for social acceptance. The balance between moral issues and individual needs may have tilted and want redressing during the retrograde phase.

Zeus was constantly warning mortals and heroes of hubris. It continues to create paradoxes of power and dethronement even today. On the one hand, the idea of achieving great heights of accomplishment is the *primum mobile* for success; on the other, it contains all the ingredients of arrogance and insolence that put Prometheus on the rock having his liver picked out by an eagle each day. Goals generate action, they sow the seeds of what is to come, but should one's consciously intended destination be thwarted, one must then turn back on oneself to discover why. Jupiter can be associated with serendipitous, random or contingent experiences, so we might find to our pleasant surprise the proverbial 'blessing in disguise' when Jupiter has completed its retrograde cycle. If what we *think* we want is not germane to the general plan, the likelihood is that it will dissipate.

As Jupiter continues to accelerate towards the opposition point from the Sun, the illumination of what has been unconsciously reflected and acted upon becomes brighter. The accelerated quincunx may provoke an urge to make sudden decisions, or to withdraw one's energy in a reactionary or retaliatory way, as a self-protecting device. New plans are made rapidly, often too rapidly, and will most probably need revision after the reflection at opposition.

At the turning-point of opposition, plans may automatically begin to take shape, often with some surprising new possibilities.

Sun opposition to station-direct: The Sun's opposition to Jupiter occurs about two months after the station-retrograde and intensifies all situations in which creative issue has been suppressed or swallowed. (See [chapter 16](#) for the opposition points delineated through the houses.) The removal, loss or submersion of energy in the initial half of the cycle resurges with highly charged intensity and is often explosive. This is especially relevant with regard to wanting or desiring something intensely. The retrograde movement emphasizes what we do not have, and we come face to face with all the hopes and dreams that may have been suppressed during the first half, now released in inflated, overdramatic display which cathartically clears the air. Once the circumstances have settled somewhat, this purge allows gradual assimilation of the true situation and consequently gradual revision of plans.

The characteristic of Jupiter delivering or distributing can be unsettling, particularly if the planet's transit brings forth experiences which are intrinsically unfamiliar or which exacerbate an already loaded psychological state. For example, if one is uncomfortable with emotional situations and habitually avoids any sort of high drama, it is quite within Jupiter's power to prompt extreme or alien emotions. Should this be the case, it would be beneficial to explore the origin of the emotional reaction and grow more comfortable with its domain, thus discovering the real source of frustration.

Jupiter retrograde transit can provoke depression—a consequence of unrequited needs; the period can spiral one into a pit of mourning and loss, requiring one to draw on deep reserves of faith in oneself. Such an experience is common when Jupiter and Saturn are conjunct every twenty years and turn retrograde and direct in close sequence, or when they are in opposition in twenty-year sequences, each of their stations

closely coinciding opposite to the other. For Jupiter and Saturn cycles play out their mythic pattern most dramatically when they are conjunct or opposite each other, alternately swallowing and expelling creative issue. The argument between Jupiter and Saturn clarifies our ideas on individual morality (Jupiter) and collective morality (Saturn). These cycles herald a new order of priorities and a struggle for creative supremacy in the houses in which the drama is enacted. That which has been suppressed or contained beyond its time is expelled suddenly, often with great anger.

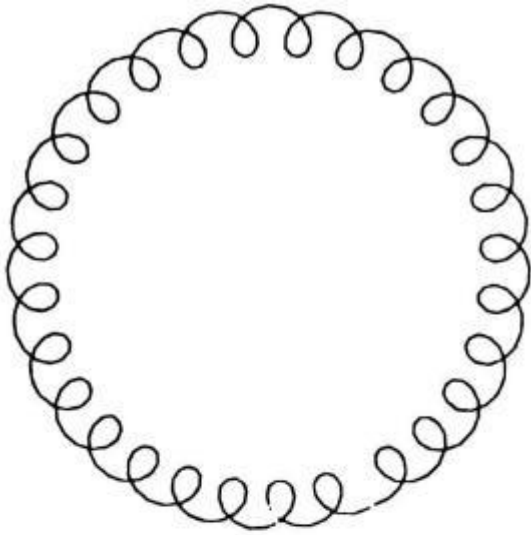
As Jupiter heads back to the station-direct, it encounters the decelerating quincunx from the Sun. Many adjustments and revisions are required. It tends to be a busy period outlining prospective plans, but with an increasing sense of waiting and suspense. This exciting aspect begins to collect energy and swell to tremendous proportions, creating an inflated sense of expectation. The horizon, though optimistic, is still unclear. Jupiter's motion continues to slow as it approaches the stationary-direct trine, by which time it is virtually motionless. A few days before it actually turns direct, Jupiter is trined by the Sun, which constellates and encases the gathered energy. The station therefore contains a tense, swollen force which can blow like a dam; this can be a positive release, or it can summon forth the demons.

Station-direct to previous station-retrograde degree: When Jupiter stations to turn direct the Sun has been in trine to it for about six days, which brings an optimistic, exciting tension to the station period. The station-direct unleashes blocked emotions, and can result in impulsive, premature decisions. The week or so leading up to the station harbours, anxiety as well as excitement—unexplained feelings of unrest can be mirrored by havoc in one's environment, and there can be a sense of anticipation and possible apprehension about what is building to climax. All of this can lend a paralytic but manic air to activities around the station-direct. Clarification of what is needed or wanted most will gradually come, once Jupiter begins forward motion again.

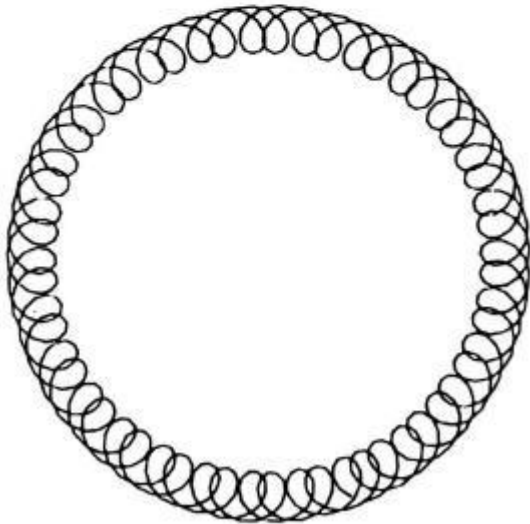
The station-direct period offers an opportunity to animate blocked or stifled creative issue. The myth of Jupiter inducing the birth of the new pantheon by forcing Saturn to disgorge his swallowed offspring is an apt allegory here, because so often one is incited to extremes of action in order to re-engage one's interest or energy level. The extreme opposite of Jupiter's *puer* influence—the *senex*—is encountered during the retrograde cycle, and though it was necessary to reserve one's energy, the conservative element is anathema to Jupiter's essence and the planet will battle with one's interior resistance to change.

If a natal planet was affected by an aspect from Jupiter at the stationary-retrograde degree, when Jupiter passes back over that degree it may bring a new and more appropriate perspective on what was deferred, lost, altered, promised or conceded. Conversely, if the stationary-direct degree is aspecting a natal planet, then by looking back to the time about seven months before, when it first transited that degree, one can then see what is being delivered, fully mature.

The station-direct begins an excellent time for inaugurating a new venture or concept, because the ensuing eight months of direct motion (other retrograde planets may qualify this) allows for stability and growth to establish a solid base of operations in the area in which transiting Jupiter is found. The plans, ideas and projects that were curtailed at retrogression (or implied at the first direct contact with a natal planet) will emerge at direction and, more often than not, with a new twist. The expansiveness dreamed of prior to the retrograde period is likely to have undergone a dramatic change, usually modified somewhat from its original grandeur. On a deeply unconscious level, a compromise might be struck during the interlude between stations, allowing for a graceful change in plans or direction. What one thought one wanted in the initial contact might not be at all what is really needed, and the true creative gift is then delivered. About eighty days after the station-direct, Jupiter passes back over the degree at which it turned retrograde and begins to gather momentum again, heading towards the conjunction with the Sun. Between station-direct and passage over the retrograde degree, the finishing touches are applied and the full maturity of a long-range picture arrives, adding a final note to the retrograde cycle.



1 January 1932 to 28 January 1961



1 January 1932 to 22 November 1990

Fig. 19.1 Saturn orbits

19

TRANSITING SATURN RETROGRADE

The transiting Sun-Saturn opposition can happen once to three times in a house, depending upon its size, because Saturn spends close to two and a half years in each sign, stationing and turning retrograde on an annual basis. The planet's annual stations occur about thirteen days later each year. It appears at a standstill for four or five days before it actually turns retrograde, and is followed by a trine from the Sun about twelve days after the station. It remains in the retrograde phase for about 130 days, backtracking through an average of 6° , and about twelve days *before* it stations and turns direct it is in a trine to the Sun again.

With Saturn, we enter a retrogression cycle that will emphasize particular and selective degrees. Saturn can transit the same degree twice in the course of its retrograde and direct phases, and occasionally it will do so three times. As an illustration, the transit of Saturn upon its entry into Aquarius in 1991 is shown here as a paradigm of its motion.

7 February: $0^\circ 1'$ Aquarius

16 March: direct at $3^\circ 52'$ Aquarius

17 May: stationary-retrograde at $6^\circ 50'$ Aquarius

22 July: retrograde at $3^\circ 52'$ Aquarius

5 October: stationary-direct at 0° 11' Aquarius

13 December: direct at 3° 52' Aquarius.

Though it will only 'hit' 0° Aquarius twice, Saturn passes over 3° 52' Aquarius three times. From the first time it transited that degree (in direct motion) to the last (also direct) nine months will have passed. This is an important feature to recall when interpreting the long-range outcome of a retrograde Saturn cycle in a natal chart. The seeds sown in the first 'hit' undergo a gestation, maturation

and eventual birth at the final passage over that same degree. Saturn delivers that which he has entombed.

Station-retrograde to Sun opposition: Wherever Saturn is transiting our horoscope we are moulding and shaping new boundaries and creating dimension and form, but periodically this type of development internalizes and incubates, resulting in a feeling of stuckness and immobility. The retrograde cycle will see Saturn backtrack over degrees which it has previously contacted while in direct motion. The past and all its attendant characteristics are then reviewed and reflected upon for current effectiveness. The process of evaluation is instigated about two weeks before the actual station-retrograde, during which time the unconscious begins to germinate a seed. If Saturn stations on or within 1 or 2° of orb of a natal planet or angle, it directly affects the growth in that area because Saturn begins to encapsulate the planet, sealing it off, preventing its contamination by external influence.

The corollary of the apparent check on forward progress is not necessarily a regression of habits or patterns of behaviour, but the station-retrograde does affect the deeper layers of the psyche, wherein the transformation will occur.

The immediate response to the station is usually dead calm, and may pass unnoticed, although there may be hints of restlessness and frustration with the status quo. Depending on what natal contacts are being made, the terminus reached at the station can either be a relief, an oppression or an outright loss. There is often great difficulty in determining what has ended, and the period is often associated with a mild form of depression or lethargy. If one has come to the natural ending of a project through which much energy has been focused, the depression is an instinctive psychic tranquillizer secreted to soothe the anxiety that always attends the void of completion. If a relationship has ended around the time of a Saturn station, the withdrawal for healing involves an alchemical transformation which is long and slow, including the endurance of several stages.

Not all Saturn stationary-retrograde periods coincide with endings. Although externally they may appear to do so, they are truly a beginning of an entirely new relationship with one's environment and one's inner feelings of power and authority. The station begins a process in which a container, a chrysalis, is constructed, within which mysterious unconscious processes begin to metamorphose. There is usually a theme; normally one is subtly aware of a necessary shift or change, but instinctively resists. The homeostatic principle charges to the rescue, halting any overt or immediate action. There is an intrinsic guarantee that what emerges at the end of the nine-month gestation cycle is considerably different from what was imagined.

For example, if Saturn stations in a square to the natal Moon, it might mean one or a combination of several things: a move, relocation or renovation of the existing home; a crisis or turning point in any kind of relationship; or a depression or melancholy which is related to unresolved emotional conflicts. Within the confines of what is manifestly possible—for that is where Saturn is most comfortable—prediction of the outcome of a Saturn transit is often very successful. Many stages of development and maturation of the seed idea transpire in the course of the retrograde time, so that what actually does develop may not be at all what was projected in the beginning. However, a thread of similarity connects the first transit to the final transit, nine months later. If one had fantasized a relocation at the outset of the cycle it may come to pass, but it may not be to where one originally anticipated.

Usually, the squares, semi-squares and oppositions to natal planets are the more obvious aspects, they being characteristic of manifestation, and are accompanied by unpleasant feelings of entrapment, frustration, anger and despair. One is forced to come to terms with one's inability to control one's environment, and becomes acutely aware of a diminution of ego power. With rearrangement of time and priorities, and after quiet withdrawal, one often finds considerable peace of mind—either because one feels the difficult time is over, or because one has reached the realization that such a profound need for change must be contemplated slowly and with great reserve.

Saturn encapsulates the ego and shrinks its parameters, thus reducing one's apparent control over particular aspects of life at certain times. If planets are being aspected by the retrograde cycle, then the reassessment of power and authority is more general but

still associated with the matters of the house Saturn is transiting, and reflected in the houses that the transiting Sun occupies during the whole cycle.

If the aspects that a station-degree makes to natal placements are through the trine or sextile, then the station is felt more gently, the subsequent cycle is more subtle and the results generally accord with one's plans. However, it still injects a note of solemnity into the planet's organizing principle. In the case of a sextile or trine, a station-retrograde can buy time to allow for a better-developed long-range plan. For example, a Saturn station in trine to natal Venus may lead one to embark on a serious re-evaluation of one's attitudes towards one's relationships, and bring about a period of settled happiness. In the subsequent retrograde phase one may find all manner of deeply satisfying aspects of one's own nature which are quite independent of relationships. One's participation in relationships matures through the Saturn retrogression, resulting in more personal security and healthier personal values. Saturn isolates the planet it contacts and inverts its energies, entombing it for incubation before eventual birth. In the process of deepening one's relationship to oneself one succeeds in multiplying the satisfaction found in relating to others.

The trine from the Sun to Saturn which follows the station by about twelve days often triggers the first inkling of what has gone underground and virtually disappeared for a period of time. The trine occurs in the same degree of the Saturn station, and the embodiment of the station occurs. Often the station is not manifest or noted until that subsequent trine—it is this aspect which activates the creation of the chrysalis within which new possibilities begin to form.

The protective coating around specific areas in the psyche, introduced at the Saturn station, is nature's way of arresting growth that may not suit the intentions of the greater Self. The trine isolates the area of the psyche which needs privacy and protection from other aspects while it undergoes a transformation. The subsequent limiting of possibility and internalization of energy is attended by shrinking parameters. The months following the station can be filled with deep frustration and resentment, which forces one to attend to business at hand, teaches one to wait things out and, eventually, compels one to wear down all possible obstacles to get to the one main issue that is truly at the core of the resentment.

Saturn's retrograde motion accelerates as the Sun moves towards the opposition, and its arrival at the pre-opposition quincunx about six weeks after the station marks a time of negotiation. The ego makes all attempts to rally and regain control, madly reorganizing priorities, often going back on itself and accepting less than was originally in mind. Adjustments made within oneself or in one's environment are in accord with the realms of experience found in the two houses in which we find the transiting Sun and, on the opposite side of the chart, where Saturn is transiting retrograde. The position of the transiting Sun is an indicator of where one is most frustrated at the time and where one will struggle to maintain authority and the status quo. The ego wants back what it lost, or wishes to gain something there which will elude it in the long run.

Sun opposition to station-direct: A little over two months after Saturn stations-retrograde it is opposed by the Sun, marking the midway point in the retrograde cycle. Saturn is moving about two thirds as quickly in retrograde as it does when it is at its fastest motion direct.

The opposition is the turning-point of the cycle, marking the end of the wildly resistant phase and the beginning of gradual incorporation of new ways of experiencing central power. The houses in which the opposition occurs will highlight the areas which have been unconsciously undergoing incarceration and curtailment. If the opposition falls across a planet or one of the angles, the subsequent paralysis is brought about by the illumination of the Sun's position and by the awareness of what has broken down and one's inability to act on it immediately. Saturn will persist in containing and encapsulating one's desire for immediate action until the inner process has reached full term. There may even be internal feelings of entrapment as well as a desire to eject oneself prematurely from the high-pressured situation or react by fleeing from responsibility.

In the opposition time one gains perspective on how outdated one's basic assumptions are. Naturally, this depends to a greater or lesser degree on how rigid and uncompromising one has been about existing structures. All will not fall apart, but that which no longer supports the needs of the deeper, unconscious, yet more intelligent, Self, will crumble slowly over the next two months.

The period following the Sun-Saturn opposition marks important transitions away from what used to be an effective psychological defence mechanism and/or the framework and structure of one's life. It is followed by the decelerating quincunx, which is a time of recollection and recapitulation—many rapid changes and

adjustments can be made during this time, and quite successfully. However, one's instinctive timing device knows that the parturition of a new and more appropriate status quo has not yet been reached. An abiding inner strength and more appropriate ways of realizing one's long-range plans, coupled with impatience and anxiety, create an atmosphere of rapid transition, but it is likely to be a temporary adjustment.

Saturn retrogression will begin to decelerate until the planet ceases motion again just prior to the stationary-direct point. This slowing of motion contributes the finishing touches to what has been in gestation all along. The exact trine from the Sun occurs precisely when Saturn begins its slowest retrograde motion, before it stations-direct, and will only move about 6' of arc before the station twelve days later. This can induce premature delivery, hastily made decisions not based on the wisdom of time but on intolerance and impatience. The Sun collects the energy of the retrograde cycle, resulting in feelings of tense, anxious suspension. Because the cycle is still active until well after the planet stations and turns direct, conscious intelligence about what has been gestating often does not surface until Saturn passes the degree at which it turned retrograde.

The Sun's 'gathering' or 'collecting' action at the trine contributes the tension to the twelve or so days previous to the station, precipitating the actions and events which erupt around the week following.

Station-direct to previous station-retrograde degree: If the station connects with a planet or angle in the natal horoscope, this time can feel interminable, as Saturn slows the quality of time. When stationing, Saturn remains within the same degree for almost six weeks on either side of the station. Upon its direction, one might feel as if moving in slow motion. It takes much time for Saturn's message to be incorporated into the conscious mind, but it is assured that the nine-month process of seeding, gestation and birth has occurred. Something new has been born, but it will need a few months to become consciously manifest. Even then, the experience of having been contained within one's innermost parameters leaves one with a sense of caution. Very gradually, new ego structures can be created, but the apparent disintegration of what was once thought to be oneself leaves its mark. The annual cycle of Saturn's retrogression can occur two or three times in one house and the matters pertaining to that house undergo revision with each successive cycle, leaving no stone unturned. Wherever one's ego is invested in the house affairs, it dies for part of the year while a new usefulness is developed.

The final passage over a degree is the most notable and frequently marks the conscious and manifest birth of what was hinted at nine months previously. Usually it is quite tangible. If one has been working on a long-term project over that last period of time, it becomes complete, workable and embodied in the final transit. Alternatively a tentative plan or fantasy may come to reality in the last stages of the cycle; negatively, it will finish off any antiquated or non-productive relationships, projects or activities. It is human nature to delay at the threshold and, although one might struggle valiantly to hang on to them, outmoded and even damaging values or relationships long past their productive stage do end. There may be an extension or second wind at the final passage, but it too has its terminus, and if the retrograde cycle has coincided with one's own phases of withdrawal, internalization, gestation and birth, so clearly demarcated by Saturn, then best to leave it alone. By the time Saturn actually passes back over the degree at which it turned retrograde, nine months later, it is within four weeks of the conjunction point with the Sun. If such a delay has occurred, this marks the final conclusion of the cycle.

20

TRANSITS OF THE TRANS-SATURNIAN PLANETS

When the Earth in its orbit 'overtakes' a planet further out in the solar system, that planet appears to defer to the Sun, bowing and moving backward in the heavens. There is a natural obeisance, an undulation in the planet's orbit, which appears geocentrically like a loop against the backdrop of the ecliptic, while the retrogressing planet appears to move closer to Earth. When this phenomenon occurs, the transiting Sun has begun to move into the 'opposition zone' where it remains for approximately five months.

The transits of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto awaken a memory of sorts, a recollection of both personal and collective symbols and images. Though the experiences associated with the transits may appear to be unprecedented, the fact that they feel appropriate and are quite within character implies that they are the manifestation of already extant, but nascent or embryonic, consciousness. Many individuals find these transits arduous, frightening and difficult to endure, primarily because the process engendered by their repeated action unearths latent, previously unexplored, psychic responses. Most of us are more comfortable with the known than the mysterious. Fear and anxiety are natural human responses to the slow, inexorable rumble of an approaching outermost planet. While in the midst of gestating a new aspect of oneself, we have

little insight into the form it will eventually assume. A seed bears little resemblance to the fruit or flower into which it will inevitably metamorphose; the gradual evolution of a long-term transformative planet works on the same fundamental principle.

1

The trans-Saturnian planets activate non-rational zones, and events related to the transits often arrive from unexpected quarters without prior conscious warning, disrupting the logical pattern of one's life. But there is logic to their unfolding of the contents of the unconscious. I will not be a Pollyanna and say that there is always a bright side to these transits, because often initially there appears not to be. In fact, the dark side is often experienced first—the primitive and undeveloped aspects of our natures, which are not inherently evil though we often regard the unknown as an evil force.

The outermost planets transit a single house for many years (using a 30° house as an average): in the case of Uranus, seven years; Neptune, fourteen years; and Pluto anywhere from twelve years (in Scorpio) to thirty-two years (in Taurus). In this time there will be as many retrograde cycles, because as the Sun moves round the zodiac, it pulls the retrograde cycles into motion annually.

2 This seasonal repetition partly accounts for the subtlety of the long-term work involved with the trans-Saturnian planets. It also flies in the face of the previous tradition of interpreting the retrograde cycles of outer planets as being meaningless or insignificant. Though the cycles are often subtle, they are definitely not meaningless.

The houses (often five) and sectors (i.e. quadrants or angles) that the Sun transits during the retrograde cycle of an outer planet signal a counterpoint message. Consciously or unconsciously, extra psychological energy is being invested in these houses on a cyclic basis. The force is directed towards revealing and breaking patterns, thereby developing a stronger ego. Often one experiences exhaustion during the retrograde transit because the unconscious is working overtime—even sleep does not seem to be a rest.

The transit of the Sun throughout the five-month retrogression of the outer planet or planets highlights where one must meet the challenge of the environment. A fifth house Uranus transit, for example, breaks up what was a perfectly useful way of relating to others on an emotional level and can create a disturbance in intimate relationships. This is not simply punishment from the gods, but an important process in maturing. Uranus is noted for its capacity to segregate aspects of one's inner nature from other integral aspects. The transit of Uranus will loosen old emotional habits and force one to look closely at one's interior motives in loving, caring and nurturing, as well as one's capacity for risk-taking in those areas.

The Sun's transit will manifest the opposite; that is, the external world will bring about the internal catharsis. In this hypothetical illustration, the opposition from the Sun to Uranus will fall across the fifth house/eleventh house axis, projecting the inner experience (fifth house) into the environment (eleventh house), forcing one to deal openly with friends and associates and, ultimately, to come to terms with one's life goals. What might seem incidental to one's capacity to give and receive love will be reflected openly in the eleventh house. The outer world is so often a mirror of the inner landscape that one need only look around to see what the evidence is.

This follows for all the planets. The Sun is the vehicle for the will, expressing the inner Self's urges in constantly new and more versatile ways. In the periodic times of clustering of the superior planets, such as the stellia occurring in Taurus in 1940–41 (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus) and also in Capricorn in the late 80s and early 90s (Saturn, Uranus, Neptune), an intensely complicated restructuring of one's unconscious forces an internal examination in a multiplicity of ways over short periods of time each year. However, when the outermost planets are distributed throughout the zodiac, there can be always a superior planet in retrograde motion, and therefore it would be impossible to lay down a definitive doctrine for delineating the retrograde motion of outer planets.

The cycles of retrogression of the trans-Saturnian planets occur many times over. Their extended stay in each house will create a history of experiences associated with the retrograde cycle, starting with the initial transit over the sensitive degree. The coincidence of the transits of the outer planets with transformational experiences emphasizes how deeply unconscious our motives in life are, because it is often with a shock that we receive the initial 'hit'. Gradually we absorb and incorporate the information or circumstance into our daily life and progress is thus made. As we move out from Uranus to Pluto, the duration and scope of the transformational experience is greater and the results deeper and more profound.

As we read in [chapter 10](#), on the trans-Saturnian planets retrograde in the natal chart, they are not quite as impersonal as we might have thought. The fundamental core essence of all planets is what we might term

archetypal, but the myriad personal expressions overlying the archetype are what give us our uniquely indispensable self. When we endure repeated retrograde cycles of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto over sensitive points in the natal chart, we are really experiencing a need to develop further more deeply personal aspects of our inner nature and consciously evolve them until they become integrated into our personality, in this way developing a stronger ego structure more specifically characteristic of the deep inner Self.

The outermost planets always require more conscious effort to integrate into the whole of the self-system, which is why they receive such bad press. The energy required to transform undeveloped or primitive characteristics into a useful and integrated mode is tremendous. The planets' transits consistently precipitate major life transitions, taking years to unfold, and given that they spend almost half the time in retrograde motion, half the 'work' done, psychologically, is done during the retrograde transit. Frequently, all extraneous and superficial ego-containment structures disintegrate in the process of saving one's life or soul—the person experiencing the retrograde transit is often accused of 'uncharacteristic behaviour', madness or plain irresponsibility. Indeed, it is more like 'necessity'.

Far too much emphasis is placed on the legendary flash of enlightenment. Burning bushes, lightning bolts and white-light consciousness are not standard features of retrograde cycles, even with precise degree contacts. Should an angel sit on our bedpost and announce enlightenment, it is only the moment of awareness itself that is numinous, not the subsequent ordinary workaday life. The underground work, the preparation for the numinous moment of awareness—should one occur—is often done during the phase of retrogression. The direct phases bring the time of active participation in the long-term transformation, which often seems very ordinary indeed.

Another significant feature of these cycles of retrogression of the outer planets is that it is highly likely that, at some point in life, one or more of the personal planets in the natal horoscope will be affected by them. Unlike the hit-or-miss cycles of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn the transpersonal planets scour the degrees of the zodiac with a relentless increment that leaves virtually no stone unturned. Their intent is to connect individuals to profoundly personal inner resources and to initiate their own increasingly unique way of experiencing the world.

As we saw with the planets closer to the Sun, their movements over years of retrograde cycles form natural mandalas. The planets appear to 'review' degrees of the zodiac, then return to direct motion, traversing those same degrees once again. Because the outer planets have very long orbital periods (Uranus, 84 years; Neptune, 168 years; Pluto, 245 years), the linear graph, rather than the mandalas used for the inferior and inner superior planets, is the most practical way of illustrating their motion. It happens that the three-year period 1990-93 gives a particularly favourable picture, illustrating the undulating nature of direct and retrograde motion (see [fig. 20.1](#)).

There have been interpretations of retrograde transit cycles that include the possibility that a repeat of a situation or condition occurs when the planet passes back over a degree it has transited once. This is highly unlikely, not only psychologically but also astrologically, first because in the course of the retrogression all the other planets move on and are found at later degrees when the retrograde planet finally turns direct to pass over the same degree. Secondly, as we shall see, there are two basic paradigms that transits in retrograde follow, each very different from the other.

When the retrograde planet turns direct and passes back over the degree at which it turned retrograde, the view of the planetary map has changed entirely, and the planet's relationship with the Sun and the other planets has altered completely. There is no 'return' at all, but simply another view from the same zodiacal location. This altered relationship, with the entire framework but particularly with the Sun, is most significant because it implies an evolutionary process, rather than a revelation or sudden event.

The more distant a planet is from the Sun, the smaller is the arc of its retrograde motion—just a few degrees—and the longer the period of time during which it is retrograde. In the case of the outermost planets, cycles are created wherein a single degree can be transited three times, intensifying that degree and focusing on a particular point (occasionally a planet) in the natal horoscope. To be precise, the transit of Uranus over a single degree occurs three times; in the case of Neptune the transit can occur four times; for Pluto, in the signs Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius it can be four times, and in Aries and Taurus it can be five or six times.

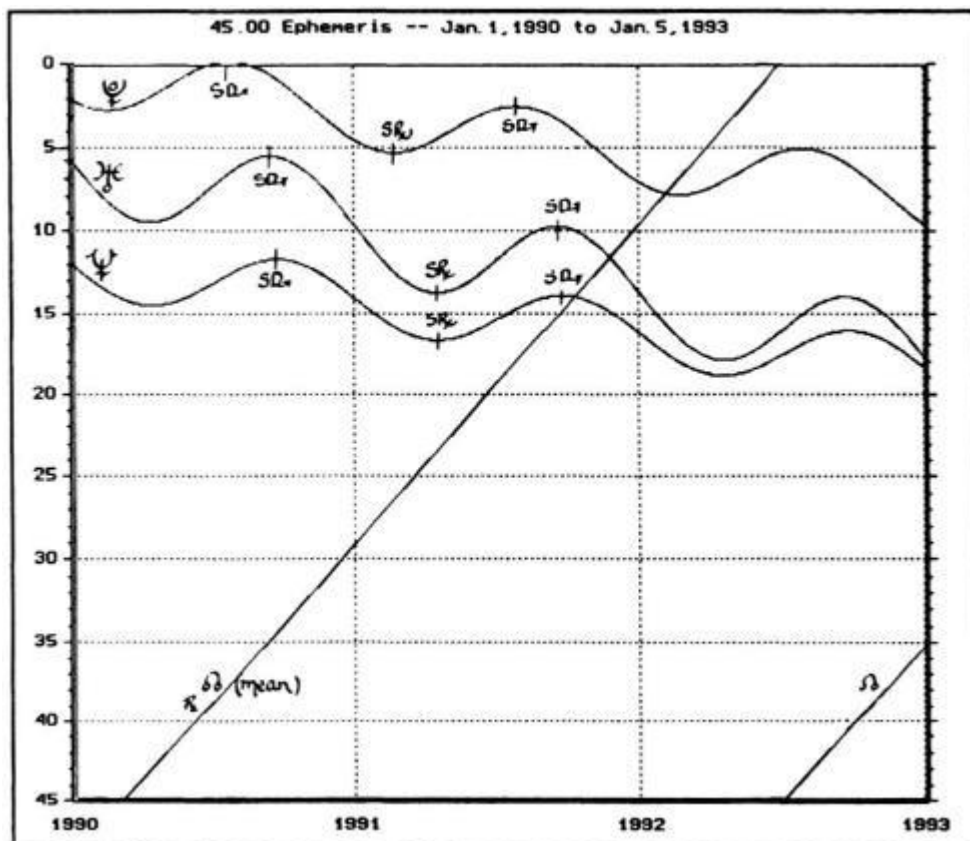


Fig. 20.1 A three-year graphic depiction of the trans-Saturnian planets with the mean mode (always retrograde) included to demonstrate constant motion versus the direct and retrograde movements

These most distant planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, have distinct cycles between the first passage over a specific degree and the final passage over that same degree. Uranus takes ten months to move from the first contact to a particular degree, back, then over that same degree for the last time; Neptune is also almost exactly ten months from first 'hit' to final transit; Pluto, when in Scorpio and Sagittarius, will also spend nine or ten months from first transit to final pass over the same degree, and will hit the same degree, minute and second four times over an eighteen-month period. Pluto's highly eccentric orbit and inclination -17° —to the ecliptic results in it spending eleven years in Scorpio and thirty-two in Taurus. Therefore, its stay in each sign is vastly different.

A repeat transit over a particular degree in the horoscope occupied by a natal planet, or on one of the angles, will reawaken one to something long buried and in need of exploration from a new perspective. The disinterment of deeply entrenched memories first manifests as shock but eventually leads to enlightenment about a heretofore undeveloped aspect of one's inner nature. The degree in question is not virgin; it has had many and various experiences before. Locked into that degree are levels of both archetypal and personal memory, which cluster in bunches and form conscious biases as well as unconscious attitudes. The older one is, the more accumulated material there is over the purity of the degree. Therefore, the more deeply one is invested in one's conscious bias, the more shocking the emergence of primal material will be. What at first glance appears to be illogical is, in fact, highly logical, because that which surfaces is relevant to one's immediate needs and is conspicuously associated with circumstances and events in current time. It is existentially appropriate, and worth examining on this level at the very least. Transits become even more predictable when we explore what previous experiences and significant relationships are associated with the planet or the pertinent degree.

The repeatedly transited point in the horoscope becomes more and more sensitive, forever imbued with the innate qualities of the transiting outer planet, which are in turn intertwined with the memories of the events or circumstances brought forth by the transit. Assuming that there *is* a collusion between the interior workings of the psyche and one's experience of the exterior world,

we would expect significant events to occur simultaneously with the transits. They frequently do.

Retrograde cycles are significant because there is an intense, periodic animation in the process of self-unfolding, marked by withdrawal into oneself to digest and assimilate.

The following feature is most important: certain planets or planetary configurations in a natal chart will experience more contacts by retrogressing planets than others (check this in your chart). In the event that this

has happened or will happen, it means that those planets or those configurations *are more significant natively* than any others in the natal horoscope. If the planets or configurations in the natal chart are fated to experience such a frequency of retrograde and direct transits, then they are by nature the most psychologically significant in the chart—they are the planets which hold the richest store of character information.

Because the natal chart is the chart of the transits for the individual at birth, the fact that one or more of those planets will be repeatedly transited forward and back implies that the memory at birth was connected to the eventual future, which then becomes the 'past'.

3 In this way, we are made up as much, if not more, of our future as of our past. Immediately at birth, the individual begins instinctively unconsciously to formulate protective containers around those planets as if the Self 'knows' there will be action on them, and when the onslaught of the long process of multiple and repeated outer planetary retrogression cycles begins, they are already tense with awareness and resistant to change. This may help in defining a psychological 'complex'.

Through the confluence of natal 'transits' (i.e. the birthchart itself) we are already connected to future transits of planets *to* those planets, and the unconscious knowledge of this inevitable phenomenon, we then can assume that significant psychological complexes are likely to exist there. Natal planets whose future is to be scoured repeatedly become loaded, virtually saturated, with complex psychological traits. These traits will be the primary unconscious motivating force underlying all other aspects of life. When the promised time comes, and the onslaught of transits begins, the complex begins to unravel itself, and though it may look as if it is involving only one aspect, it will prove to have been the connecting link to the individual's entire unconscious impetus. (See [chapter 24](#) for an illustration of the pile-up effect.)

Of the two ways in which a retrograde transit will affect a degree place in the natal horoscope, most common is when the point or degree is first transited in direct motion, secondly in the retrograde phase and finally in direct motion after the retrograde cycle is completed. (See [figs. 20.2 and 20.3](#), pp. 358 and 362.) If that degree is occupied by a natal planet, the repeat action of the transit alters the bias of the planet permanently; the long-term results of retrograde transits over sensitive points in the horoscope are life-altering, rather than transitory or incidental.

The conception, gestation and birth associated with the transit of an outer planet over an inner planet, midpoint degree or structure mirrors the prenatal development of a person. The more aware we are of the timing sequence that these cycles hold, the more intelligent we become about their function in the continual development of our nature. I cannot say that consciousness of an outer planetary transit allows one to avoid or defer what is written at birth, but it surely assists in managing affairs in the process. The knowledge that we are pregnant with a necessary matter reduces the fear and angst that outermost planets often engender. The deeply unconscious nature of the trans-Saturnian planets, and the often surprising information that they dislodge, creates deep currents of agitation around their transit. That a transit of an outer planet frequently coincides with sudden revelations and increased awareness of hitherto unrealized aspects of a deeply personal characteristic or psychological trait is quite typical. But what is pragmatically and immediately useful to the astrologer is the predictable movement, and subsequent logical development observable with each faltering step through the retrograde cycle to and from the degrees of the zodiac.

However, it is not prediction that I am concerned with but insight and understanding. By inquiring into a client's precedent experience around a degree or point in the chart, his or her previous background regarding the transiting planet, *and* the current situation and its potentials, it becomes entirely possible to understand what the developmental process of the retrograde transit is bringing to the surface. The psychological importance of this method should be fairly clear, but in pragmatic usage, for example in timing the outcome or completion of a project or idea, it is equally valuable.

As mentioned previously, there are two main sequences by which a point in the horoscope will experience the retrograde transits of one or more of the outermost planets. If a natal chart has a planet (or point) at the degree in which an outer planet (Uranus, Neptune or Pluto) will actually station-retrograde, then a slightly different sequence occurs than if the outer planet passes over a natal planet while in direct motion, stations at a later degree, and then passes back over the natal planet while retrograde to pass over it again when direct. It will always station-direct within 1° of orb at the same degree at which it was stationary-retrograde. The subtle differences in these two paradigms can produce radically different results.

For the sake of clarity and consistency, I have arbitrarily used Uranus' motion in the early degrees of Capricorn to illustrate the two paradigms.

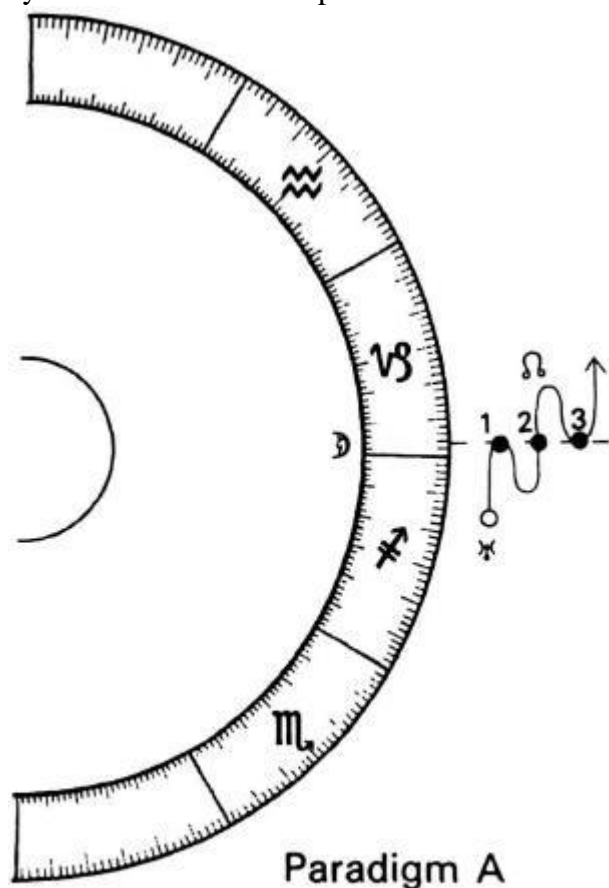
PARADIGM A

When a transiting outer planet stations-retrograde conjunct a natal position, retrogresses, passes back over the natal degree and eventually stations-direct on that degree.

Example:

1. Uranus stations-retrograde at 1° 02' Capricorn, 4 April 1988. (Sun in Gemini opposes Uranus retrograde at 29° Sagittarius, 21 June 1988.)
2. Uranus stations-direct at 27° 02' Sagittarius, 5 September 1988.
3. Uranus is moving direct at 1° 02' Capricorn, 20 December 1988, passing over the degree at which it stationed-retrograde eight and a half months before. (22 December 1988—Sun conjunct the direct motion Uranus shortly after it passes the degree at which it stationed retrograde and six months after the Sun-Uranus opposition.)

In this example, Uranus only contacts the exact degree minute and second twice—once at the station-retrograde, and again when it has completed the cycle and turned direct, passing over it. Uranus will, however, contact that degree once again, but slightly past the precise degree, as we see in the continuing cycle of Uranus for this period of time.



Paradigm A

1. Station-retrograde (4 April 1988)
2. Direct pass (20 December 1988)
3. Station-direct (10 September 1989)

Fig. 20.2 Paradigm A

1. Uranus stations-retrograde at 5° 20' Capricorn, 9 April 1989. (Sun opposite to Uranus on 25 June 1989 at 3° Cancer-Capricorn.)
2. Uranus stations-direct at 1° 20' Capricorn, 10 September 1989. (Note that this degree was the degree at which Uranus stationed-retrograde seventeen months before, but is now slightly further ahead by a few minutes of arc than the first 'hit' on 4 April 1988, and therefore within orb for interpretation's sake.)
3. Uranus is moving direct at 5° 20' Capricorn, 25 December 1989, thereby passing over the degree at which it turned retrograde in April.

In this sequence, for example, if one's natal Moon was at 1° 02' Capricorn, then one would experience first a station retrograde of Uranus conjunct the Moon; then the retrograde cycle as it 'backs off; then a second contact to the Moon when it passed back over the exact degree, minute and second in direct motion almost nine months later. So, technically and precisely, there are only two contacts to the Moon. However, almost exactly nine months after that transit, one would receive a third transit when Uranus stationed-direct at 1°

20' Capricorn—certainly close enough in orb to consider it conjunct! In which case, without any stretch of imagination or fact, one can consider oneself to have received three transits of Uranus over one's Moon over a period of one and a half years. This is fairly consistent for the trans-Saturnian planets. When an outer planet stations-retrograde on a natal placement, it will eventually station in direct motion within a degree of that same place about eighteen months later. Therefore, there would be both a station-retrograde and a station-direct occurring right on the point or planet concerned.

This is a most potent transit which can be interpreted in the following cyclic fashion.

1. The transiting planet stations-retrograde on a sensitive degree (or planet). If this happens, the outer planet has been hovering over the natal degree for a few weeks prior to the station, and has been creeping forward at a decreasing rate. This has the effect of gradually loosening both one's conscious and unconscious ties to the principles of the affected planet or point. Most frequently there is no 'surprise', but instead a deep-seated angst—an unfocused, undifferentiated sense of disorder regarding one's ingrained responses and habits surrounding the planet or point being 'sat upon' by the stationing planet. A deep feeling of unresolved conflict begins to surface, but with no avenue for analysis because the experience is too new. However, other transits and progressions will help to identify how to contain the free-floating anxiety and, also, the knowledge of the fact that it begins a *process* often assuages one's fear. The station period is frequently exhausting because the internal homeostatic principle tries vainly to activate itself and resist change; the exhaustion can precipitate the subsequent depression of the senses and emotions often associated with this stationary transit. These feelings

of depletion are exacerbated by the fact that the stationing planet will spend almost two months hovering around that degree point.

2. The subsequent retrograde cycle, lasting between eight and nine months. Once the stationing planet 'backs off' from the sensitive degree, a sense of relief often overwhelms the individual experiencing this transit. The instinctual response is to forget it happened, being thankful it is 'over'. During this phase it is possible, but inadvisable, to suppress the anxiety that the original contact initiated. This is the rest period during which much work might be done towards sorting out and making conscious that which desires to make itself known. It is a most fruitful time, as the natural cycle allows for absorption and assimilation of new information over a long period. This is a good time to both be involved in and observe one's process and reactions to old patterns, while maintaining a conscious attitude about changes which will inevitably occur over the next year or so.

3. The opposition of the transiting Sun to the transiting retrograde planet. This always occurs mid-way through the retrogression cycle, and may illuminate that week or two with realizations, critical information and hectic re-grouping of energy, time and resources apparently 'lost' during the station-retrograde. Though it is a subtle phase in the cycle, it can be used for breaking up old patterns and reclaiming power that was diminished while one's system unconsciously applied its energy to maintaining the status quo.

4. The direct-motion transit of the outer planet back over the degree at which it stationed. The planet will pass right over the degree at which it stationed, breaking up a long-standing pattern. Though usually not as discordant as the initial 'hit', there is often a review of the anxiety attacks, and a dread that 'it is starting all over again'. That this is rarely true in the extreme is of some comfort, but the individual experiencing this second pass may be thrown back to reprocess any unfinished business. This is because a great deal of what it was necessary to bring to consciousness remained unformed, only slowly gathering shape during the retrogression period. Not infrequently a revisitation of what the initial contact brought is conducted in an entirely different state of mind. The 'themes' will be similar, that is, a thread of the original experience is still attached to the second pass, but usually now with a sense of perspective, control and completion.

5. The outer planet stations-direct within orb (usually 1°) of the sensitive degree approximately eighteen months after it stationed-retrograde at the first contact (nine months or so after stage 4). This stage delivers any unfinished material from the entire one-and-a-half year cycle. By this time the slow, undulating process has done its work, but it remains to be seen how effective the process has been, and indeed what exactly went on during the transition. As a general rule of thumb, it really takes about a year to incorporate and embody such major life-transformations as the retrogression of an outer planet. It may be years before one is truly cognizant of its processes. Suffice it to say that it will happen once only, and should ideally be made the best of by making as much conscious change as is possible.

PARADIGM B

When a transiting retrograde planet passes over a natal degree, stations retrograde and transits that degree again while retrograde and then a third time after it turns direct.

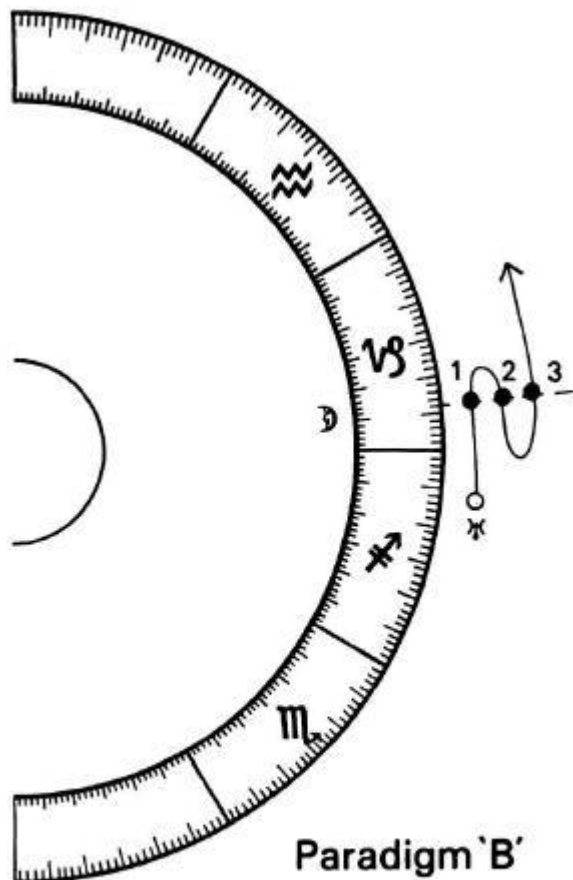
Example:

1. Uranus is moving direct at $6^{\circ} 06'$ Capricorn, 7 January 1990.
2. Uranus stations-retrograde at $9^{\circ} 35'$ Capricorn, 13 April 1990. (Sun opposite Uranus at $7^{\circ} 31'$ Cancer-Capricorn, 30 June.)
3. Uranus retrograde at $6^{\circ} 06'$ Capricorn, the arbitrary degree above.
4. Uranus stations-direct at $5^{\circ} 36'$ Capricorn, 14 September 1990.
5. Uranus is moving direct at $6^{\circ} 06'$ Capricorn, 19 October 1990.

In this example, if one's Moon is $6^{\circ} 06'$ Capricorn, one would have experienced an initial transit of Uranus direct over one's Moon; secondly, a transit of Uranus retrograde back over one's Moon; then a third, and final, transit over one's Moon when Uranus was moving direct to pass beyond this point. This is *three* exact contacts to the Moon. In this particular pattern, Uranus will not transit the sixth degree of Capricorn again—at least, not for another eighty-four years!

When the initial contact is made by the outer planet in direct motion and then passed over again by retrogression, to be transited

finally in direct motion, there is a subtly different process being engendered in each case. The sequence is as follows.



1. Direct pass (7 January 1990)
2. Retrograde (10 August 1990)
3. Direct again (19 October 1990)

Fig. 20.3 Paradigm B

1. First contact (the transiting planet makes contact with the degree while moving direct). An awakening or rumbling of unconscious activity coincides with a spectrum of possible feelings—from mild concern to acute anxiety. An inner alarm indicates that the system is being interfered with and change is imminent. This is the 'conception' stage, and although there is a vague awareness that something has happened, it is an embryonic unknown, and largely a mystery. Often a person falls into a state of self-examination and withdrawal from the usual modes of activity in order to explore interior experiences. Frequently the sensations are undifferentiated and free-floating, difficult to localize and therefore often projected. The transit can coincide with an unexpected event, and frequently does, as if it might take something external to provoke an interior journey. The

transiting planet moves on in degree, giving a false sense of completion or, at the very least, a premature expectation of having 'changed'.

2. Second contact (while the planet is transiting retrograde). At this time the ruminations over the last couple of months during the retrogression of the planet come to consciousness. More likely than not, one becomes consciously aware of what in fact it is that has been in development since the first contact. It is not resolution time, as this is part of the 'gestation' phase and the maturity of the process is yet to come. It is not always associated with an event, but if so, it is rarely of the same type as that engendered by the first contact. However, there is usually a motif involved, and with a little effort and connections with symbolic themes, we are enlightened about what it is that needs to be uncovered and brought to the surface. Any sequence of events coinciding with the transits may seem quite unrelated or random until the conclusion of the cycle is reached and an overall perspective gained.

3. The opposition of the transiting Sun to the transiting retrograde planet. This occurs mid-cycle and has a powerful illuminating effect. That which is in development often becomes manifestly active, either psychologically and intellectually, or by experiencing the inner drama in the environment through events, circumstances and happenings through other people.

4. Final passage (after the transiting retrograde planet has turned direct, moving past the natal degree). This contact is even less likely to be associated with an event. It is the 'birth' of that which has been in development for the last nine-month period. Although we might be consciously aware of what the cycle has produced by this last passage, still to come is the digesting of the new knowledge before it becomes fully integrated. It is useful to 'work' the unconscious in an active way, through association and self-analysis of thoughts, images, dreams and fantasies during all phases of the cycles, remaining acutely conscious of behaviour patterns, seeing if they are relevant to current needs. There is more likelihood of a release from an old complex if effort is applied. Most people have described this last phase as a liberation from an old tyrant, usually an inner tyrant fashioned out of archaic material moulded in the shape of a parent or parental values.

As distinct from direct transits, which contact a natal degree and pass on, retrograde transits operate on a deeper, less conscious level. The retrograde transit is subtle and indirect, often resulting in delayed responses, which will crystallize at the direction of the planet, and manifest when it passes back over the natal degree in question. During the 'rest period', there is often a vague feeling of unease but with no acute responses or reactions; things are implicated rather than explicated, and a feeling that something is lurking permeates all aspects of life.

The motion of backtracking an already contacted degree unravels the material that was jolted free. Deep, embryonic emotions are unlocked and left to drift, impressing their tone indiscriminately on all features of life. The loosened material permeates the entire Self and is absorbed subliminally at first. The changes which manifest later first take place internally, in secret.

During the retrograde passage, the potential for transformation is internalized, insinuating itself into all facets of one's being, becoming organic. One's ego becomes defenceless, permeable, while boundaries drop, or at least blur. The grip of the ego weakens and becomes available to alternatives, opposites even. Extreme polarities begin to constellate, resulting in an interior split and creating tension which still remains free-floating and amorphous. The split eventually surfaces in the form of alternatives, decisions and crossroads. A strong feeling of fatedness normally accompanies the period around the Sun opposition to the retrograde planet (see [chapter 16](#) for delineation of the oppositions through the house axes). The ego becomes spongy, absorbing increasing amounts of 'new' energy from the unconscious, rendering it incapable of relating to the environment in its accustomed way.

Retrogression is a liminal journey, a marginal existence, planmaking becomes impossible, everything is contingent and provisional.

The ego is at the mercy of the Self, which acts as a Hermetic guide through the passage from the known place to the unknown destination. There is a deeply instinctual compulsion for the potential of the yet un-lived future to emerge from the consciously known and clung-to reality of the past. The incubation period of retrogression has its own intrinsic pattern, largely mysterious to the conscious mind. This is what causes the anxiety, depression and struggle during long-term transits.

The real work is done during the retrograde phase, and the implementation of new skills, perceptions and knowledge and the subsequent experimental phase of life begins at the direction. Because the outer planets bring to the personal experience incomprehensible and unfathomable possibilities, one feels like an animal in the woods, stalked by an unknown adversary.

The periphery connects to the centre, and one stretches oneself beyond one's known boundaries to incorporate once-distant experiences and feelings into a core, central philosophy. Superficial tactics cease to function, old pat generalities sound flat and rote solutions do not solve. One grasps at extremes and grows larger at the effort, learning to eliminate superfluities with greater speed.

Crisis-consciousness cannot sustain itself for too long, for the ego then breaks down and ceases to contain the individual. The timing of retrogression seems quite in tune most of the time, though many of us have undergone what feels like, complete ego disintegration and reintegration at critical junctures. Just as one feels that all is lost, the planet stations-direct. The explosion at direction eventually settles, and a regrouping at the final passage of the planet begins as it transits direct.

The station-direct collects the unconscious process as much as possible and expels it, to externalize and manifest what one has been gestating. When it passes back over the degree in the natal chart, it is the end of the most intense change. Gradually, life stabilizes, but with infinitely more appropriate perspectives and irrevocable new direction.

21

TRANSITING URANUS RETROGRADE

All the stream that's roaring by
Came out of a needle's eye;
Things unborn, things that are gone,
From the needle's eye still goad it on.

W. B. Yeats

Uranus transits suddenly disengage us from what have been secure points of reference. Being catapulted into deep space, we are left to explore what at first appears to be alien territory. With each successive direct transit we are increasingly separated from the known, but the subsequent retrograde phase reconnects back to an aspect of ourselves from which we have been cut off and desensitized. The initial transit of Uranus to a natal planet or angle is often shocking, bringing with it acute attacks of anxiety and fear. Uranus is a celestial alarm clock, a rude awakening to the aspects within our nature which have been lying dormant and untried. The successive transits work to dislodge hidden traits from which we have been consciously separated, either from birth or in the natural process of early training.

Since Uranus spends approximately seven years in a sign, its retrograde transit cycles, like the other outer planets, will accumulate a history of activity over the years that it spends transiting one house. Uranus transits frequently coincide with an abrupt separation from something that was once of high personal value. The real danger lurking in Uranus transits is potential alienation from the most fundamental aspects of life and concentration on the ideal.

On some level everyone has a desire to create the perfect system and destroy existing systems. Uranus retrograde transits provoke an internal revolution against systems that no longer support holistic survival. We gradually replace old models with new models as the slow process of the Uranus transit through a house transforms our perspectives; as it receives the annual opposition from the Sun, we slowly undermine the old and replace it with the new. The 'new' model which Uranus initially introduces is virtually impossible to use in its ideal form, and results in the frustration and disillusionment which so frequently accompany Uranus transits.

The intrinsically detached, observational mode of Uranus can result in the transit producing a sensation of being 'outside' of oneself, of being detached from one's core and split in two: experiencing and observing oneself simultaneously. The first contact brings the sudden awareness that all is not 'right' but it is often difficult to discern which part of oneself or one's environment is inappropriate to the future. One begins to cast about, looking outside oneself for the cause of the anxiety or turbulence. Frequently, the anxiety is infused with a sense of anticipation and adventurousness which encourages one to explore new horizons and allows greater disruption to routine. The inner homeostatic mechanism, which unconsciously governs and regulates one's normal behaviour, suddenly wobbles, and what was once considered risky can seem less so. Because of Uranus' affiliation with the 'ideal', the initial transit can suffuse an individual with a sense of dissatisfaction. All that used to be comforting and stable becomes boring and staid, dull and unbearably stultifying. This feeling is not always positive because it may introduce change too radically, involving a whole system or network of interrelated ideas or people, all of whom will unwittingly and indirectly participate in the Uranus person's transformation. Much of the anxiety that accompanies Uranus' initial transit to a planet or point is the result of being unexpectedly introduced to limitless possibility and

unbounded horizons. Suddenly one is no longer contained or bound by convention, but with no alternative pattern to respond to. The lack of containment and inability immediately to re-create security is normally experienced as chaos. However, chaos is the genesis of all things, and the long-term process of the Uranus cycle is gradually to introduce a new perspective. A secondary anxiety that people feel when Uranus begins to work on a natal

pattern is related to the degree to which they are responsible for the lives of others, and the insecurity which they will inadvertently introduce to others in their immediate environment.

Linda

A woman called Linda who came to me for a first-time chart analysis had just experienced Uranus transiting square to her natal Moon at 2° of Aries. She had plunged into a chaotic mass of feeling which she had never before experienced. Her life hitherto had been, on the surface, steady and conventional: she had married at eighteen, her husband was a physician, they had three children in school, both she and her husband were active in their upper-middle-class society and she had always enjoyed her circle of friends and the activities they participated in. Suddenly she saw things which shocked her, and she noticed a degree of superficiality in her relationships that had never been apparent to her before. In her external reality nothing had changed, everyone was behaving quite normally and carrying on just as before, but Linda was plunged into existential despair. She found herself 'watching' everything, noticing the hollowness of conversations, realizing that her associations and friendships were not based on individual needs but on social groupings and activities. She became increasingly distanced from her once familiar surroundings and from her old self.

Linda thought she was falling apart, that something was terribly wrong with her, because in the midst of this psychic uproar she was measuring herself by past standards and other people's behaviour. Her anxiety was exacerbated by the fact that she was acutely aware that it was *her* that was changing while all else remained the same. She could finally admit that her marriage was deeply unsatisfying, but refused to challenge or alter the status quo because its maintenance depended on her. Nothing she could do would assuage the deep fear that life was meaningless and superficial.

Then Uranus stationed, and went retrograde back to square the Moon a second time. By then, Linda had become more accustomed to her increasing awareness, but a residual anxiety remained an undertone to all that she did. She began to make some significant life changes in the course of the retrogression. She enrolled in

postgraduate work at university and entered therapy. Linda recognized the value of her inner experience, but felt that it needed support from a guide to be more effective in creating a stable point from which to execute the changes she anticipated. Her perceptual shift had left her few familiar points of orientation, and having come to the logical conclusion that her experience was largely internal she needed to understand more about what she might have been burying in her subconscious, so she started to engage actively in her process of increasing awareness. She still maintained that she was going to change herself, but not disrupt the family. Her unhappiness increased as her awareness grew.

The third, and final, transit of Uranus to the Moon found Linda resolutely holding together her conventional life, while studying and exploring her own unconscious. Far from being happy with this state of affair she was in fact increasingly discontented and disturbed by her altered awareness. She began to crack under the strain of living two lives. Though in a sense she had always lived two lives she was now aware of both and felt incapable of integrating them. Her husband did not at all understand her, and by this time was quite fed up with the whole self-exploratory journey that Linda had necessarily chosen. She became even more alienated and trapped.

Linda's experience is very typical of the shock of Uranus when it 'hits' the chart of an individual who is enmeshed in a system from which independence is impossible. Her capacity for liberation within the system was limited not because others were really holding her back, but because she perceived them as doing so. Her perceptions had shifted but not the reality. By the third transit her view of her emotional and habitual reality had shifted drastically. Linda had done all the prescribed things one traditionally does when Uranus aspects the Moon: she began to change her routines; she looked more deeply into her emotional needs and began to create a new reality with new people; she attempted to fulfil her own needs while reducing the demands on the outer environment to supply fulfilment; the family moved in the course of the final transit. What else could she do? The one thing she failed to realize was that she could not undergo the transformation without tearing down the structure—the context—in which her life was contained. After considering leaving her marriage, thus breaking apart a system which moved

concentrically outward from herself, she decided to live through the transitional period within her family and see what the unknown future would bring. In doing this she became more happy and productive, and aware that she was in mid-transition and that changes, should they come, could be incorporated.

Uranus makes us conscious of imperfection. This can be shocking when we have lived quite happily with an attitude, a person or a social situation for years and never really felt any discontent or need for change.

Uranus awakens our dissatisfaction with that which is superficial, rote, habitual, or based on sheer animal survival instinct. The élitism of Uranus has the power suddenly to reveal a relationship or lifestyle as being false, pretentious or sordid, whereas before it had been perfectly suitable. The wonder of it is that *it never before appeared to be so*—it is the perception that has shifted rather than the reality. All the time Uranus is to-ing and fro-ing a planet in the natal chart, an individual becomes increasingly astounded at how radically different his or her perceptions have become. How is it that yesterday something was valid and today is not? People undergo real disillusionment with Uranus passages. They experience a distrust in their own beliefs and capacity for discernment—for how could they have good judgement when their whole life has been a lie? Whether or not this is actually true is quite beside the point? that one feels or thinks it is true is what is so amazing. The most important realization for one to come to terms with during the repeated transits of Uranus is: because something has now become redundant does not invalidate everything else, nor does it mean that it was not purposeful and valid before. The sudden clarity and objectivity which is introduced in the initial transit is extreme only because it has not been present before; it is no more 'real' than yesterday's perception. It is, however, more up to date and therefore more appropriate for today. The scorn one heaps on one's past embarrassing affiliations and feelings is often outrageously disproportionate to the reality of the situation. A balance is eventually struck, but the polarities one experiences in the meantime are extreme. Ouranos' disgust at his own offspring, the monsters that he suppressed in Gaia's womb because of their undignified and ugly

appearance, lies at the foundation of the sudden rejection of the past. The past becomes sordid, ugly, undeveloped and stupid. We wonder how we could have been such fools not to have seen the base, unevolved aspects of our own and others' natures. One must take care not to dis-identify with one's own monsters or one's own instinctual nature. To be suddenly appalled at ordinary life and be transported into the world of the higher mind can produce depression and existential despair at the futility of attempting perfection.

It is difficult under a Uranus transit to come to terms with one's boring self. One tends to look out for excitement and for what removes one from the fundamentals of life. Yet I have seen the three-times transit of Uranus produce some shocking changes in individuals for the length of time of the transit, and then seen them return to precisely where they were in the beginning. This happens primarily because changes were instigated too rapidly, with little grounding and no practical measures taken. It is possible for an individual to go on an eighteen-month experimental spree only to decide that the change isn't worth it. People who have done this—moved experimentally in a new direction—and found it too rarefied and remote from their basic security needs, have not failed. Their perception of the world remains altered and more acute, but they have chosen to go back to the old habits, resigned perhaps to a life which does not include that type of change. They have nevertheless been deepened by their experience.

Uranus attacks the most tightly wound aspects of our inner self, the parts of us which are tensely organized around some ideal or principle. Be assured that what you once 'would *never* do' will be offered as an option during the repeated transits of Uranus, if not on the first transit then during the subsequent two. The intent of repeated transits is that you might never forget what you learned, and just in case you thought you got it the first time, it comes back in a new form, sometimes cleverly disguised, but with the identical message.

The repeated transits allow for a gradual assimilation of new ideals. In the retrograde times, the process of incorporation is subtle but effective. Usually, once the intensity of the initial 'hit' wears off, one becomes accustomed to the higher frequency of one's energy and finds outlets for it. The anxious alert internalizes, goes

underground for unconscious processing and loosens more tightly bound characteristics, bringing them to the surface at the second passage. If the second pass occurs during the retrograde cycle a new seed idea is planted, which matures to become comfortably integrated by the time the degree is finally transited when Uranus is direct. Very frequently the events or inner experiences that one has during the retrograde transit are not fully developed until well after the degree is completely cleared.

Uranus shatters concentrated pockets of energy, fragmenting one's energy. People often worry about their capacity to focus and concentrate under a long Uranus cycle—it becomes difficult to be consistent or stable.

The high degree of experimentation creates a constant torrent of alternatives, as possible marvels flow through one's mind and enter one's reality. The transit signals a time in one's life when it is possible to achieve great heights of experience and manifest the brilliant, exciting aspect of one's nature. The danger that lurks in the depths of the transit has to do with Ouranos' permanent castration and separation from Gaia: the real, fundamental, practical and contained side of one's life may not be able to remain connected to the ideal, exalted and élitist urges of Uranus' transit.

In the retrograde phase, the tension and anxiety which was precipitated by the first contact direct begins to abate and internalize. The function of loosening is still manifest but deeply interior, in the recesses of the unconscious. Rather than being the 'all clear', this is the time in which the best work might be done. Should a brilliant idea come to one under the initial transit, then the embodiment of that fantasy or imaginal creation must be tested during the retrograde period. For example, Otis, a scientific writer, experienced Uranus transit his Mercury in Scorpio three times and found he absorbed a tremendous amount of knowledge and generated more original ideas in the two-year time of the transit than he can ever recall. He is still drawing (fifteen years later) on that pool of information and developing concepts fully which he was only able to make in note form at the time. He remarked that he was amazed at the source of inspiration which was available to him at that time, in contrast to the amount of pure effort and work required since then to give shape and form to his concepts.

We might find we get in touch with our most innovative and creative side, but if there is no grounding for it and we cannot solidify it, the anxiety and frustration outweigh the potential for realizing that spark of genius. The disembodied feature of Uranus is the disconcerting side of what is a tremendously adventurous period in one's life. One's consciousness is split off from the mundane, which is where one normally receives signals of difficulty from. Uranus-Moon contacts are the most unsettling because they disrupt the emotional container and deliver one abruptly from the womb of one's security, forced out to confront the world. Uranus-Mercury contacts are the most sympathetic in their interaction, often resulting in abbreviated concentration, scattered thoughts and radical ideas which, if embodied, bring good results. Uranus-Venus shatters one's self-contained value system, and relationships often take on an ideal tone. One woman who had Uranus transit her Jupiter-Venus conjunction married under the initial transit. The marriage lasted seven years. She had married the ideal of what the man could become, rather than what he was. She was blind to the deceptions which he openly engaged in and only saw what 'might be'. She herself continued to become increasingly successful in her own work, winning a prestigious award at the second pass of Uranus to her Venus-Jupiter which made her reputation in public relations. Her work and effort in the marriage never came to anything solid, eventually dying. Uranus only sponsors that which, in the end, will be given form. It is particularly important, therefore, to use the retrograde phase of Uranus' transit to test what has lasting value and what is merely potential with no containment. The underground labour involves cutting free entrenched potential and working it loose, allowing it to float to the surface for testing in the conscious realm. The myriad opportunities that enter the zone of possibility can only be seized and used by a strong, self-contained ego. Uranus threatens ego containment because one must explore unknown territory and potential within oneself at the risk of failure.

Uranus shatters smug ideals which will not withstand true, objective clarity. Its repeated contacts bring increasing awareness of where one has been complacent and somnolent. It can constellate several disparate problems and bring them together with a logic only recognizable when one sees with Uranian eyes. Oddly enough, Uranus' capacity to fragment a complex is mirrored by its ability to collect and compartmentalize issues which have been apparently unrelated. In the case of a woman called Magda, for instance, it was not readily apparent to her that her parents' exclusive loving and romantic relationship with each other was in any way connected to her own unhappy and unsatisfying marriage.

Magda

Magda discovered a tremendous anger deep within herself when Uranus transited back and forth three times over her IC at 28° Sagittarius. Uranus then moved on within the year to begin a triple conjunction over the next eighteen months conjunct her Venus-Mars at 6° Capricorn in the fourth house; and eighteen months after that began a cycle of conjunction over her Sun at 12° Capricorn, a sequence which was to last another eighteen months. In all, the transits of Uranus over personal points in her horoscope numbered twelve in four years, all contacting the IC, Venus, Mars and the Sun.

That Magda became accustomed to being left out of the parental loving pair was reflected in her unconscious willingness to be excluded from love within her own marriage. When Uranus first transited the

IC in 1988 she experienced unsettling nightmares about monsters lurking in her cellar. After each of these dream sequences she would have to get up and read for an hour or so. The monsters gradually took on a shape recognizable as her parents. In the same year as the dreams occurred, Magda married. She could not understand why her husband had become cold and sexually unaffectionate within a matter of months after their marriage, when the entire two-year courtship had been sexually passionate, adventurous and deeply satisfying.

Also in that period, she discovered that her mother had tried to abort her, without her father's knowledge, because her mother was afraid that an infant would interfere with her marriage and the romance of their lifestyle. Magda was unable to connect the embryonic trauma of pre-conscious life with the pain now obvious in her own marriage. When she came for a consultation, Uranus had just stationed-retrograde within a degree of her Mars-Venus conjunction, and she had just discovered that her husband had become incapable of seeing her as a 'sex-object', that she had become a mother or sister figure to him. This is clearly part of the husband's issue, but it is dramatically portrayed in Magda's chart. She became severely depressed, and because of the depression sought counselling.

A few months later I saw Magda again, when Uranus made its final pass over Mars and Venus in the autumn of 1990. In the intervening time, she had realized that deep in her core she had virtually annihilated her capacity for intimacy, which was projected on to her husband. What she had not told me in the initial session was that she herself had frozen over very shortly after her marriage and felt unclean about her hitherto healthy sexuality. Some seed of taint had been planted, which was liberated by Uranus' transits. The devouring parents, in the form of dream monsters, signalled a deep rage and fear of her primal instincts. Her marriage became the container for the emergence of the fear, but also the mirror of her own self-disgust. Magda's relationship with her husband has improved tremendously, and having seen them both it appears that their initial bond is restored—both had had to face some interior demons. Uranus-Mars contacts signal the release of raw libido, and can provoke an assembly of monsters clawing for air.

Uranus' subsequent transit of Magda's Sun (marking the end of the Uranus transit cycle) initially brought about a rebellion against her parents, who still remain happily married, and also a new unity within her own marriage on an infinitely more real and honest level. The Uranus transits loosened her grip on the Mars-Venus fantasy that happiness 'happens to others' in marriage, and made her aware that it could happen to her.

One's capacity to organize one's life in the domain of the planet Uranus has been scouring is generally much improved once Uranus has completed its repeated action—if only by contrast to the apparent disorganization of the nine or ten months during which Uranus was affecting a planet. The faculty for objective observation and clear thinking returns once the full transit is completed; the initial sense of disorganization departs, to be replaced by a better sense of discrimination and discernment. It is difficult to lose oneself in illusory or deceptive fantasy when the integration process is complete and Uranus moves away from the planet it has been transiting back and forth. One becomes accustomed to witnessing one's own experience and remains to that degree quite objective and less unrealistic.

Because of this prolonged transit, the successive oppositions of the Sun to Uranus will mark annual turning-points in what is really a long-term revolutionary process. If the actual opposition point makes an exact aspect to a natal planet, then the separation is acute and an aura of finality surrounds the situation. As with all the outer planets, it takes about a year for the process engendered by the transit to be completely assimilated.

22

TRANSITING NEPTUNE RETROGRADE

Neptune's lengthy sojourn in a house will produce a series of Sun-Neptune oppositions over the years, their number depending on the size of the house. Because it spends fourteen years in each sign, a Neptune transit could last many more than fourteen years in a large house. Its effects are less shocking than its relatives, Uranus or Pluto, but no less effective in the long term. The underlying intent of Neptune retrograde is gently to dissolve the boundaries of the known universe and submerge the planets it contacts into a prenatal condition. Each inversion period of Neptune smoothly dislodges one from a previously certain attitude or perception, immersing in a primordial sea any planetary principle it contacts in its course.

Fantasies of a perfect world are created and gradually undone as Neptune transits a house—the retrograde cycles perform the untethering ritual. The annual Sun-Neptune opposition marks the period in which the greatest losses of ego control and boundaries occur. Whether or not it becomes immediately apparent (and it

is a feature of Neptune that it should *not*), there is a disintegration of worldly form. With each successive cycle, illusions are swept away and new ones are instated. The solid world of what appears to be reality shifts and changes shape, enriching one with new and more elaborate images of what the world is. The dissolution and resolution cycles are part of the natural phenomenon of the ever-evolving perceptions that we have of life itself, but the erosion of boundaries between ourselves and our world can be frightening and disorienting, especially when the planet repeatedly contacts personal points in long-term transits.

The trines and sextiles from retrograde Neptune add a feeling of authenticity to one's fantasy-world, and although capturing the idea, relationship or project one has in mind during a Neptune contact is often elusive, the trine or sextile supports a long-range creative turning-point. It might be frustrating, and difficult to articulate one's feelings or ideas in the year or years of Neptune, but there is a true infusion of creative originality taking place on an interior plane. On the negative side of trines and sextiles, one needs to be more than usually conscious of establishing any patterns of self-delusion in the course of the transit. Its repeated emphasis over a planet or angle drives habits deeper and deeper into one's being, and addiction to emotional, ideological or spiritual fantasies can become entrenched. One can imagine oneself to be omnipotent and omniscient.

Neptune's influence in direct motion, as it approaches and contacts a natal planet, is subtle and hypnotic, enchanting one into feeling or thinking in new ways. When it recedes and retrogresses, its influence is erosive and dissipative, breaking down internal barriers. We have boundaries not only between ourselves and the world, but also between various aspects of our own nature—serving to separate those parts of ourselves which we do not wish to experience from those which we consciously claim. Neptune surrounds its victims (any planet it is transiting) with an aura of the exotic, romantic and elusive which is why it is so frequently associated with deception and illusion. Not all of Neptune's influence is sinister and hallucinatory, though it does heighten one's sense of the divine-in-all. This is largely because Neptune exemplifies the unity-in-all that is experienced in the womb, the embryonic, pre-conscious state of life when we are one with the source of life and nurture.

Neptune retrograde invites one to return to the womb state to incubate and eventually be reborn. Its seductive characteristics can colour the most sordid experience with luminous hues which exalt it beyond its reality. Even the most rational individuals will find their perception of reality seriously challenged when Neptune transits a natal planet three or four times over a couple of years. The long span over which the transit occurs gradually reduces the principles and traits of the planet it contacts to an elemental level. The erosion of false values and fantasy goals is a positive result of Neptune's cycles, eventually resulting in a more realistic and practical

attitude towards life. Its repeat over particular degrees through long periods of time reinforces one's new perspectives from several levels, for as Neptune backtracks, all other transits continue to move on so that when the next 'hit' from Neptune occurs, one's perspective has altered completely.

The softening of boundaries creates a condition in which previously hard-edged definitions of oneself undergo a mutation. Ultimately one's ego is softened and becomes less arrogant, assuming a more humble role within the whole of oneself. This has its dark side in that the insecurity and malleability can render one highly susceptible to manipulation and coercion. Inevitably, the ego may not be the source of true wisdom during a Neptune transit because primarily Neptune serves the deeper Self, the core essence of our nature which ultimately 'knows' what is meant to be born.

Projection upon or fusion with the environment are the most common psychological side effects of the Neptune transit—where we see others or a specific other as an idealized individual, projecting on him or her our own source of divinity. In the case of fusion, we can find ourselves unduly incorporated into someone else's fantasy, falling into it and sharing the experience of another as if it were our own, completely without regard for our own motives and needs. In the course of a Neptune transit it is common to require another person as a mirror of oneself. Since the vast majority of individuals do not slip into psychosis or become completely subsumed by the unconscious under a Neptune transit, it is hardly the precursor to madness, but there is a peripheral insanity to all that happens. Unlike Uranus, where we are ripped from the mainstays of life, or Pluto, where we are plunged into the nether regions of the unconscious, Neptune gently rubs away the edges and life is perceived through a soft-focus lens.

The need for another person, or for a triangular situation, seems to be because Neptune undermines the ability to trust one's own judgement. One becomes helpless, infantile and in need of support from a mother figure, who often comes in the form of a lover, analyst, adviser—anyone who will save one from the

harshness of the world. Neptune recalls the Edenic state of being, where two hearts beat as one, and the longing to return to that state can result in some fairly self-destructive experiences. One can become temporarily blinded as Neptune approaches a natal planet, and all conscious, progressive action ceases while an inversion of the planet's principles begins. When the retrograde cycle starts there is a feeling of suspension and paralysis, and normally decisive and controlled people can become flaccid and ambivalent, allowing their judgement to be influenced by others whom they perceive to be more clear. The irony lies in the fact that one's perceptions of others are likely to be just as distorted as one's perceptions of oneself. Ultimately, the long-term intent of a triple contact from Neptune is to expand one's perceptions, to move them beyond the consensus reality into dimensions of the supernatural which are just as real, though non-tangible. Neptunian realities are indiscriminate, with everything blended into a numinous sphere, which is why it so often provokes exploration of spiritual, psychic and phenomenological experiences. Finding religion or spiritual solace under Neptune is frequently disappointing in the end, not because of the religion but because of the supernatural powers attributed to it while in the embrace of Neptune. This does not mean that true spiritual nourishment is not found under Neptune, but one must find the spiritual strength *within* oneself, rather than being 'saved' *from* oneself.

Relationships can be difficult to form or maintain during the duration of the cycle, primarily because the intent of the Self is towards giving birth to an aspect of itself, rather than fusing with another person, although this is most often the temptation. The function of idealization and sacrifice play strong roles during a Neptune cycle, and one might find oneself giving up a significant portion of personal freedom and integrity, becoming lost in the ideal of the relationship rather than finding oneself. Being swept up by another during a Neptune transit can be a rich source of self-examination, for there is a certain element of narcissism involved.

It is possible to be a temporary channel for divinely inspired information, but it is often very difficult to use the information for self-help. The principle that dissolves the boundaries between the conscious intellectual mind and the unconscious bank of intelligence is the same one that dissipates one's own energy. Neptune enervates and depletes one's store of physical and psychological resources, even while making one receptive to inspirational material. The powerful empathy between oneself and those who are helpless is a mirror of one's own inner helplessness—one really hopes in the process of helping others to help oneself. Striking a balance, at least consciously acknowledging the natural symbiosis between helping and being helped, not only staves off an inflated self-image of being a saviour but also conserves much-needed personal energy.

The various stages of Neptune's transit are gradual processes of dissolution, suspension and resolution. A 'one-off', that is, a transit which passes by without repeating itself in retrogression, is often a flurry of profound self-illusion, from which one awakens with amazement at what one experienced during the months of influence. When the transit is repeated three or four times, greater significance is attached to the transit and its effects are towards a total transformation of the creative principle.

The first contact loosens one's grip on reality, disengaging one from a sense of conviction about one's life or world. In contrast to Uranus or Pluto, Neptune has no opinion. It has moods, feelings, sensations, images, fantasies, nuances, hints and visions. It is redolent with insinuation. Neptune initially reduces all to an embryonic state in which mysterious goings-on are concealed from consciousness. Often an angst permeates one's consciousness, a free-floating sensation of worry with no locus, and one casts about hoping to find a reason. One becomes suspicious—indeed, the suspicions can be well-founded, though remaining elusive at first. One woman who had Neptune station-retrograde on her natal Mercury in Sagittarius in the second house had a vague feeling that 'something' was terribly wrong. Ten months later, when Neptune transited Mercury again by direct motion, it transpired that her husband had taken out a second mortgage on their home at the time of her anxiety (and first transit of Neptune) without her knowledge, jeopardizing their retirement security. She 'felt' the deception of the second house, but there was no tangible proof until the second transit.

In the initial stages of a Neptune contact it is essential to maintain a grip on what the perceived reality is—should there be hints of subterfuge they are frequently borne out. Obviously, paranoia—itself only a heightened, dark, state of awareness—can develop during a Neptune transit, and can only be dispelled by strong doses of truth and reality. One can suspect one is paranoid and in fact not be. It is essential to determine when one is truly intuiting and when

one is merely becoming suspicious or jumpy. However, one's valuable inner voice is often much stronger and more assertive during the first Neptune contact and is ultimately far more correct than the trickster conscious mind.

When Neptune undergoes the retrograde phase and repeats a transit in reverse, the illusory feeling subsides, to be replaced instead with a new way of perceiving reality. One's mind opens to receive, but not process, information. The *solutio* occurs in the retrograde period. The ego relaxes and becomes pliable, and is easily permeated with new sensory perceptions, swelling to include previously inconceivable alternatives. Neptune gradually reduces the ego state to an id state—that is, from 'I am' to 'it is'. It is a passive time, one which continues to diminish boundaries between the real and the merely apparent. One young Capricorn woman, with 5° of Capricorn rising, spent her final two years of schooling with Neptune transiting and retrogressing her ascendant. She did well academically and developed her artistic skills at that time, but said that the entire period was a fog. As someone with Capricorn rising she instinctively needed to know what her image was but she spent the Neptune period completely without a sense of personal identity, drifting in and out of various personae and questionable groups of contemporaries. Fortunately her innate sense of values prevailed and she survived the drug-experimentation and peer pressure with few setbacks, but she was highly vulnerable during the entire sequence.

All transits of the outer planets may need manifestation on the rational plane through direct contact with people or events that are directly related to the transiting planet. We attract that which we are internally or psychically experiencing. With Neptune, we gather around us other Neptunians, an assembly of slippery, elusive, mysterious, intangible people, and their world becomes ours for a time. The bleeding into others expands our experiential realm; we are genuinely in others' shoes and become implicated in all their patterns. We become increasingly aware of the all-in-one and though our experiences seem to be coming from the environment they are really mirrors of an internal aspect of our own nature, one not before brought to consciousness.

It is entirely possible to experience one's 'not-self' under the transit of Neptune. The mystery of the symbiotic relationship unravels when we explore some of the alternative realms under a Neptune transit. The planet that Neptune contacts discontinues ego support, ceasing to be integrally involved in the gestalt of the rest of the horoscope. It is as if it cuts itself adrift, to explore vague, misty realms, abdicating responsibility for the duration of the transit. One can feel completely at the mercy of others, caught up in their realm rather than one's own. Symbiosis is inherent in all relationships, and a healthy sharing and merging of ideas, goals, activities and, eventually, personalities, is always desirable. The sharing is consciously recognized and individuality is thus maintained. However, when one undergoes the dissolve of Neptune, one can lose that sense of separateness and individuality and believe oneself an extension of, or even the same as, another. Hence the seductive folie à deux.

A woman I counselled had Mars in Libra. Neptune formed a square to it and she found herself involved in a love triangle. Neptune stationed and turned retrograde—she broke it off. Neptune re-transited Mars while retrograde—she re-entered the relationship, under what she thought were 'new' circumstances. Then, Neptune stationed, turned direct and transited Mars, and the relationship dissolved again, upon which time she 'saw' how deceived she had been. During the entire eighteen months of the relationship she was trying to help the other man sort out his problems. Who had the problem?

By the time Neptune makes the last pass to a natal planet, one's entire reality is likely to have shifted to include philosophies and beliefs which were foreign to one prior to the transit. Individuals can be returned to their primal state and reborn through the experiences they have during that time. One's view of the world softens and becomes more accepting and often much more peaceful after Neptune. There seems to be nothing to fight when Neptune untethers the ego; it rarely provokes rage, usually sadness or longing. The kind of anger that Neptune puts us in contact with is global, infantile and undifferentiated. It is virtually impossible to label it and more often than not, it turns inward. Infants do not know why they are hungry or cold or wet, they do not even know that these are the reasons for their discomfort. If they were to think, they would think everything was wrong. They are angry with everything when one thing is wrong—they are not distinct from the world. When baby is fed, dry and comfortable, the world is a perfect sphere. When we have a Neptune transit, we are not distinct from the world and also can experience global pain as well as global bliss.

Heather

In February 1987, when Neptune first formed a square to Heather's 7° of Libra Moon, which is conjunct Neptune (11°) in her natal chart, she began to undergo a series of events which would eventually lead her to

a totally new environment over a three-year period. The first contact coincided with her younger son leaving home for university, while at the same time her elder daughter travelled abroad. Both her children grew up and left home within two months of each other. Although Heather had very satisfying work as a psychologist and writer, she found the 'empty nest syndrome' to be far more powerful than she had anticipated. Her points of reference gradually began to dissolve.

When Neptune transited retrograde back over the natal degree, in June 1987, her brother phoned to tell her their mother had been diagnosed as terminally ill with liver and pancreatic cancer. She had not seen her mother for eight years, having cut her ties with her after a situation involving psychological abuse of her own children. Heather had been violently abused by her acutely alcoholic mother as a child, and the mother had continued well into both her children's adulthood to interfere miserably and constantly in their lives. Heather had to make a decision about seeing her mother again. During the first half of the retrograde cycle she contemplated whether or not to risk her own emotional stability to go to see the dying woman, or to maintain a distance to the end.

Her decision was made in the subsequent two months. On 16 September 1987, Neptune stationed-direct at 5° of Libra. Heather had decided to visit her mother within the month. She went to see her and found a source of love deep within herself that transcended her mother's cruelty to her as a child and young woman. Heather went to see her a second time, and knowing that her mother desperately wished to die at home, in her own surroundings in as

much dignity as possible, she decided after a night of real agony and soul-searching that she herself would commit to doing the homecare. Heather offered to take care of her and see her through to the end, but with one condition: that she be given absolute control. Her mother agreed.

Within the last week of October 1987, Heather transferred herself to her mother's tiny house and began to set up the terminal care. She organized everything. The roles were reversed, as Heather became the 'good mother' and essentially healed her scars and wounds from having been raised by a 'bad mother'. In the course of becoming mother to her own mother, something was touched deep within her own soul. The mother's cancer, her helplessness and subsequent cliché conversion, was the beginning of a complete dissolve of Heather's own Moon-Neptune complex. The mother realized what she had done and experienced true remorse, and in that reunion between mother and daughter Heather was reborn. In the course of the inversion period between October and December, many things were resolved. Heather and her mother did not talk much about the wounds, it was not necessary. Heather went through hell internally, she went into the process of death. At one point, as Heather was giving her her morphine injection, her mother said to her, 'I know what you could do to me, and I wouldn't blame you for it—after all the horrible things I did to you, you now have a choice.' They both knew to what she referred. Heather now held all the power—the power of life and death. Both mother and daughter were healed in that moment. As death crept forward, Neptune began to station and remained hovering for two weeks over the exact square to the degree of Heather's Moon. On 16 December 1987, Neptune stationed-direct at 7° 11' Capricorn—Heather's *exact* lunar degree in Libra—and her mother died at noon that day.

In the subsequent months a healing began to take place. Heather had been cruelly abused by her alcoholic mother all of her life, and agreed to nurse her only because she could finally do something for her and be in absolute control. Heather had always loved her mother passionately, but had been so victimized she finally came to hate her. In the course of the nursing and the healing of both of them Heather was both reduced to an embryo and simultaneously delivered into the world. Heather gave birth to herself. Slowly, all aspects of Heather's emotional and domestic life began to dissolve. She left her marriage in the following months (in April, just as Neptune stationed-retrograde again, at 10° Capricorn), realizing she had repeated her pattern of victimization in it. She found herself completely disengaged from her 'old life' in vague and strange ways. The final transit of Neptune in Capricorn to 7° of Libra occurred in September 1988 and, though she did not know it at the time, surrendered all influence over her life. The following year, in September, she left her home country and moved abroad, to start completely anew. In the course of the Neptune transit Heather virtually relived her life, seeing its illusory qualities and becoming ultimately more realistic and practical thereafter. Unsaid are the levels of pain and sadness which she had to endure all over again in the course of this rebirth.

Although this is a particularly dramatic and authentic illustration, it serves as a paradigm of Neptunian long-range influence. One can truly become unborn, incubate and be born again under Neptune; merging the ego and the soul, dissolving boundaries between that which was, that which is and all that will be, blending all of time into a non-temporal zone in which miracles might occur. The anxiety, pain and longing that move with

Neptune serve as indicators of the degree to which one is attached to the past and invested in maintaining ego control.

We never know what the final outcome of a long-term transiting effect will be. The primary lesson it teaches is to walk with the gods. One's ego is properly diminished and new infusions of life vision become available. The degree to which one wants rebirth is reflected in one's ability or desire to shatter the past, creating a new future.

23

TRANSITING PLUTO RETROGRADE

The descent into Avernus is easy; . . .
but to recall your steps and ascend again to the upper world,
That is the work, this is the task!

Aeneid VI. 176, trans. Allen Mandelbaum

The ultimate test of Pluto transits is to maintain integrity in the face of fateful circumstances which are symbolically related to disintegration, death and renewal. Pluto requires that one descend into the deepest recesses of one's soul, to stand alone and find integrity, value and security in that isolation.

The power of a Pluto transit partly lies in the fact that it is a singular experience; there is no rehearsal, nor is any one Pluto transit over a planet a preparation for a future Pluto transit over another planet. There may be themes, however, carried over from one to another if a stellium is involved, but the actual experience is totally unique. Pluto's transit over a single degree of a sign can occur as many as five times over a period of three years, which in certain degrees can mean at least a five-year time-span before it leaves the orb of influence. Pluto transits often act as an underlying theme for more quickly passing transits or cycles, and are often the 'end result' of a three- or four-year life transition in which there has been a multitude of other major progressions and transit cycles.

The more isolated the natal planet receiving the Pluto transit, the more alien is the experience. For instance, if transiting Pluto conjoins Venus three times over a two-year period, then moves on to conjoin the Sun or Mercury within the next year, the experience of the initial contact will be carried over to the next planet, infusing it

with the previous events and circumstances—in some situations reducing the shock potential and continuing the evolution process. However, if Mars, for example, is sitting off on its own without close aspects with other natal planets, and Pluto aspects it by transit, it would be more difficult to 'connect' the experience with other, previously integrated Pluto transits. In such a situation, where a number of years passes between one Pluto transit and another, or the transit is an isolated incident, the experiences invoked are often more disorienting and apparently disengaged from one's immediate circumstances in life. The Pluto transit might then act as an abrupt separation from the past, often being experienced as the typical Plutonian 'death'. In the case of the isolated transit, Pluto acts as a free agent, disinterring encapsulated or segregated aspects of one's inner nature and bringing them to the fore to be civilized and integrated into the whole of oneself.

Grant

To take more complicated interactions between natal planets, a Pluto transit affecting all of them simultaneously will connect a web of complexes, functioning as both terminator and creator. The long range experience of Pluto's cycle for one man, Grant, involved three planets and the ascendant. Grant, a barrister, had undergone a radical change around his Saturn return at age thirty when he abandoned his carefree travelling lifestyle to enter law school and 'settle down'. Having achieved his ambition of building a law firm, he underwent another major shift at forty-one. His transformation included Pluto's transit of the ascendant in the year previous to its conjunction with natal Jupiter in Scorpio in the first house, which simultaneously sextiled his tenth house Virgo Sun-Venus conjunction. The process was complicated, and engaged the combined characteristics of ascendant Jupiter and the Sun-Venus conjunction in Grant's life, intertwining and strengthening the weave of the planets and houses involved.

On the first contact from Pluto to the exact configuration of the planets (Jupiter sextile to the Sun-Venus conjunction) Grant's friend and law partner (female) suddenly decided to marry and retire early, leaving Grant to reorganize the entire practice. On the second pass, retrograde, his wife became pregnant—a very happy surprise as they had experienced great difficulty with pregnancy since their marriage seven years previously. On the third and final pass, direct, he and his wife had the longed-for child, the law practice was booming and he was offered a position as

magistrate, which he turned down. The events speak for themselves, but the psychological manifestations were much more turbulent and evoked all of Grant's inherent insecurity and fears around independence. The loss of his close friend and legal partner was deeply distressing to Grant, and he suffered anxiety and terror over managing the firm himself. He also began attending Alcoholics Anonymous at the same time, facing his existential loneliness and deep fear of inadequacy, which he had masked by various forms of abuse ever since adolescence. Pluto conjunct natal Jupiter brought his overindulgent years to an abrupt end, while the sextile to Sun and Venus bolstered his courage and worked creatively to allow his ego to incorporate the experience. The changes in the career were instigated with little problem, but the reappraisal of his values and emotional patterns was more extensive and thorough. During the retrograde passage of Pluto, Grant voluntarily sought treatment for his habitual self-destructiveness and found that the secret terrors he harboured about his lack of worth and value were unfounded. From that supreme ordeal, Grant's sense of personal integrity was strengthened and he viewed his wife's subsequent pregnancy as a reward. It might well have been, for birth is also Pluto's domain.

When Pluto made its final transit over the exact degree of natal Jupiter (still contacting the tenth house Venus-Sun) Grant had to search his soul for a life direction. At one time he would have jumped at the offer of a magistracy, but upon reflection and honest evaluation of his interior motives he found deeper value in his personal work as a legal advocate. The initial temptation to assume a judgeship was based on childhood insecurities related to the desire to please others (primarily his mother) and gain applause, rather than on a sincere desire for the position.

Pluto's association with the frustrated, impassioned, but lonely lover is directly related to the god Hades, who had to steal love and, having done so, still had to relinquish the loved one for part of each year. Pluto transits can invoke circumstances in which one becomes aware through experience of everything one ever wanted but can never have. It can bring with it burning passions, unmet desire and thwarted ambition. Ultimately, the ordeal is not meant to break an individual but to strengthen him or her by applying the extreme test of endurance. Within every individual is primal desire—not the sort of differentiated, specific desire that Mars evokes, but a universal, unformed angst. This is why its emergence is so often shocking, resulting in compulsion. Very often this instinctual desire is contained or even repressed, so that its advent results in primitive expression; it has not been sufficiently exposed for a civilizing process to shape it into something attainable.

The uprushing of primal desire is often met by an opposing force which denies its fulfilment, most commonly taking the form of an object such as a person or a goal of some sort. A frequent way of correcting a psychological issue is to project it, thus externalizing it. It is often the only way that one can consciously grapple with a huge internal issue, and it appears to emerge coincidentally with an event or external experience. Most spiritual paths and lessons include this possibility of manifestation in their disciplines: the potential, and sometimes the requisite, image, to lead one to the revelation of 'understanding'. This experience is unique to each individual, but there are some common themes, most frequently love, personal autonomy, sexual desire or power over others. Desire is desire, whether it is for sex, chocolate cake or the rule of nations. The containment of the frustration engendered during the retrograde transit of Pluto is the process which builds the ego and gives the person such a strong sense of personal identity. This new sense of achievement is tested when Pluto transits the point for the final time, cleaning up any unfinished business and eliminating any superfluous or wasted resources.

Obsessive experiences under Pluto transits normally cease after the planet has moved on. Pluto collects and compacts apparently disparate characteristics, binding them up with a theme and in turn presenting the theme in the form of a person or an experience. The projection of one's own compulsions on to a person, or some other cause, is the psyche's way of conveniently externalizing an internal condition, allowing it to be worked on consciously by having it out

in the environment. As with the other outer planets, there is often an aspect of the psyche that 'witnesses' the experience, commenting with amazement to the obsessed part of the mind about the condition. Engaging the 'witness' is a fruitful way to convert the raw desire-power of Pluto into contained and directed power which facilitates the ego rather than diminishing it or subordinating it to compulsive behaviour.

The Greek god Hades was segregated from the land of the living, the upper world of mortals. Possibly the most difficult encounter that we have as mortals is the one with death—not just corporeal death, but death-consciousness. We encounter within ourselves existential isolation; the plain fact that we are essentially alone becomes unavoidable and inescapable under Pluto's influence. Terror of death and the paradoxical longing for the arms of Morpheus, of eternal sleep, are also companions to the Pluto stations and retrograde

cycles. Frequently one does need more sleep—unconsciousness—through which the being may heal itself by nature of its relaxed, unstressed state. The Greeks thought of sleep as ‘Death's little brother’.

Years ago, a friend of mine who had Pluto stationing-direct 1° behind her descendant (it had transited it once, ten months previously, then again in retrograde) stood up in the middle of a field on a lovely day and said in despair, ‘I want to die.’ She neither did die, nor wanted to commit suicide, but was in the throes of a form of death. The emergence of stationary Pluto from the lower hemisphere of the chart (unconscious), from the sixth house (embodiment and manifestation of the soul) and into the seventh house, brought forth all her sensations of existential meaninglessness into the light of day. It remained for her to begin to eliminate all the *pro forma* habits and patterns while facing ultimate personal truths. Some things had to die. Most people do not, in fact, bodily die under Pluto transits—death occurs for various reasons, and most frequently Jupiter is the herald of a natural death—but one is often very conscious of death or themes around death. Certainly death may present itself, or as in Jude's case (see [chapter 24](#)) one walks with death as brother walks with brother. However, it is certain that once Pluto has passed through a house in one's birthchart, or repeatedly transited a planet

or angle, *something* has died. It might be a cherished idea, a comfortable persona or lifestyle, but a significant *past* is born.

It is virtually impossible to sustain a fantasy or live in an illusion during repeated Pluto transits. The first impact can bring with it a situation in which one's reality is severely tested, where one is brought up against one's capacity to control life. It might come in the form of a relationship, a professional goal, a fateful incident or encounter that happens to someone with whom we are intimate, or a dramatic personal loss. In whichever way the transit is manifested, the test remains constant: can one hold up under the sudden removal of all known points of reference, all previously held convictions and the loss of orientation? Fortunately, more often than not, the answer is ‘yes’, but one has no precedents for the unforeseen ordeal or tribulation. The resources that one needs for working through a Pluto sequence are not the resources that one normally employs, and the likelihood is that they have never been fully developed, if at all. These resources are deeply buried, and are only found by profound soul-searching and self-containment. It is very rare to find a shared Pluto experience— one might find support and encouragement in the course of the long-term interior renovation, but one is unlikely to find true understanding from others. People learn compassion for themselves and recognize their fallibility and the mortality of their lives and experiences. The wisdom of this rite of passage is encouraging, for there are many examples of restoration of the soul under Pluto. The descent into the Hades of the soul is easy, as Virgil said the descent into Avernus was, but to find one's way around down there and to return again to the upper world is laden with tricks and danger. Inevitably one is thrown back on one's own resources and forced by circumstances to face the external destruction of what was once a protective coat, but one's restoration in the course of the final passage is liberating and life is richer for having endured and succeeded in the passage. The Herculean tasks assigned during Pluto's inexorable transit are rewarded equally—the degree to which one resolutely faces the interior Self is the degree to which one redeems oneself.

People talk about Pluto transits as a time of truth, in which it becomes impossible not to be honest. This is quite remarkable,

because Pluto and its sign Scorpio are noted for their characteristics of inscrutability and subterranean motivation. Plutonian veracity has little to do with day-to-day honesty, but deals only with essential truths, life-and-death matters, the kind of truth that preserves the integrity of the soul. It is part of the contract with Pluto, it seems, that if one faces oneself willingly and unflinchingly, the reward is an unshakeable integrity. When Pluto undergoes its retrograde cycles and repeats a contact to a natal degree, it dredges deeper and deeper into the recesses of the unconscious, bringing to light the most secluded aspects of one's inner nature. That Pluto can transit the same degree as many as four or five times in two or three years demonstrates its thoroughness. By gradual stages, that which needs to be eliminated undergoes a ritual death. We are alerted to something buried deep in the darkest recesses of the psyche in the initial contact, but should Pluto repeat the transit over a planet or angle there is an increasingly high chance of purging oneself of a psychologically deadly pattern.

When we dread the fact that Pluto might ‘hit’ a natal point several times, we fail to realize a valuable intent underlying its motion. Should all be revealed at a single instant, madness would ensue, so nature's way of coping is by allowing discrete bits of information to surface at particular times. Pluto's dip into the unconscious is highly selective; it brings forth psychic contents that might be reflected in one's current experience. The transit may not coincide with an event but instead manifest in an interior experience of a

‘test’ of faith, will or courage. Conscious recognition of the depths of the nether regions of the soul has long been a ritual in most spiritual paths, and rightfully so. One can rid oneself of habitual, self-destructive emotional and behavioural patterns in the course of two or three transits, but, with Pluto, the reverse can also be true. Because it wears away the edges between the unconscious and the conscious mind, obsessive thoughts, actions and patterns become apparent. The fact that they become apparent is the important signal that there are forces within the psyche that are death-dealing and polluted, and therefore must be expurgated. Something is dying in order to be born.

The process of loosening firmly entrenched and potentially annihilating characteristics in the depths of the psyche is active primarily during the retrograde period. In the ‘rest’ phase of the transit we relax the hold on the repressive function and allow transformation to occur. The reflex from the direct transit, where ‘events’ and psychic tension create high atmosphere, often exploding with anxiety, is the protective time, where one comes to terms with the evident changes. In this time, the ego is spongy and malleable, more influenced by the unconscious than the conscious mind.

The mini-deaths instituted at Pluto's transit prepare one for life's inevitable terminus. The major lesson learned in the course of the long process is how to let go of what one thought was absolutely necessary to one's life. We discover how powerful and how resourceful we can be when faced with not having what we thought we wanted. Pluto as we know stirs up the most fundamental fear, that of death. Instinctual rejection of such a possibility is natural, but it is inevitable that we must face our mortality in various ways and at numerous times, none of which are convenient. Pluto acts as a homoeopathic remedy, a ‘little death’ to prepare us for the big one. Our human capacity for denial is profound, but once Pluto begins to leave its mark, denial becomes less and less an option.

Like quitting a bad habit, there is no ‘good’ time for a Pluto transit, just an appropriate time. When the transit is to be repeated several times, it eventually becomes the liberation from an old, gripping compulsion which has paralysed an aspect of the psyche, preventing its growth and experience. It is best to open the door willingly and with some respect for one's inner intelligence. Attempting to keep a hammerlock on an outmoded way of existence causes the exhaustion which Pluto is capable of rendering. One's resistance wears down, one's immunity to invasion is depleted and illness can result. The body has not the power of the psyche and is often quicker to buckle under prolonged pressure. The positive maturation of the raw power of Pluto paradoxically results from letting go of a cherished idea, person or goal, not from attempting to force it into submission. Pluto inevitably wins in such a contest, by destroying what possible benefit might have accrued. In the course of letting go, a more specifically appropriate circumstance arises, though often through indirect means.

In the course of resurrecting aspects of one's unseen, immutable nature, a form of exorcism takes place. Traditional exorcism requires

calling up the dead—the tortured, angry souls who pollute the atmosphere—in order to give them a fair hearing. Once done, they rest. A great deal of the inner pain we experience under the repeated onslaught of Pluto has to do with unrealized potential, hidden resources with no avenue for expression or deeply submerged desires which have remained unmet. Our own thwarted soul can find release through passionate obsessions which are often unleashed during the long cycle of Pluto's direct and retrograde motion, but only by realizing them as a vehicle for transmutation. It is a form of exorcism to acknowledge these passions consciously, for though they arrest growth temporarily, the struggle can act as a purification ritual. Whatever the events are that are associated with the Pluto transit, they will present themselves with a high emotional tone.

Perceiving natal Pluto both as the point of incarnation and excarnation—the point of birth and death—it represents something like the place we were before we were born and the place to which we shall return. That Hades means ‘unseen’, therefore, has special implications for transiting Pluto's retrogression and direction back over a single degree several times, because there is no anticipating what will surface in the end. In the retrograde periods, poisonous aspects of oneself gather together silently and secretly, to emerge for elimination at the direct cycles.

Raphael

Deeply unconscious threads that bind apparently disparate traits can suddenly emerge with incredible relevance. If one finds oneself saying ‘never’, it is often a foreshadowing of the inevitable. A Pluto transit can instigate ‘never’. Raphael had Sun-Pluto in square to a Mars-Jupiter opposition—a fixed T-cross with Sun and Pluto in Leo, Mars in Scorpio and Jupiter in Taurus. He was a very successful business man, with

links all over the world. At one point he said to me that he spent most of his time in a plane. More than being just workable, this life was precisely as Raphael liked it. It supported his family well, it utilized his abundant energy and allowed him to play at his work, and conveniently kept him distanced from emotional encounters. Raphael loved to make deals and money and thrived on the edge. Though the underlying theme was financial, Raphael was not unaware of his spiritual nature, and within his world of traditional business he was also integrally involved in a spiritual community—as a teacher. The one aspect of Raphael's nature that was not evident was any time spent in quiet contemplation or in mindless pursuit.

When Pluto first transited his natal T-cross—conjunct Mars, opposite Jupiter and square his Sun and Mercury—he began to experience rumblings of discontent with his extraverted lifestyle. Nothing serious, just stirrings. The following year when I saw him the rumblings had intensified and he was activating plans for major changes in his lifestyle. His firm lost an important client, but instead of panicking and resisting he recognized it as a potential blessing in disguise. What might have been a financial disaster became an instrument for change. Raphael began to reform the company, cutting back expenses and concentrating on his most valuable resource — people. He also became increasingly aware of the quality of his life, rather than the quantity of money. In some way he began to see them as vaguely connected. Though he had never been selfishly acquisitive, making money had been the prime impetus in his life, but it had suddenly become secondary, even tertiary.

By the third passage, retrograde, Raphael was actively engaged in complete rearrangement of his priorities and lifestyle. The family sold the beautiful country mansion and moved to a smaller home. Raphael halved his company's production and simplified it, streamlining his time so as to spend more of it in contemplative pursuits; he began to work very closely with a friend developing seminars for incorporating the spiritual aspect of life into business. By the time the final transit of Pluto, direct, went over Mars and 'hit' the Sun-Pluto and Jupiter, Raphael had dismembered his many-armed creation and cut it down to a reasonable size. Never, until Pluto first began its slow trek, did Raphael dream he would seek quiet, solitude and earthy pursuits.

One trait common among transiting Pluto 'survivors' is their banked power, not repressed but contained. Natively, Pluto is often the last planet for the ego to contain and mature into, and the most difficult to incorporate when it is transiting. Once grappled with, however, it remains a constant well-spring of resources.

The point at which the annual Sun-Pluto opposition occurs illuminates the struggle. Because it is the midpoint of the entire cycle of Sun and Pluto, it will offer some information about what it is that the ego is resisting and in what area the greatest power is to be earned by honesty. If the opposition period brings power struggles and explosions, they serve to break down the desire to control what cannot be controlled. The strength that arises from the confrontation is one which is slowly incorporated in the final phase of the retrograde cycle in that year.

The opposition period also often requires one to face the inevitable and the inexorable, digging deeply into issues of mortality and immortality. The immutability of the soul might, be of little solace to the person who faces life or death issues in the houses that the opposition falls across, but deep reserves lie there. The resources that one finds within oneself during the course of the oppositions of the Sun and Pluto are true, not adopted or borrowed, for these last are the first to disintegrate under a Pluto transit.

The direct transits of Pluto mark the uprising of deeply submerged feelings, moods and habits. Though it may feel like a descent, it is in fact the ascent of one's unconscious. The subsequent retrograde times mark periods of gradual assimilation of newly discovered resources and adjustment to new psychic terrain. When Pluto moves back over the same degree a third time, direct, the 'ascent to the upper world' requires great strength and courage and the deployment of new skills, paying close attention to one's inner voice.

24

A CASE OF TRANSITING RETROGRADES: JUDE

The following sequence delineates the exact transiting aspects of Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto to Jude's Moon-Neptune opposition and the ascendant. (Progressed Mercury, having turned retrograde by progression at age eleven, stationed-direct in 1981 and passes over the natal Mercury place in 1992.)

December 1982: Saturn enters Scorpio conjunct Neptune opposite Moon, square the ascendant.

(Saturn SR February 1983 at 4° Scorpio.)

April 1983: Saturn makes retrograde pass conjunct Neptune opposite Moon.

(Saturn SD July 1983 at 27° Libra.)

August/September 1983: Saturn direct—last pass over Neptune—Moon square ascendant (making two direct passes and one retrograde).

November 1983: Pluto enters Scorpio conjunct Neptune opposite Moon. Remains there for two months. (Pluto SR February 1983 at 2° Scorpio—virtually remaining in orb through autumn.)

January/February 1984: Neptune enters Capricorn trine Moon sextile Neptune.

March/April 1984: Neptune SR at 1° Capricorn trine Moon sextile Neptune. Remains in orb May/June. (Pluto SD July 1984 at 29° Libra.)

September/October 1984: Pluto direct conjunct Neptune opposite Moon. (Pluto SD September at 28° Sagittarius.)

November/December 1984 to January 1985: Neptune makes direct pass trine Moon sextile Neptune. (Neptune SR April at 3° Capricorn.)

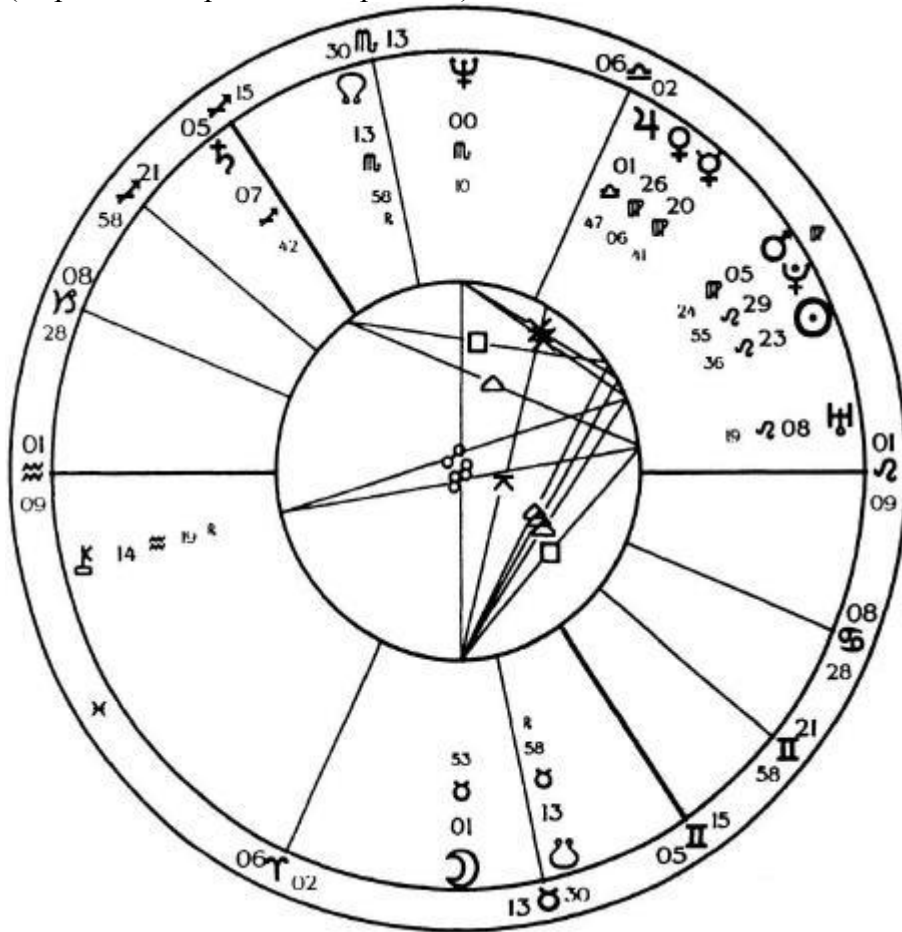


Fig. 24.1 Jude

July/August 1985: Neptune makes retrograde pass trine Moon sextile Neptune. (Neptune SD at 0° 51' Capricorn sextile natal Neptune.)

July 1985: Pluto SD at 1° 55' Scorpio opposite natal Moon 1° 54' Taurus (last exact transit of Pluto).

October/November 1985: Final pass of Neptune direct over the Moon-Neptune degrees.

NB: Technically there have been three hits of Saturn, four hits of Pluto, and six hits of Neptune exactly, but both planets have hovered within a single degree of orb for two years, traversing the same Moon-Neptune opposition without respite for three years.

A breather from July 1985 to October 1986

January 1986: Saturn conjunct MC ('Call to Adventure'). Saturn return, three times, as it retrogresses back over natal Saturn in May, then finally returns in October 1986.

February 1988: Saturn and Uranus enter Capricorn, trine Moon and sextile Neptune, and remain there through April.

April 1988: Uranus SR at 1° Capricorn.

Saturn SR at 2° Capricorn.

They remain in orb through May, retrograde.

(Saturn SD August 1988 at 25° Sagittarius.)

(Uranus SD September 1988 at 27° Sagittarius.)

November 1988: Saturn makes final direct pass trine Moon sextile Neptune.

December 1988: Uranus makes direct pass trine Moon sextile Neptune.

(Uranus SR at 5° Capricorn April 1989.)

August 1989: Uranus makes retrograde pass over Moon-Neptune.

(Uranus SD at 1° 20' Capricorn September 1989.)

October 1989: Uranus makes final pass direct trine Moon sextile Neptune.

NB: There have technically been five passes of Uranus and three of Saturn during this period, but Uranus has hovered within a degree of orb periodically throughout, stationing and retrogressing in the degrees of the Moon-Neptune opposition.

A breather from October 1989 to February 1991.

February 1991: Saturn enters Aquarius forming the first square Moon-Neptune, conjunct ascendant.

(Saturn SR at 6° Aquarius.)

August 1991: Saturn makes retrograde pass square Moon-Neptune conjunct ascendant.

October 1991: Saturn SD exactly square Neptune at 0° 11' Aquarius.

November 1991: Saturn makes last direct pass square Moon-Neptune and transits over the ascendant (making three passes of Saturn over the Moon-Neptune and ascendant: two direct and one retrograde).

NB: There have been more than twenty-three *exact* contacts to Jude's Moon-Neptune and ascendant T-cross over a nine-year period, with only two breaks, one of which involved his Saturn MC and return transit. The fact that the outer planets conspired to station on the degrees and remain there makes it redundant to add up the true number of technically exact transits. Suffice it to say, there has been a lot of action around Jude's configuration. If we were to single out Moon, Neptune and ascendant, we would have the equivalent of sixty-nine transits of Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto to each of the points. Should you want to combine midpoints with this, do, but I assure you, this way lies madness.

TWICE BORN FROM THE TOMB OF THE WOMB

The list of transits has been given in some detail to dramatize the cumulative effect that a series of outer planetary transits can have over a long period of time. As mentioned in [chapter 20](#), when a natal planet or configuration is fated to receive repeated contacts, direct and retrograde, over a long time, it implies that the natal planet/configuration is a tense complex destined to become a pivot in the individual's life, awaiting the pull on the trigger. For the sake of illustrating the power of direct and retrograde transits, we will concentrate almost wholly on Jude's T-cross of Moon, Neptune and ascendant, for that is the focus of his life path.

In 1957 Jude was born Graham to loving parents who sustained their secure marriage until his mother's death in 1985. He always remembers being especially attached to his mother, and when his brother was born Jude was five years old and his progressed Sun was conjunct his natal Pluto. Jude hated his brother's arrival and, since it coincided with his departure to infant school, associated his brother with the loss of his mother, his first shock of leaving the security of his mother's protection and entering the harsh world.

By nature, Jude's unconscious and conscious participation in incarnation has been reluctant. It is particularly interesting in light of the fact that he has no natal retrograde planets (although Saturn is stationary-direct by five days) and only progressed Mercury will turn retrograde and direct in his life. At age eleven Mercury stationed-retrograde, and stationed-direct in 1981, opening the door to the onslaught of repeated transits of all the outer planets the following year. Jude's has been a story of slowly and deliberately emerging from the secondary womb in which he was encapsulated from his first birth. Saturn stationary-direct is loaded with tension and expectancy, awaiting incarnation and embodiment.

Jude's Aquarius ascendant squares his Moon-Neptune opposition, which states that coming into the world, entering his body (ascendant) and all his external points of reference are in direct conflict with a profound desire to remain unborn (Moon opposite Neptune). This condition is amplified by the houses: the second house/eighth house axis is the syzygy between the physical body and the etheric or psychic body, and the Moon is the physical womb and Neptune the psychic womb. His Aquarius ascendant requires that he become a human, a man, a whole person. However, Aquarius requires that his mind and intellect become separated, differentiated and individuated from his soul, and that he become distinct.

I began to work with Jude on 17 November 1989, the day Saturn entered his twelfth house and the fourth anniversary of his mother's death. Since that time, he has undergone the preparatory disintegration of identity and persona as Saturn approached the ascendant, creating a space for new identity symbols to gather and solidify.

Much of Jude's conflict has centred around his emergence from a religious life into the secular life of a Jungian analyst. He has been teetering in the balance now for almost twenty years, but most urgently since

1982. In December of that year he wrote in his journal that although he could not put his finger on the reason, he

was deeply unhappy and felt he was in the wrong place. Let's go back a bit in his life.

Jude was always fascinated by death and used to conduct funeral ceremonies for his teddy bears. Also, he created not an invisible playmate like many young children, but an invisible God who was with him all the time, with whom he communed and related constantly. That invisible God was to forsake him when he began to come to consciousness, but remained to serve him well until that time. In his journal Jude notes: I had grown up in a church tradition which emphasized discipline and authority [Saturn in Sagittarius, tenth house, stationary-direct]. God spoke through the Church, the laws of God were made by the Church. I was in no doubt whatsoever, God was God. He was 'ordered'. For *me*, He was ordered into neatly organized little boxes. Cause and effect was the science I applied to Him. You obeyed God, you were rewarded, you disobeyed and you were punished.

As far back as he can recall, Jude had always had a vocation, and at twenty-one, in January 1979, he entered the Franciscan order of friars, a non-hierarchical Roman Catholic organization (Aquarius rising). By 2 February 1979 he was a postulant, and on 19 July 1979 he became a novice and donned the habit, taking the name of the patron saint of hopeless causes—Jude. (Transiting Saturn had been retrograde at 12° Virgo in February, stationed-direct in May and was back at 12° Virgo direct at his ordination; what was conceived in February was born in July.)

A couple of years passed in which few questions arose between body and soul. Jude had always known of his homosexuality but was never 'tested' until 1982 when he had his first sexual relationship, precipitating the nine-year transition with which we will deal. He began a tortuous journey into the depths of his soul after the Saturn direct and retrograde transits over his Moon-Neptune opposition square the ascendant in 1982–3. Immediately afterwards Pluto entered Scorpio and conjoined the same T-cross at 0°. During the Saturn retrograde period in 1983 he took a break from living at the religious community, and in the autumn of that year he entered a training course for psychoanalysis. (Saturn's final pass over Neptune—ejection from Eden, scales fall from eyes, a form of secondary

birth; opposite the Moon—a forced embodiment of the ego; Pluto transiting over the configuration for the first time—a shocking awakening to the depths of the psyche and bodily needs, and the lack of integration between the two.)

By October 1984 leaving the order had not occurred to Jude, but he was fully involved in analytic work and, as he said, 'Gradually over the three and a half years of analysis that followed, the foundations were certainly loosened and became very rocky indeed.' However, as fate would have it, Jude had to decide at this time whether or not he would take life vows.

On 18 April, with Neptune having just stationed-retrograde at 3° Capricorn, Jude applied for consideration. He was elected by the community in July. (Pluto had been retrograde and stationed-direct on 12 July—within days of his election—and was 1° 55' Scorpio, exactly opposite his 1° 54' Taurus Moon, the final pass of Pluto over the configuration.) On 5 September 1985 Jude made his Life Profession, just six days after Neptune stationed-direct at 0° 51' Capricorn. Having sealed his fate, he now began the descent into the depths of his soul.

The combined Saturn and Pluto transits between 1983 and the summer of 1985 had served to soften the boundaries around Jude's core Self, thus permitting increased transference of contents from his deep unconscious into his intellectual consciousness. He became increasingly and uncomfortably aware of a split between his sacred world and his secular world. This split was not only on the manifest level, but was also a deeply interior schism which would become increasingly polarized over the next few years. What was once a fusion between himself and God was becoming a dichotomy. Eventually this would lead to a communion, or *conjunctio*, but not until more work was done, both unconsciously and consciously.

The sudden death of his mother coincided with Jude's initial peek out of the womb; it preceded his first Saturn MC transit and Saturn return by two months. Her death gave the shock needed to shift Jude from childhood into adulthood. She died on 17 November 1985, as Neptune made its final trine within 4' of arc to his natal Moon. Jude was devastated, taking a full year to incorporate her death and move beyond her.

In June 1987 Jude moved to London to continue his training in

Jungian analysis. This process involved three analytic sessions weekly. At the end of June he went to Zurich, attending the Jung Institute; he was becoming more and more steeped in the symbolism with which his own nature was intrinsically entwined. However, he was now dealing with the conscious manifestation of symbolic life through the intellectual processes of studying and reading material directly related to what

he would soon perceive as his own birth process. This involved the deterioration and dissolution of a once solid structure which contained Jude. For he had been first contained by his personal mother, then by his invisible God, then by the religious community. Now he was being called instead to contain God. His interior world crumbled.

Dream, 10 July 1987

I am in a ruined church which is falling down. I have a room, but it is suspended off the building and the walls and floor are made of plywood. It is all rocky and the floor is going up and down, the walls are not nailed together properly. It is about to collapse and it is a sheer drop below on to cliffs and into the sea. The dream shows Jude was pinioned by fear. Who wouldn't be, facing yet another expulsion from Eden? His knowledge was beginning to wear on him. Coming to terms with reality involved constructing a new god image, or did it mean allowing God to come up from within himself? He was in a precarious position, still attached yet distanced. A sheer drop awaited any move he might make. He wrote in his biographical journal about that time:

The unconscious confirmed my decision. I had to leave. The Church and Religious Life were collapsing for me. Unless I got out of that room, I would fall to destruction . . . I was scared, afraid, I didn't know what to do or where I was to turn . . . I had started on a journey on which there was no turning back. My adventures had begun. The Hero had left the homestead. [Saturn return transiting the tenth house.] The time was for me to 'review' my vocation, but for me it was rather a chance to distance myself from the community and from all it personified in my unconscious.

Jude had said he was aware of the community being directly related to his mother, that it was another breast from which to draw sustenance. It was also a secondary womb within his gestation before giving birth to himself would take place. The urgency with which he experienced these emotions and sensations was by and large premature labour, but, importantly, he was breaking the fused bond between mother, God, the community and his own unborn self. There had been a 'rest' period between Pluto's last transit direct in July 1985 and November's final pass of Neptune, allowing much of the conscious anxiety to internalize and become integrated. He recognized the deep connection between his mother and the Church. The first archetypal symbol which began to appear in my dreams was that of the 'Great Mother', personified as the Church. The Church, which had been a home, a place of refuge, an existence. I had not seen that rather than being the good, feeding, nurturing breast I had thought it was, it was rather a great castrating devouring mother draining me of all life. I was encapsulated by it. I was a child of the Great Mother, a eunuch in the temple, castrated, with my homosexuality to keep me apart from the Religious Life, which further bound me to the Mother.

He then dreamed: 'In a room at the chalet at the London house. Trying to decide whether to make myself a new habit. I then discover that my hands are joined in a sort of straightjacket and I can't get them out.' In this rest period, where resolution of conflict might take place, Jude came to realize that staying too long in the womb has its dangers—it fast becomes a prison-like tomb.

By February 1988 the rest period of integration and incorporation was over, and Saturn and Uranus entered Capricorn, forming a trine to Jude's natal Moon and sextile Neptune. Jude had by then become aware that he would have to face issues which he had hoped would remain submerged—childhood, sexuality, dependency, jealousy—as well as others as yet unforeseen. He began to return to early childhood and to recognize where he had subordinated his own personal needs and feelings to the intense desire to please and be a good son; he had not experienced the vicissitudes of childhood trauma, with his invisible God by his side. His mother had held him up to his younger brother as a shining Divine Child, the Perfect Dying Son, and Jude soon came to realize that he would now have to deal with *psychological* issues, rather than vague, mythologized, *spiritual* issues. He would have to become more embodied, more accountable, and infinitely more real. His Moon-Neptune fusion was now a distinct opposition, having been articulated first by the Saturn and Pluto transits, and gently but no less effectively prodded by Neptune in the trine and sextile, which offered a kind of unseen assistance to leave the womb. Painful, yes, creative, yes and irrevocable. The times in which the inversion of the transits occurred, the retrograde periods, were the times when Jude internalized and embodied the external experiences and conscious questions.

Jude's crisis was manifesting consciously around decisions about leaving the Church and entering fully into the secular world. However, unconsciously, something less mundane and far more alchemical and mystical was occurring. I felt that he need make no such decision, and should allow the process to continue. He was on sabbatical all through the period from 1987 onward, but agonizing over these questions, working them to exhaustion in his conscious life and continuing to dream of death and destruction in his unconscious life.

The trine aspects from Saturn and Uranus to the Moon fostered a support system in which he might rebuild—they still worked to release the tension but moved him towards unity, rather than disparity. There were dreams of caves and tunnels, dark rooms and death, and ‘all those precious things I had clung on to for so many years were not only being challenged but falling apart before my very eyes (or rather eyelids during sleep)’, Jude wrote. Now that his consciousness had emerged somewhat from the protective chamber of Mother and Church, and his personal mother had released him by her death, the wasteland stretched before him, and his intellect struggled with what he saw. However, he was beginning to come to some truths which were not as devastating, though still alien.

There now began a new and very important period in my analysis and in fact my religious beliefs. It is what I shall call in Meister Eckhart's terminology, ‘the birth of God in the Soul’. For all intents and purposes I was in fact pregnant, I had been impregnated with the semen of the Christ who is God.

Now comes the turning-point, the beginning of what will prove to be Jude's second birth—the realization that what had once been

fused, then polarized, was gradually working itself towards communion. The internalization of the once imaginal God, who walked beside the infant Graham, had begun to occur. Now that God was within, a God born of his soul, he could see He was not an Old Testament figure, all rules and no mercy, but a God of liberation, who would set him free from his terror and fear. With a greater sense of internal balance, Jude was in a better situation to contemplate the externals again.

In the real world, Jude began to face something foreign. In February 1988 he met a man with whom he began a relationship. Paradoxically, for the first time he knew loneliness. His invisible God disappeared and real, human, existential loneliness entered in its place. Jude was entering his body and through it experiencing human emotion rather than celestial vibrations. He was now replacing the divine relationship with the human variety, ever so much more tangible but requiring much more central courage.

The transiting Uranus trine to the Moon gently dislodges one's emotional attachments from past habits and ingrained patterns, accumulated and compounded from infancy. The sextile to Neptune, however, is a little more esoteric — the Uranus—Neptune agency says much about the numinous spiritual encounter that one has under trance states or altered states of perception. Reality takes on new forms and one becomes separated (Uranus) from the cosmic womb (Neptune), and therefore more capable of discerning what is truly a religious experience and what is a panacea or anaesthetic for world-pain. Still, however, it is a fact that these transits are repeated five times to the gestalt of Moon-Neptune, and ten if the Moon and Neptune are considered individually—that is, five to the Moon and five to Neptune. That Uranus is retrograde for almost half its cycle simply emphasizes its retrograde significance. It would be virtually impossible for Jude's Moon-Neptune to have remained fused under all of these traversing transits. But there is still more to come. During the period when transiting Venus was retrograde from 6° Aquarius back to 20° Capricorn—December 1989 to February 1990—it passed back over Jude's ascendant and into his twelfth house.

Throughout that entire period he was undergoing another bout of intense interior pressure to ‘do something’ about his vocational commitment to the Franciscan community. He was saying things

like, ‘My persona is separated from my Self; I feel as if I am living two lives; I am not who I appear to be.’

On a superficial level perhaps this was true, but on a deep level he was simply going through an exacerbation of a long-term transit cycle of retrograde and direct outer planets. Uranus made its final passage over the crucial degrees in October 1989, and with no major transit to the Moon-Neptune—ascendant configuration until February 1991, a respite, a time of embodying and integration, was upon him. Though it was on the back burner, he continued to worry about the syzygy of external world image *and* internal spiritual chaos.

Transiting Venus retrograde brought that syzygy to the fore. Jude was required to go to the head of his order, the provincial, to determine whether or not he would extend his sabbatical. The conscious pressure he was applying to himself to make a decision is something we all endure when we are sick to the death of the ‘process’, but it is often the precursor to a breakthrough and thus absolutely necessary to hang on to for a bit longer. With transiting Venus prancing back and forth across his ascendant in early January—first in retrograde, then direct in early March, to reach the degree at which it stationed (6° Aquarius) by 12 March 1990—it struck me that he would be dislodging more vital information from his twelfth house and spilling it into the first house right about the time he had the meeting with the provincial. Having undergone the ritual death and rebirth which Venus retrograde engenders, he decided to extend the sabbatical and to remain in the religious order. He bought more time.

His own motives for *not* leaving the order were still suspect to him, because it was out of fear of disappointing others that he remained. I think partly it was because it was not the end of the process and that the eventual resolution was to occur when Saturn transited his 0° Aquarius ascendant for the last time, in October 1992. The dichotomy between the Moon, which holds the secular/profane, mother, container and fleshly body, and Neptune, which holds the religious/sacred, spirit, god and *corpus mysticum*, the mystical body, could only be resolved through the integration of these apparently disparate realms. That is Saturn's function as an agent of change.

In February 1991 Saturn entered Aquarius and transited Jude's ascendant (the descent into the belly of the whale, the shadow battle) while at the same time it squared his Moon-Neptune. He had formed an excellent new relationship with a man, and was doing well with his struggle, but in December 1990, just prior to the Saturn descent, he suffered another attack of identity loss. Saturn's transit over the ascendant requires that one bring one's deepest inmost Self to the test of reality; the persona of old is outmoded and requires new symbols, actions and relationships with which to identify. Naturally this is accompanied by a loss of old, decayed and invalid persona symbols.

The square to the Moon says, 'Now I must embody myself, contain myself and encase my true Self for a new incubation period (nine months long).' The Saturn square to Neptune is the ejection from Eden, where one stands outside, looking in, knowing it is lost for ever. That we undergo these banishments every seven years speaks of continual small emergences from the psychic womb, as we grow increasingly more mature and less able to sustain fantasies and unreal lives, unless by some anaesthetic method. The Saturn square (which also occurs three times) will require a manifest acknowledgement of Jude's emotional commitments and a stabilization of his home. One can read this on several levels.

All through the period we have been covering, Jude remained a monk, preaching and serving the community at large. His work as a Franciscan involved helping many 'lost causes'. He worked through the Samaritans to help the suicidal, and he began working with men with HIV and AIDS. Jude is very connected to his God-inside. He has a habit he can wear which is a symbol for the Divine Vestment, and in some way this habit, persona though it might be, is a true symbol of the power of God coming through him. As an analyst in training, Jude helps people through the agency of their own unconscious, their interior psyche giving up symbols of which he himself is intimately aware. His own process has led him to realize that his search for God has come full circle.

I found God in myself and it was in myself that I discovered God. A God who is no longer the old God, but a God of liberation and inclusiveness. A God who is God . . . bigger and unexplainable and beyond all reason, but who for the first time in my life I now understand more than I have ever done.

In the spring of 1991, when Saturn was still direct, Jude took sixty people, many with AIDS, to Lourdes. His work carries him into the realms of death and rebirth. Where the little boy, Graham, gave rites to his dying teddy bears, the man, Jude, offers his own soul to those who face the unknown. His Neptune in Scorpio has found a place to salve the mortal wounds of his generation. In this way he personifies his namesake, the patron saint of hopeless causes.

Jude has faced many hopeless causes himself, one of which was the attempt to quicken by conscious endeavour the necessary evolutionary process of the workings of the psyche. The astrological transits—the mystery of retrograde—work in this way to unlock a secret, blow it into the open, and return it to be further processed in the underworld of the psyche.

The Saturn transit through Aquarius is the end of the process which began with the first Saturn transit through Scorpio in 1982, when Jude first became aware of his inner and outer split. Bracketed by those two Saturn transits, the untethering and reweaving of his soul's purpose took place through the agency of the traverse of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. He has entered his body with Saturn over the ascendant, and withstood the long dark night of the soul, which ultimately leaves his soul free. He no longer experiences life as a duality but has come to terms with all his roles. Essentially, Jude has been twice-born, having given birth to himself over the period 1981–92. It is difficult to say from what mysterious place he has come or where he will go, but one does not look into the tomb for the place of resurrection. The quiescence of his inner spirit suggests that such a resurrection has occurred. He still remains within the order, yet lives partly out of it. There is no urgency to make a decision any more, nor any feeling of inauthenticity or schism. A decision may be made, but it is unlikely to be Jude himself who makes it.

NOTES

Chapter 1: The Mechanics of Retrogression

1 Geoffrey Dean *et al.*, *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology* (Astrological Association of England, 1977), pp. 434–42. This book contains interesting tables of periods and frequencies along with a collection of astrologers' contributions and ideas on retrogression from a statistical view as well as interpretative. Well worth checking.

Chapter 2: The Sun and Natal Retrograde Planets

1 Michel Gauquelin, *Neo-Astrology*, Stela Tomašev Ć trans. (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 136.

2 Françoise Gauquelin, *Psychology of the Planet* (San Diego, CA: ACS Publications, 1982), *passim*. There is a diagram on p. 18 which depicts this negative statistical result.

3 Michel Gauquelin, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–7.

4 June Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul* (New York, NY: Anchor Press, 1973), p. 187.

5 Howard Sasportas, *The Luminaries* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1992).

6 Robert Hand, *Horoscope Symbols* (Atglen, PA: Whitford Press, 1981), p. 44.

Chapter 3: Secondary Progression of Planets

1 See Nancy Hastings, *Secondary Progressions* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1984).

Chapter 4: Mercury, God of Retrogression

1 An edited version of some of the material in this chapter, including the table, appears in my chapter in *Planets: The Astrological Tools* (St Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, 1989). The table and original material

was copyrighted in 1982 with RKM publications and any subsequent use of the material was without acknowledgement to or permission from the author.

A recommended read in conjunction with this chapter is *The Retrograde Mercury Workbook* by C. J. Puotinen (Hoboken, N J: Ninth Sign Publications, 1982)—a complete and simply written booklet.

2 Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1960). This little book should be read in its entirety for a capsule of the history of astrology as seen from the world-view of a classicist with good knowledge but little empathy for the current (or ancient) practice of astrology.

3 'The Homeric Hymn to Hermes' in *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. Morford and Lenardon (New York, NY: Longman Press, 1971).

4 *ibid.*

5 *ibid.*

6 Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Richard Lattimore (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Bk XXIV, l. 344.

7 Karl Kerényi, *Hermes: Guide of Souls* (Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1986), p. 88.

8 See Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Penguin, 1989).

9 Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. R. Fitzgerald (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), Bk XXIII, ll. 1–10.

10 Carl Jung, 'On the psychology of the trickster figure' in *Collected Works* (Princeton University Press, 1959), Bollingen Series, Vol. 9.1, para. 456.

11 *ibid.*, para. 469.

12 *ibid.*

13 F. David Peat, *Synchronicity* (London: Bantam, 1987), ch. 8, pp. 222–4 in particular.

14 Jung, *op. cit.*, para. 479.

15 John Lilly, *Communication between Man and Dolphin* (Glendale, CA: Crown Publications, 1978), p. 54.

16 See Dane Rudhyar and Leyla Rael, *Astrological Aspects: A Processoriented Approach* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Aurora Press, 1980), p. 140. In this book Rudhyar and Rael present the best cyclic approach to retrograde planets I have read. Although my interpretation of Epimethean and Promethean retrogrades differs from Rudhyar's, I find his philosophy the most acceptable of all expounded to date. As far as I know, he is the first to emphasize the process-oriented approach to aspects, and the first to dwell on the relationship of retrogradation and the Sun as a developmental process. The entire section on special conjunctions and oppositions is highly recommended.

17 Hesiod, *Theogony* trans. Dorothea Wender (London: Penguin, 1973), l. 510.

18 Rudhyar and Rael, *op. cit.*

19 This mandala and all subsequent mandalas for transiting Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn were generated by Astro Computing Services, Inc. Neil Michelson developed this program, and his researches into planetary symphony date back to the early seventies. They can be seen in colour in Neil's latest book, *Tables of Planetary Phenomena* (San Diego, CA: ACS Publications, 1990).

Chapter 5: Venus, Dual Goddess

1 Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. J. P. Sullivan, Bk XVI, ch. 18.

2 Bruce Scofield, *Considerations*, Vol. 3, no. 3, 1986.

3 See Theodore Landscheidt, *Meridian*, January/February and March/April 1992. In it the German physicist and astrologer shows how he has found that the peaks and troughs in the Gauquelin sectors (among many other natural planetary cycles) fall into the Golden Section ratio.

4 Michael Harding and Charles Harvey, *Working with Astrology: The Psychology of Harmonics, Midpoints and Astro*Carto*Graphy* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 441.

5 David Hamblin, *Harmonic Charts* (London: Aquarian Press, 1983), p. 48.

6 Michael Harding, *Hymns to the Ancient Gods* (London: Penguin, 1992). The whole of ch. 8 deals with Venus, the fifth harmonic and the function of language and communication.

7 Rene Guenon in J. E. Cirlot, *The Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. J. Sage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 193.

8 Scofield, loc. cit., referring to a 1985 article in the *Astrological Society of Princeton journal*.

Chapter 6: The Cycle of Superior Planets

1 Jim Lewis and Ariel Guttman, *The Astro*Carta*Graphy Book of Maps* (St Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, 1989), p. 43. I have quoted

2 See Erin Sullivan, *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul* (London Penguin, 1991; revised edition: York Beach ME: Samuel Weiser, 2000), pp. 91. and, specifically, 210.

3 Robert Hand, *Horoscope Symbols* (Atglen, PA: Whitford Press, 1981), ch. 7.

4 Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 210 ff.

Chapter 7: Natal Mars Retrograde

1 Liz Greene and Howard Sasportas, *Dynamics of Unconscious* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1988; London: Penguin, 1989), p. 43.

2 Melanie Reinhart, *Chiron and the Healing Journey* (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 44. Melanie's study of the cult of Artemis, the Amazons and Mars is revealing in the light of Mars retrograde and 'outrage'.

3 This information came to me through Michael O'Neil, a London researcher who accidentally discovered this fact while researching Mars. He found an excess (1:10.5) of Mars retrograde in feminists' horoscopes. The following are some of the women with Mars retrograde found by O'Neil.

1800s: Louisa May Alcott (29.11.1832), Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (9.6.1836), Susan B. Anthony (15.2.1820), Mary Carpenter (3.4.1807), Anne Clough (20.1.1820), George Eliot (22.11.1819), Charlotte Gilman (3.7.1860), Angelica Grimke (20.2.1805), Helen Jackson (15.10.1830), Ellen Key (11.12.1848), Rosa Luxemburg (5.3.1871), Dame Ethel Smyth (23.4.1858), Elizabeth Stanton (12.11.1815).

1900s: Judy Chicago (20.7. 1939), Janet Frame (28.8. 1924), Lillian Hellman (20.6. 1903), Muriel Rukeyser (15.12. 1913).

4 Michel Gauquelin, *Neo-Astrology*, Stela Tomašev Ć (London: Penguin, 1991), p.44.

5 See John Anthony West, *The Case for Astrology* (London: Penguin, 1991), for more information on the Gauquelin affair.

Chapter 8: Natal Jupiter Retrograde

1 Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. Dorothea Wender (London: Penguin, 1973), 11. 902ff.

2 E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1951), p. 77.

3 J. K. Campbell, Honour, *Family and Patronage* (1964), pp. 327–8.

Chapter 9: Natal Saturn Retrograde

1 Manilius, *Astronomica*, trans. G. P. Gould (Cambridge, Mass.: Loeb Classical Library, 1977), Bk II, 11. 932–5.

2 Erin Sullivan, *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul* (London Penguin, 1991; revised edition: York Beach ME: Samuel Weiser, 2000), pp. 91. and, specifically, 210.

3 Liz Greene, *Saturn: A New Look at a New devil* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1988; London: Penguin, 1990), p. 95.

4 Robert Hand, *Horoscope Symbols* (Atglen, PA: Whitford Press, 1981), p. 128.

5 Reinhold Ebertin, *The Combination of Stellar Influences* (Aalen, Germany: Ebertin-Verlag, 1972), p. 70.

6 Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 17off.

Chapter 10: The Trans-Saturnian Planets

1 Liz Greene, *The Outer Planets and Their Cycles: The astrology of the Collective* (Sebastapol, CA: CRCS Publications, 1983). The lectures in this book cover much of the psychological and mundane historical

significance of the outer planets. They deal with the outer planets as experienced in the charts of nations, leaders and individuals.

2 Dane Rudhyar, *The Sun is Also a Star*, *passim*.

3 Alexander Ruperti, *Cycles of Becoming* (Sebastapol, CA: CRCS Publications, 1978), p. 263. The treatment of retrogression in Ruperti's book is process-oriented, person-centered and developed from Dane Rudhyar's phased-oriented astrology. To my mind this is a sensible approach.

4 Melanie Reinhart, *Chiron and the Healing journey* (London: Penguin, 1989). Melanie's treatment of our solar system maverick establishes absolute credibility for Chiron's effect in natal horoscopes and in transit.

5 Reinhold Ebertin, *The Combination of Stellar Influences* (Aalen, Germany: Ebertin-Verlag, 1940).

6 *ibid.*, p. 196.

7 Robert Hand, *Horoscope Symbols* (Atglen, PA: Whitford Press, 1981), p. 177.

Chapter 12: Natal Neptune Retrograde

1 Plato, *The Republic*, Bk X, p. 422, in W. H. D. Rouse, trans., *Great Dialogues of Plato* (New York, NY: New American Library, 1956).

2 Jim Lewis and Ariel Gunman, *The Astro*Carto*Graphy Book of Maps* (St Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, 1989), p. 49.

Chapter 13: Natal Pluto Retrograde

1 Erin Sullivan, *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul* (London Penguin, 1991; revised edition: York Beach ME: Samuel Weiser, 2000), pp. 91. and, specifically, 268.

Chapter 14: A Natal Case History: Oscar

1 Reinhold Ebertin, *The Combination of Stellar Influences* (Aalen, Germany: Ebertin-Verlag, 1940), pp. 206–7.

2 Carl Jung, *Collected Works* (Princeton University Press, 1969), Bollingen Series, Vol. 2, para. 292.

3 *ibid.*, para. 719.

Chapter 15: A Mundane Case History: Syphilis

1 Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment* (London: Collins, 1990), p. 21.

2 *ibid.*

Chapter 16: Overview

1 Dane Rudhyar and Leyla Rael, *Astrological Aspects: A Process-oriented Approach* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Aurora Press, 1980), ch. 4. In this chapter the authors make a concise case for the process-oriented approach to both inferior and superior retrogression.

2 Graphic ephemerides from Astrolabe UK, Roy Gillett Consultants.

Chapter 17: Transiting Mars Retrograde

1 Data obtained from Michael Harding in a sort of Venus and Mars stations over a 200-year span.

Chapter 20: The Transits of the Trans-Saturnian Planets

1 Howard Sasportas, *The Gods of Change: Pain, Crisis and the Transit of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto* (London Penguin, 1989), is highly recommended. Howard treats the outer planets in depth, with great psychological awareness. Each planet is treated in aspect with natal planets and through each house. See also Robert Hand, *Planets in Transit* (Atglen, PA: Whitford Press, 1981).

2 The synodic periods—between successive conjunctions with the Sun are slightly longer than orbital periods.

3 See Michael Harding, *Hymns to the Ancient Gods* (London: Penguin, 1992). Michael Harding illustrates 'planetary memory' clearly in this book. Planetary motion is a continuum, not a series of discrete positions, hopping from one place to another. That is why this system works.

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INDEX

- Adler, Alfred, [247](#)
- Adonis, [80–81](#)
- Alpert, Richard, [264](#)
- androgyny, [87](#)
- angular placement, [18](#)
- Aphrodite, [77, 80](#)
- Apollo, [46, 197](#)
- archetypal parent image, [28](#)

Archimedes, [49](#)
Aristotle, [191](#)
Astor, John Jacob, [155](#)
Athene, [190](#)
Baba Ram Dass, [264](#)
Blake, William, [263](#)
Blavatsky, Helena, [246](#)
boundaries, overextension of, [198](#)
bowl pattern, [154](#)
Buck, Pearl S., [246](#)
Campbell, J. K., [192](#)
case histories
Blavatsky, Helena, [202](#)
Chris, [158](#)
Daphne, [272](#)
Diana, [201](#)
Donald, [222](#)
Emma, [103](#)
Gauquelin, Michel, [173–174](#)
Graham, [97](#)
Grant, [388](#)
Harinder, [140](#)
Heather, [384](#)
James, [156](#)
John, [99](#)
Jude, [398](#)
Justine, [100](#)
Krista, [273](#)
Leyla, [216](#)
Linda, [368](#)
Magda, [374](#)
Marcia, [182](#)
Marlene, [200](#)
Martina, [146](#)
Nadia, [108](#)
Oliver, [262](#)
Oscar, [280](#)
Paul, [128](#)
Perry, [278](#)
Raphael, [395](#)
Sandra, [219](#)
Sheila, [178](#)
syphilis, [293](#)
Warren, [106](#)
Change, [236](#)
Chiron, discovery of, [232](#)
cholos, [165](#)
Cinyras, [80](#)
complex, [238](#)
constellating collective, [241](#)
of inner planet, [238](#)
saviour, [239](#)
conjunction, [86](#)
direct (superior), [7](#)
Curie, Marie, [233](#), [247](#)

Davenport-Hines, Richard, [293](#)
Davis, Angela, [134](#)
death, [271](#), [391](#)
Demeter, [269](#)
depression, [330](#)
Dione, [77](#)
Dionysos, [190–191](#)
Dodds, E. R., [191](#)
Duncan, Isadora, [131](#)
Ebertin, Reinhold, [241](#)
ego, sacrificing one's, [240](#)
Einstein, [247](#)
Elongation, [5](#)
eastern, [7](#)
greatest, [5](#)
western, [7](#)
Epimethean
phases, [58](#)
retrograde, [60](#)
Epimetheus, [60](#)
eris, [165](#)
Eros, [77](#), [80](#)
Euclid, [91](#)
extravert and direct planet, [25](#)
Fates, [270](#)
first quarter square, [10](#)
Fonda, Jane, [133](#)
Freud, Sigmund, [155](#)
Gaia, [77](#), [189](#), [245](#), [370](#)
Galatea, [80](#)
Gauquelin, Françoise, [18](#)
Geb, [45](#)
Gibran, [321](#)
goal-setting, [171](#)
Goethe, [268](#)
Hades, [257](#), [269](#)
Hamblin, David, [92](#)
Hand, Rob, [30](#), [242](#)
Harding, Michael, [92](#)
Harvey, Charles, [91](#)
Hearst, Randolph, [204](#)
Hecatoncheires, [245](#)
Hephaistos, [80](#), [190](#)
Hera, [80](#)
Hermes, [45–50](#), [70](#), [192](#)
Hesiod, [46](#), [59](#)
Himeros, [77](#), [80](#)
Homer, [46](#), [189](#)
Horus, [45](#)
individuation, [230](#)
inflation, [198](#)
introvert and retrograde planet, [25](#)
Isis, [45](#)
Jagger, Mick, [161](#)
Jung, Carl, [51](#), [135](#)

Jupiter, [15](#), [35](#), [189–193](#), [197](#)
herald of natural death, [391](#)
mythological, [189](#)
station-direct to previous
station-retrograde degree, [338](#)
station-retrograde to Sun
opposition, [333](#)
and the Sun, [194](#)
Sun opposition to station-direct, [336](#)
Jupiter retrograde natal, [189](#)
in the natal chart, [196](#)
as singleton, [204](#)
split social or religious background, [197](#)
transiting, [333](#)
turns direct by progression, [199](#)
Jupiterian traits and social behavior, [194](#)
Juvenal, [244](#)
Kerenyi, Karl, [47](#)
King, Martin Luther, [137](#)
Kore, [269](#)
Krishnamurti, [135](#)
Kronos, [77](#), [189](#), [207](#), [232](#), [245](#)
Kbbler-Ross, Elisabeth, [138](#), [269](#)
Laing, Ronald D., [248](#)
last quarter square, [12](#)
Leary, Timothy, [264](#)
loneliness, existential, [269](#)
Maclaine, Shirley, [131](#), [138](#)
Manetho, [45](#)
Manilius, [208](#)
Mars, [15](#), [164](#)
as a planet of acute illness, [300](#)
as singleton, [186](#)
mythological, [163](#)
stations, [321](#)
station-direct to Sun trine, [327](#)
station-retrograde to Sun opposition, [322](#)
and the Sun, [165](#)
Sun opposition to station direct, [325](#)
Mars retrograde, [26](#), [167](#)
transiting, [321](#), [329](#)
Maya, [88](#)
Mercurius, [45](#)
Mercury, [4](#), [5](#), [46–48](#), [51](#), [56](#), [70](#), [82](#)
cycle of, [53](#), [58](#)
Epimethean direct, [66](#)
Epimethean phase of, [59](#)
god of retrogression, [45](#)
inferior conjunction, [62](#)
orbit, [59](#)
Promethean direct, [64](#)
Promethean phase of, [59](#)
stations of, [57](#)
Mercury retrograde, [53](#)
cycle of, [55](#), [68–69](#)

through the elements, [67](#)
turning retrograde in Air signs, [72](#)
turning retrograde in Earth signs, [73](#)
turning retrograde in Fire signs, [74](#)
turning retrograde in Water signs, [71](#)
Metis, [190](#)
mind-body-soul image, [257](#)
Mnemosyne, [191](#)
Moon
as funnel to wedge, [155](#)
as handle to bucket, [155](#)
Morgan, J. P., [204](#)
mortality, [269](#)
Mozart, [263](#)
Muses, [191](#)
Myrrha, [80](#)
Nebo, [45](#)
Nephtys, [45](#)
Neptune, [15](#), [35](#), [229](#), [233](#)
natal, retrograde, [256](#)
progressed, [265](#)
repeats a transit in reverse, [382](#)
retrograde in the natal chart, [261](#)
retrograde transiting, [377](#)
Sun and ego, [258](#)
transits, [348](#)
Newman, John Henry, [17](#)
Nut, [45](#)
Odysseus, [49–50](#), [192](#)
opposition, [133](#)
Osiris, [45](#)
Ouranos, [77](#), [189](#), [207](#), [232](#), [244–245](#), [370](#)
Paphos, [80](#)
Pausanias, [77](#)
Peat, David, [52](#)
Persephone, [269](#)
planetary aspect, progressed, [33](#)
planets
inner, complexes, [237](#)
natal inferior, progressed cycle of, [40](#)
natal superior, progressed cycle of, [34](#)
secondary progression of, [33](#)
singleton superior, [154](#)
social, [4](#)
transpersonal, [229](#)
trans-Saturnian, [229](#)
planets, inferior, [3](#), [4](#)
heliocentric view of cycles, [6](#)
retrograde cycle of, [4](#)
planets, retrograde, [29](#)
and obsession, [31](#)
Sun and natal, [17](#)
trans-Saturnian, [237](#)
planets, superior, [3–4](#)
accelerating quincunx, [120](#)

- conjunction, [119](#)
- cycle of, [119](#)
- decelerating quincunx, [121](#)
- geocentric view of, [14](#)
- heliocentric view of cycles, [9](#)
- individuals with none, [160](#)
- opposition (retrograde), [121](#)
- retrograde cycle of, [8](#)
- retrograde individuals with a majority of, [159](#)
- sextile, [119](#), [122](#)
- square, [120](#), [122](#)
- station-direct, [121](#)
- stationary-retrograde, [120](#)
- stationary-direct trine, [121](#)
- stationary-retrograde trine, [120](#)
- planets, transiting
 - makes contact with degree while moving direct, [362](#)
 - stations-retrograde on a sensitive degree, [359](#)
- planets, trans-Saturnian, [234](#)
 - graphic depiction of, [353](#)
- transits of, [348](#)
- Plato, [77](#), [245](#), [257](#)
- Pluto, [16](#), [35](#), [229](#), [233](#)
- natal, retrograde, [268](#)
- progressed, [276](#)
- retrograde in the natal chart, [271](#)
- retrograde, transiting, [387](#)
- Sun and ego, [269](#)
- transits, [348](#)
- Poseidon, [269](#)
- Presley, Elvis, [131](#)
- progressed Sun's trine to Jupiter, [199](#)
- Promethean
 - phase, [58](#)
 - retrograde, [63](#)
- Prometheus, [60](#), [65](#)
- quincunx,
 - accelerating, [12](#), [131](#)
 - decelerating, [12](#), [135](#)
 - stationary-direct, [12](#)
- reincarnation, [258](#)
- Reinhart, Melanie, [169](#)
- Remus, [164](#)
- retrograde
 - conjunction (inferior), [7](#)
 - cycle, [302](#)
 - and dominant personality type, [25](#)
 - as maverick, [24](#)
 - motion, [3](#)
 - period, duration of, [13](#)
 - syndromes, [153](#)
 - retrograde planet transit, [314](#)
 - 1st/7th house, [315](#)
 - 2nd/8th house, [316](#)
 - 3rd/9th house, [316](#)

4th/10th house, 317
5th/11th house, 318
6th/12th house, 318
retrograde transit, 301
conscious deliberation, 310
main turning points in, 303
retrogression, mechanics of, 3
Rhea, 189, 207
Roddin, Lois, 203
Romulus, 164
Rudhyar, Dane, 229, 302
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 270
Sasportas, Howard, 27
Saturn, 15, 35, 77, 193, 189, 232, 245
mythological, 207
station-direct to previous station-retrograde degree, 346
and the Sun, 209
Sun opposition to station-direct, 345
Saturn retrograde, 28, 208, 211, 213
natal, 207
as singleton, 226
transiting, 341
Scofield, Bruce, 87
self-confidence, 29
selfhood, coming into, 22
Semele 190
Set, 45
Shakespeare, 81
Singer, June, 25
Socrates, 270
solar
air trine, 152
earth trine, 152
fire trine, 151
grand trine, 144, 151
water trine, 152
solar aspects
progressed, 39
in the retrograde zone, 122
station-direct, 5, 7, 12, 126
progressed, 37
station-retrograde, 5, 7, 10, 125
progressed, 34
to Sun opposition, 342
transit, 305
stationary-direct trine, 137
trine, 129
Sun, 4, 19–21, 27, 82
aspects to planets from, 21
assisted by Jupiter, 195
conjunction with, 10
and the development of ego, 234
geocentric view of the apparent motion of, 11
to Jupiter, opposition of, 198
opposition point of, 12

retrogression and development of ego, 23
and shadow, 209
special configuration formed with, 139
stationary-direct, 12
stationary-retrograde, 12
timing of trines, 13
trine Jupiter, 27
Sun-Jupiter, 13
relationships, 195
Sun-Mars, 13
principles, 170
Sun-Neptune, 13
Sun-planet opposition, 311, 313
Sun-Pluto, 13
Sun-Saturn, 13
opposition, transiting, 341
Sun-Uranus, 13
Tantalus, 270
Taylor, Elizabeth, 135
teacher, 52
Thoth, 45
thumos, 165
transit, repeat, over particular degree in horoscope, 354
trickster, 51, 54
Typhon, 45
Urania, 77
Uranus, 15, 35, 229, 233, 245
genius, 248
progressed, 251
progressed Sun square to, 253
station-direct, 252
stations-retrograde, 252
Sun and ego, 244
transits, 348
Uranus retrograde, 245–246
natal, 244
as a singleton, 253
transiting, 366
values, superficial, 198
Venus, 4, 5, 77, 82
astrological, 79
the fifth harmonic, 88
greatest western elongation, 86
inferior Venus heliacal rising, 86
Mesoamerican view of, 86
movement by secondary progression, 110
progressed station-direct, 113
progressed station-retrograde, 110
station-direct, 86
station-retrograde, 86
stations, 91
the Sun and ego, 82
superior conjunction, 86
Venus retrograde
cycle of, 85, 89, 91

natal, 96
Virgil, 387, 392
Vulcan, 80
Watts, Alan, 263
wedge or fan patterns, 152
weltschmerz, 256
Xeinius, 194
year, stationary-direct, 265
Yeats, W. B., 366
yod, 143–144
solar, 139
Zeus, 47, 60, 77, 80, 189–192, 194, 197, 207, 257, 269



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