MAKING THE GODS WORK FOR YOU

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The Astrological Language of the Psyche

CAROLINE W. CASEY

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TO THE GODS, DESIRING THEY BE AMUSED

To the ever-expanding community of allies,
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and to all of my great friends and teammates,
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without any of whom this book would be
just a bad mood.

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MAKING THE GODS WORK FOR YOU

VISIONARY ACTIVIST ASTROLOGY



I am convinced that the universe is under the control of a loving purpose. And that in the struggle for righteousness man has cosmic companionship. Behind the harsh appearance of the world there is a benign power.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Think of your life as a spiritual detective novel. Each aspect of your life, especially the really quirky, maverick parts, are clues to your task, your destiny, and your gift to the world. Astrology invites us to see life as a web of myriad meaningful patterns. Those moments when we apprehend and perceive patterns give rise in us to feelings of reverence and awe (ah!)—two very healthy attitudes that have been the central foundation of great civilizations, but are sadly lacking in our own. Gandhi spoke to this point when asked what he thought of Western civilization, by replying that he thought it was a good idea. Reverence, awe, and positive spiritual intrigue are the primary dynamic qualities that the language of astrology seeks to awaken in you.

Entertain the possibility that you are an undercover agent parachuting down to this beautiful planet in its time of need. Astrology

is a language that catalyzes your memory of your mission. Each of us has some crucial task to perform in the Grand Intrigue, a task that will not only transform us personally, but also transform the entire climate of culture. By responding to astrology's invitation to participate consciously in evolution, we cultivate the infinite capacities of being fully human. Our affinities, those things to which we are strongly attracted, lead us to our gift, and hence to our way of serving the larger community. We can then give a gift to the world that could be given by no other; we can do a work or work a magic that could be effected by no other. The astrological language embodies a worldview in which each of us is honored and cherished as a necessary evolutionary experiment, and is encouraged to bloom. When we bloom we become generous—and vice versa.

The Lakota saying *O Matake Oyasin,* "for all my relations," defines community in the largest sense, to include all of creation. Through this saying the Lakota remind us that all our actions want to honor the spirit in all things—bugs, microbes, rocks, animals, plants, planets. Magical kinship should be encouraged at all times, for it is what makes life bearable.

Some styles of spiritual practice arise from the premise that the world is merely a seductive illusion to be transcended through detachment. There is not a lot of room for humor in this approach, for this is serious business, a kind of goal-oriented, solo, M.B.A. approach to enlightenment. "Down to Gehenna, or up to the throne, he travels the fastest who travels alone," says Rudyard Kipling, speaking for those who value speed and expediency. (But is it the most interesting fun possible?) If you truly adhered to that philosophical strategy, you probably would not be reading this now, because the orientation of this book is that life is to be embraced as an ally—to be transformed rather than transcended. We want to become completely involved in the responsibility of shaping reality for the greater good of all our relations. For us potential life enthusiasts, astrology defines the task of being fully human as discerning

the pattern of evolutionary intelligence, the liveliest possibility at any moment in time, and aligning with that.

There are two primary Buddhist paths toward enlightenment. Hinayana, which means "lesser vehicle," is the path of (strictly) personal salvation, whereas Mahayana, "the greater vehicle," is devoted to the salvation of all creation. The astrology of this book aspires to the Mahayana path—of full self-cultivation, participation, reverent curiosity, and concern for the well-being of other creatures—and thus encourages us to become increasingly conscious players on the team of creation.

This astrology weds spiritual magic and compassionate social activism to create Visionary Activist Astrology, because one without the other does not work. Vision and spirituality by themselves can be too ungrounded, detached, narcissistic, or oblivious. For example, there was a great blooming of interest in metaphysics and Eastern spiritual practices in Germany in the 1930s, but without sufficient sense of compassionate social responsibility.

Yet activism by itself is too dreary and overworked to be effective. We all know people who are doing noble, hard-working good, yet who have a gray pallor of infighting fatigue, symptomatic of "magic deficiency." They are tyrannized by "realism," alienated from their innate capacity to draw upon larger resources to heal and revitalize themselves.

Visionary Activism invites us to participate actively in shaping and creating our personal and collective reality by embarking on an adventure of joyful maximum self-cultivation. The third Webster's dictionary definition of *maximum* is "an astronomical term for the moment of greatest brilliance of a variable star."

Astrology describes us as living in a *Kairos,* or "fulcrum" moment. The future is not fixed (but it's not broken, either). Our actions can tip the fulcrum either way, toward the life or death of innumerable communities of creatures living on this planet. By voting with our imaginations, we determine the outcome.

The all-too-visible forces of greed are stupidly lumbering along, dragging everything in their net toward the abyss of planetary systems collapse. But the forces of human ingenuity and artful compassion, allied with the world of the invisibles, are sprightlier, sleeker, and smarter, and they know how to dance away from the chasm. If imaginative people can use their powers to release creation from the net, then the forces of greed can hurtle themselves into the abyss (to be transformed at a later time) without taking the rest of us.

Imagination lays the tracks for the Reality Train.
Therefore the cultivation of imaginative capacity is the primary, specific, and detailed act of magic to which this book is dedicated. We do not need more power, magic, or wealth, but, rather, to use the abundance we already possess in conscious, imaginative ways. When we suffer from magic deficiency, we do so not because of an absence of magic, but because of our inattention to its presence. We are constantly performing acts of magic, summoning and invoking our reality—personal and collective. But we tend to do so in such an inconsistent and frenzied fashion that we arrive at our current reality.

The *Dhammapada,* an early collection of Buddhist verse, says, "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. . . . If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him."

I remember a moment when I decided that whether or not the world was magic, it was better to live in it as though it were. There is no future in nihilism. When I run into friends who have become bitter basement Bohemian bureaucrats on the brink of alienated breakdown, I say, "You know, your beliefs are not really supporting you—why don't you entertain some other, more fun possibilities?"

Believe nothing, entertain possibilities.
Astrology is not a belief system; it is a language of the dynamic interplay between our interior life and the exterior world. The astrological language grants us access to the invisible realm it describes, and provides the vocabulary with which we can begin a detailed investigative exploration of the psyche.

"There is really no astrological evidence that science is anything more than a medieval superstition," says my fellow astrologer Stephen James. If our curiosity stops at the hurdle of "how could this work?" we cannot apprehend astrology. Modern, mainstream thinking does not encourage us to entertain the possibility that astrology is useful. You might get busted by the Reality Police, who will pull you over and give you a citation for stepping outside proscribed domains of thinking. The only approach to proscribed knowledge is experimental verification for oneself. Jump across the chasm of doubt, land on the side of the astrological worldview, and see for yourself whether it "works." Aspire to be a pragmatic philosopher who is willing to check out anything, as long as it is useful. Test every proposition in the fires of actual experience.

Don't believe in astrology. But don't believe in science, either. Superstition is not so much *what* we believe, but the act of believing in *anything*. As we will explore in Saturn's chapter, even if, owing to some fluke, we happened to believe in the "truth"—it would still be a booby prize, because the act of belief is an abdication of autonomy.

Like many truly radical tools of personal and collective liberation, astrology has been trivialized, demeaned, and attacked for being what it isn't, reminding us of the saying, "The God that an atheist denies never existed."

Once, astronomers were astrologers and astronomy was the study of the heavenly patterns. Those patterns were understood as the visible end of the spectrum of an invisible order that suffused all

creation. Astrology was the philosophical exploration of the meaning and instructions of these patterns.

Just as all preindustrial cultures have had an intimate relationship to the heavens, so all cultures and times have grown and continue to grow different astrologies. In a feudal class system, life was predictable, so its astrology was predictive. Today we are engaged in a different experiment of becoming unpredictable individuals. Hence, our astrology teaches us how to cultivate maximally unique options of adaptive response.

Better to create prophecy than to live predictions.
The word *prediction* comes from the same root as *predicament,* which is nearly always something unpleasant; prophecy, however, implies collaboration with the divine in order to co-create the most interesting, ingenious, and loving world possible. Our work together is thus a prophet-sharing venture.

In service to that goal, this book is an invitation to experiment, engage, and form alliances with forces that reside within our psyches. These forces connect us to very real corresponding external sources of support, which we will call gods. We need all the help we can get.

True help is always reciprocal: whatever we help serves us. The word *therapy* means "healing," but its original meaning was "to serve the gods." Similarly, the Mayan word for *human* meant "one who owes the gods." We serve the gods, internally and externally, in a dance of reciprocal generosity. When we work for the gods, they work for us.

Through invocative essays, this book aspires to expand your range of intimacy with the god-forces represented by the ten planetary bodies other than the Earth (including the Sun and the Moon). We first summon these gods by simply thinking about them in their myriad mythological guises. In each planetary chapter, you will encounter the gods through myths and stories. You will also be

given contemplations and rituals you can enact to collaborate with these creative forces in your life. Ritual brings the myth alive and vitalizes the dance with the archetype through which the specifically nuanced energy of the universe flows. Ritual further allows us to transcend passivity and become active agents in creating our lives.

Each planet has its own mode of expression, so each chapter will have its own atmosphere, nuance, and structure. Begin by diving into the zodiac and then swim on into the planets. If anything seems too complex or the terminology seems too astrological, simply let it wash over you. You will absorb and retain what is most useful to you now.

All that is required to profit and prophet fully from this book is a sense of humor and a desire to do good in the world. This is neither a textbook nor a self-help book, but rather a guide to self-cultivation and gleeful participation in the larger world.

Creating this book has been a complete workout for me, and for almost everyone else even remotely involved in the process. Because one of our working principles is that we invoke whatever we think about, the material in this book makes for pretty lively living. Writing each chapter absolutely invoked the myths, virtues, and demons of that thematic force or god.

No less is expected from you, O playful reader, as you embark on this journey in which your soul will travel through obstacles and recollect its destiny in order to become a creator. Together we will stoke the fires of our imaginations and awaken our potential to become co-creators of a new emerging guiding mythos, a synthesis of collective aspiration.

All disciplines have their gods or presiding forces—astrology, writing, publishing, painting, medicine, scientific research—who, once you reach a saturation point (characterized by devotion), accept you as an apprentice. That is why it is so important to move on if you find yourself in a discipline, a relationship, or a life to which you cannot be devoted. The *I Ching* counsels that if we are

associating with others who are not our true peers, our real allies cannot find us. Similarly, a Haitian proverb says, "When the anthropologist arrives, the gods depart." The gods won't appear, the magic won't happen, if we are not living our real life. Studying life is not living life, and therefore has no magic.

In college I attended one philosophy class for about five minutes. The professor asked us what we thought philosophy was, and I said something like, "It's a passionately eclectic embracing of life from which is distilled principles of meaning, by which one forms a wise code in order to live a graceful and harmonious life." To which he replied, "No. Philosophy has nothing to do with how you live your life." I departed immediately (both the class and the university) with a new resolve to find the Mystery Schools, where philosophy was actually useful.

So, on an intuitive whim, at the age of eighteen, I hurtled myself into London, and proceeded to check out every occult-spiritual-theosophical-crank magic school, of which there was a wonderfully cuckoo profusion.

In the foyer of the Theosophical Society on Baker Street, where I took classes and attended lectures, hung a great photo of Helena P. Blavatsky, a formidable Leo spiritual teacher of the late nineteenth century. She gazed down at the viewer in a way both dreamy and fierce, one hand raised, fingers slightly spread. A sacred mudra or secret hand gesture? No. My affectionate regard for her grew upon discovering that the Theosophists had airbrushed out her cigarette. As I would discover in innumerable explorations of teachers and teachings, my colleagues of shared affinity would be those seekers found smoking on the back steps of the ashram, literally or metaphorically. And there would always be those forces of timid spiritual orthodoxy attempting to airbrush out the cigarette.

For years I studied astrology and ritual in England, India, and California, then later in Cuba, the Yucatán, New Zealand, and South Africa, consulting every mystic, martial artist, Jungian analyst,

mythologist, or "enlightenment school" that crossed my path. I even washed up on the shores of Brown University for a degree in Symbol Systems (called semiotics) syncretizing everything gleaned into an astrology that cultivates free will.

This astrology understands that the heavens are the largest and most visible representative of an order that runs throughout creation. By learning the language of heavenly patterns, we begin to see that the heavens are not the source or creator of the moment, but that everything is married to everything. This view of universal interconnectedness hearkens back to, among others, Paracelsus, the great medieval alchemist, doctor, and astrologer. Paracelsus taught a "doctrine of signatures," which holds that everything is written everywhere, if we had but the eyes to see and the ears to listen. He observed that mother birds would drape an herb across their babies' eyes. This herb is called eyebright, and heals eyes. "Behold the *Satyrion* root," he wrote, "is it not formed like the male privy parts? No one can deny this. Accordingly magic discovered that it can restore a man's virility and passion. . . . And the *Syderica* bears the image and form of a snake on each of its leaves, and thus, according to magic, it gives protection against any kind of poisoning."

Reverent curiosity was considered the motivational force that informed all observations and intimate interactions with the natural world. In the modern world we have lost the acuity of these senses of observation and listening to the natural world. Astrology is a remedial tool to retrain us once again to be able to converse with the universe by seeing and hearing rhythmic patterns and cycles in time and space. "Thus," wrote Paracelsus, "the uncertain arts are in such a state that a new generation must come, full of prophetic or sybylline spirit, which will awaken and direct the skills and arts (of intimacy with creation). The arts of this kind . . . are quite old, and enjoyed great reputation among the ancients. They were kept secret and taught secretly. For the students of these arts devoted their time to inner contemplation and faith, and by such means they discov-

ered and proved many things. But the men of today have no longer such capacity for imagination and faith . . . a sceptic can never create anything enduring."

Mystics and scientists now share a belief in the unity of all life and matter in the universe. Everything is connected and everything is in dynamic flux.

According to the physicist David Bohm, reality "is a single, unbroken wholeness in flowing movement." He says that electrons, charged and guided particles, can communicate with the rest of the universe. He uses the analogy of an airplane, which is guided by radio waves that do not cause the plane to turn, but provide it with the necessary information that it needs to respond appropriately.

Similarly, astrology does not say that the planets send down waves, "boogedy-boogedy," causing us to behave in certain deterministic ways. True, we are receiving information all the time, as if in radio waves. However, there is major interference. The positive ion hum of modern culture's constant cacophony of all news and distraction media and electrical lighting, combined with fast-food indigestion, drives us crazy by interfering with our reception of necessary information.

Astrology can be a remedy for modernity by restoring our capacity to receive necessary guidance from without and within. As we reclaim the capacity to hear ourselves think, we once more hear the reassuring voices of the gods thinking within us. Each of us has access to the innumerable wise voices of the planetary gods, which we will be bringing alive one by one, chapter by chapter.

Astrology gives us a map of the realm of the invisible and the visible. The invisible, to physicists, is an implicate order, an implied order, our primary reality. The visible, or explicate order—what we see and feel—is just a set of ripples on the surface of a vast, invisible ocean. Astrology is the language of the invisible order that runs throughout creation. We can and will speak to this invisible order through imaginative exercises.

An alchemical aphorism says that "whatever we take an interest in, takes an interest in us," and in the same manner. It is therefore good to have a friendly interest in the invisible, or the unconscious. Better a dance than a war.

The botanist George Washington Carver said that he learned everything he knew about plants from walking through the forest and talking to them. He would ask, "What are you for, little plant?" He said they would answer by their shape, and their color. ("I'm a peanut, and I make great sandwiches.")

Another botanist, Luther Burbank, said that he also talked to plants. He developed plants that were edible without their spines by talking to them and saying, "You are perfectly safe here, you don't need your spine." Then he would grow these spineless fruits and eat them. (This betrayal may have set plant-human diplomacy back a generation.)

Burbank's experiments in human-to-plant intimacy imply that patterns form invisibly and then descend into form. When doctors and scientists were shamans, one of their primary tasks was to mediate between the visible and invisible worlds just as Carver and Burbank were doing, the former to retrieve knowledge, the latter to put in a request. Both were performing what we might call rituals, the kind that the planets will be teaching us in their chapters.

Astrology is at least threefold in its purpose and practice:

Astrology is descriptive. Jung said, "Anything born at a moment of time has the characteristics of that moment." Astrology provides a language to describe the characteristics of a person, event, or time.

Astrology is instructive. Through astrology, we learn how to dance with the *ch'i* (life force) of the universe. We learn how to play the energies and perceive the patterns, and view them as instructions revealed to us by our intuitions.

In the original Latin, the word *disaster* combines the prefix *dis,* "against," with *aster,* "the stars." Disaster befalls us when we pit our petty, small wills against the larger pulse of creation, which is

described by the planetary patterns. *Dis* also means the underworld, which we enter through discord, disease, and disaster. In Norse cosmology, *dis* is the singular of *disir*—the Norse equivalent of the Furies.

The opposite positive—what it would be to dance in accord with the stars, not attracting the wrath of disorder—is revealed by the word *consider,* in which *con* means "with," modifying *sider,* another Latin word for "stars." Consider that to pause and reflect, to take counsel within is to be in accord without. In so doing, we align ourselves with the rhythm of the patterned moment, and dance *ch'i*-to-*ch'i* with the universe.

Astrology is celebratory. We only truly possess the power of an insight when we give it expression. Collectively, throughout time, the celebration of celestial order has been what gave a community not only its calendar, but also its story, its cosmology—a sense of intimate place in the vast design.

The calendar year and the seven-day week are evidence of our desire to participate intimately in the vast design. We have a seven-day week because there are seven visible planets. We have Sun Day; Moon Day; Mars' Day (*Mardi* in French), which is Tuesday (from Tiw, the northern European name for Mars); Wednesday, which is Woden's (Mercury's) Day; Thor's Day (he was the Norse Jupiter); Freya's Day (the Norse Venus); and Saturn's Day. The calendrical impulse pays homage to different parts of life, and to different parts of ourselves, internally and externally.

A wonderful way of honoring the planets on their respective days is to simply draw their symbols (or glyphs) outside your door with colored sand or cornmeal. For example, the symbol for Saturn is a stylized C, the semicircle of the Moon or spirit underneath a cross, where the manifest and invisible worlds intersect. The symbol represents the assignment to wed the inner needs of spirit with responsibility to the material world. Any conflict is an illusion. The

cornmeal glyph reminds us of this each time we cross the domestic threshold on Saturn's day.

The symbol of the cross, found as a component of many of the astrological glyphs we will encounter, long preexists Christian usage. Its original import was as a depiction of the two paths of the human and the spirit worlds, flowing into and nourishing each other in mutual support. The point at which the two lines intersect is the dance. This language delineates the choreography of creation, and invites us to join in the festivities.

We know from ancient lunar calendars that humans have celebrated their relationship to heavenly order for at least 25,000 years. We know that the turn of the year's seasons, the equinoxes and solstices, the journey of the Sun from south to north and back again, have long been considered. Perceived rhythmic patterns in the heavens, with their obvious correlations on Earth, have inspired humans throughout time to want to join in. We have always wanted to celebrate or dance with this larger order, to feel a part of it consciously. The desire to participate in larger patterns lies at the heart of ritual. Ritual is the participatory dance.

Ritual is by no means confined to humans. When I lived on a wild coastal cliff in California, I noticed that my Burmese cat, Khesev, would leave the warmth of the bed before dawn, clearly and purposefully venturing forth. One morning I followed him in the dark, along a circuitous trail that wound around to an exposed rock, which the cat sat upon, eyes closed in alert reverie. When the sun rose moments later, the first thing it shone upon was my cat on that rock. Cat-henge.

All of creation is, in a sense, ritualistic. We humans also are ritualistic beings. Ritual gives us a sense of participation in the larger order, the antithesis of which is the feeling of alienation.

My beloved cat did not need to study astrology. For him, a Taurus, it was intrinsic; he embodied it. He was intuitively reverent. But

so are we. The astrological language reminds us of what we already know, on some level.

Whatever we think about, we invoke. Once summoned, the gods seek to incarnate through us. They are especially eager to form a collaboration between the mythic invisible and the mundane visible, at this historical time.

This is an initiation school disguised as a book.

VISIONARY ACTIVIST PRINCIPLES

The following principles are derived from my own years of serious whimsy and musing, and their spirit suffuses the text of the book.

PRINCIPLE 0 (ZERO). *Believe nothing, entertain possibilities.* Therefore everything hereafter is offered playfully.

PRINCIPLE 1. *Imagination lays the tracks for the Reality Train to follow.*

PRINCIPLE 2. *Better to create prophecy than to live prediction.* What makes us passive is toxic. What makes us active is tonic. This is the difference between predictions, which make us passive, and prophecy, which is active co-creation with the divine.

PRINCIPLE 3. *The invisible world would like to help, but spiritual etiquette requires that we ask.* Help is always available (operators are standing by).

PRINCIPLE 4. *The only way the gods know we're asking for help is ritual.*

PRINCIPLE 5. *If something's a problem, make it bigger.*

PRINCIPLE 6. *We only possess the power of an insight when we give it expression.*

PRINCIPLE 7. *Creativity comes from the wedding of paradox.* We aspire to be disciplined wild people who are radical traditionalists.

ASTROLOGICAL GRAMMAR



SERVING THE GODS OF INNER AND OUTER SPACE

My evenings are taken up very largely with astrology. I make horoscopic calculations in order to find a clue to the core of psychological truth. Some remarkable things have turned up which will certainly appear incredible to you. . . . I dare say that we shall one day discover in astrology a good deal of knowledge that has been intuitively projected into the heavens. For instance, it appears the signs of the zodiac are character pictures, in other words libido symbols which depict the typical qualities of the libido at a given moment.

CARL JUNG
in a letter to Sigmund Freud, June 12, 1911[1]

We do not need astrology. But it is an exquisite language by which to bring alive all the different facets of our natures. Because we summon whatever we think about, an astrological reading, if done properly, has manifold effects. A reading can be instructive as well as compellingly descriptive. It also has an energetic

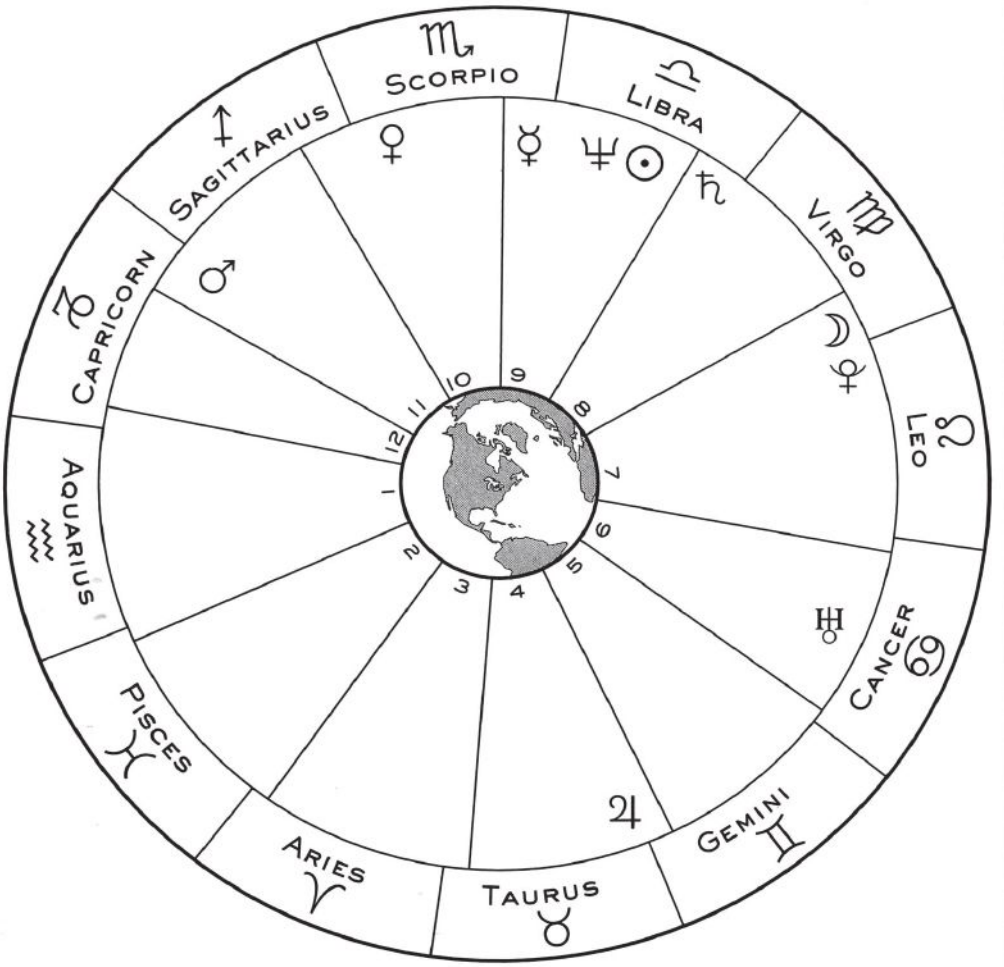
aspect: by speaking of the forces that dwell within us, we bring them to life. Neglected or slighted aspects of ourselves awaken from dormancy. They stir, quicken, and grow glossy like sleek animals. They get rambunctious. Energies rise. Dreams happen.

While you absolutely do not need to know your astrological chart to enjoy and engage with this book, do take the time to read this chapter. Reviewing the different components of the birth chart provides an introduction to astrological thinking and to some of the vocabulary of this language.

YOUR BIRTH CHART

An astrological chart is an astronomical map of the sky at the time of your birth, as seen from the perspective of your birthplace, represented in a stylized form. It is a snapshot of the sky that freezes a moment in time that is unique to you. With some training and reference books, it can be calculated from the birth data of time, date, and place. You can also calculate your chart using astrological software. (See the footnote on page 56 to find out where and how to get your chart calculated.)

We orient ourselves to the chart by understanding that the Earth is the central, inner circle. Think of the main horizontal line that cuts across the chart as the line of the horizon. An astrological chart differs from a conventional map in that east is on the left and west is on the right. The horizon line on the left determines the *ascendant* or *rising sign.* It is simply that sign of the zodiac which was rising due east at the moment of your birth. The ascendant represents your style of doing things. It's like a stained-glass window through which the rest of your chart shines. The ascendant also represents your path—the journey that will develop those qualities most necessary to bring the rest of your chart's potential into full manifestation.



CAROLINE W. CASEY

October 14, 1952, 1:38 P.M. EST

Washington, D.C.

Everything above the horizon is theoretically visible at the time of your birth, and represents the larger social world of which we are all a part. If most of the planets are above the horizon, the chart describes someone whose primary mission is to participate in the larger, social, collective world. These people do not mind being visible. While they are certainly allowed to have private or personal lives, their primary task is to extrapolate larger significance from personal experience. People whose charts show the predominance of planets below the horizon prefer to be invisible, lobbing things into the larger world from their private bunkers.

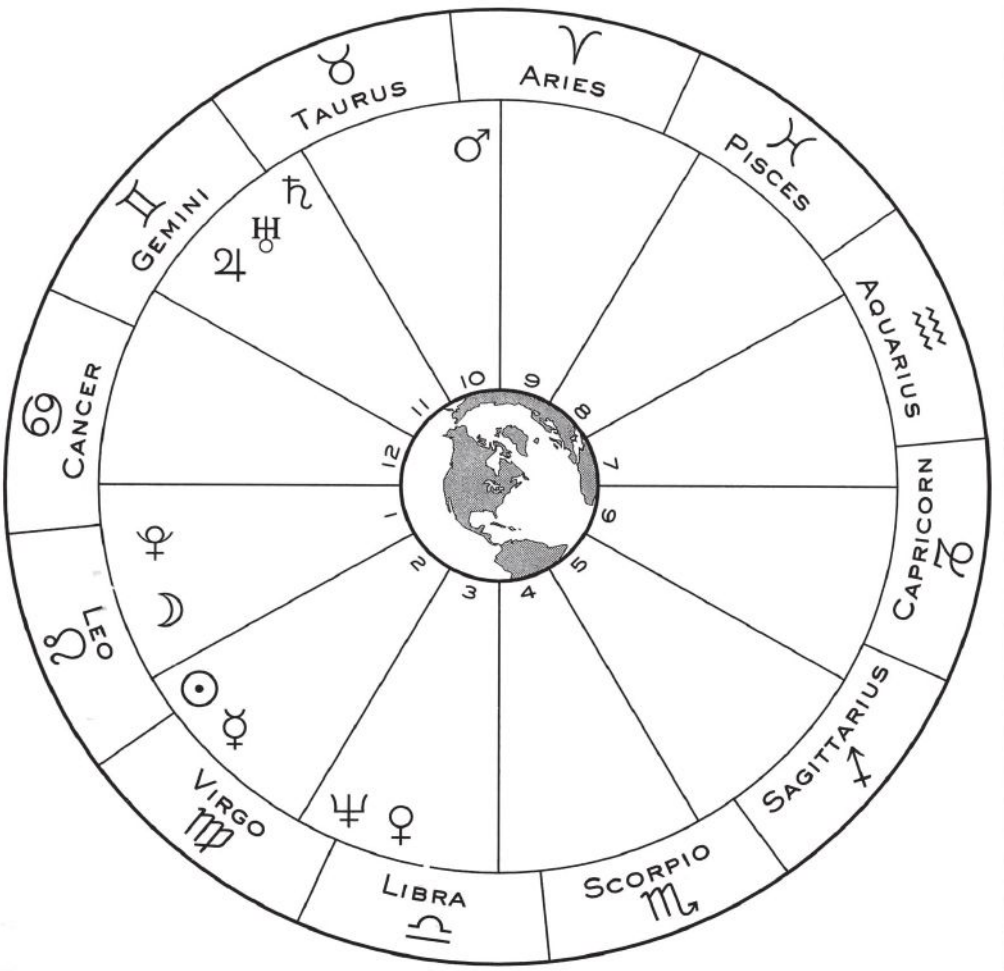
When planets are primarily on the left side of the chart (east, where the Sun rises), it describes a person concerned with self-determination and discovery. Very often this will be the family member who moves away to the other coast, or the symbolic geographical equivalent.

In contrast, if most planets are on the right (west, the realm of things ancient), there is a feeling of a deep relationship to the past. These are people whose lives will make more sense if they think of themselves as ancient souls in the modern world. We would be sending them to Hell if we made them live in Los Angeles or any other place with no deep cultural roots.

THE PLANETS

Your chart is a symbolic map of your contract with life—your briefing instructions from the gods in their planetary guises. The planets represent different kinds of intelligence, different parts of the psyche. When we feed each part of ourselves, as represented by the planets, we bloom as individuals. Or, if some part is neglected, it becomes cranky and strange.

The planets move against the backdrop of the wheel of the zodiac, which is the outer circle of the chart. The zodiac gives the planets their flavoring, their myriad permutations of expression, and tells us how they will express themselves in our lives. Think



JOE CASEY
August 21, 1941, 3:05 A.M. EDT
Hanover, NH

of the planets as verbs and the zodiac as adverbs. A planet will always express itself in the medium of the sign through which it is moving.

Each planet is associated with an astrological sign. We might say a planet "rules" a sign, which simply means it has an affinity for what that sign represents. Mars and Aries both have to do with the heat of outward dynamism, making things happen in the outer world, initiation. Therefore, Mars has an affinity for Aries; it rules Aries. The planets sometimes rule two signs, which will then describe an introverted and an extroverted version of a particular energetic quality. Mars, in its introverted expression, also rules Scorpio, making things happen in the realm of the invisible.

Some signs also have co-rulers—two planets—as in the case of Scorpio, which is also ruled by Pluto. In their Scorpion manifestations, both planets have to do with deep delving into the underworld.

Venus has an affinity for pleasure, kinship, and beauty, which is expressed in the sensual world by Taurus and in the social world by Libra.

Mercury rules Gemini, the communicative, discursive mind. It also rules Virgo, the mind in its analytical, diagnostic mode.

The Moon rules Cancer much the way it governs the ocean tides, pulling in and letting go, sensing what needs nourishment and what needs release.

The Sun is called "the ruler of Leo." At the height of summer, when the Sun is strongest, it is passionate, shining, and radiant, like Leo. The Sun makes us sweat; it makes everything that is fertile more fertile, and everything that is barren more barren.

Jupiter expresses the outer quest in its rulership of Sagittarius, and inner questing in its affinity for Pisces, which is also ruled by Neptune, representing dreams, vision, and imagination.

Saturn, in its dynamic ambition, rules Capricorn, the empire builder. It also co-rules Aquarius, representing stability, tradition,

and the domain of community, along with Uranus, which embodies wild innovation. This suggests that Aquarians are always hovering dynamically in balance between the two planets that rule them.

THE ZODIAC

Most people identify astrology with the wheel of the zodiac and its twelve signs. Even the dourest skeptic knows his Sun sign (the sign that was the backdrop for the Sun when he was born). The wheel, in which each of the signs comprises 30 degrees of the sky, represents human imagination projected against the constellations.

The great wheel of the zodiac describes how energy circulates. The eternal rotation of the signs alternates between extroverted and introverted, masculine and feminine. It begins with Aries (at the vernal equinox, the beginning of spring), circles around the sky through Taurus and Gemini and ultimately to Pisces, then starts up again with Aries. In any situation or person, all of the twelve dynamics are present, though with some more strongly emphasized than others. However, those people who are born with the Sun in a particular sign are the most visible exemplars of that sign's characteristics. For this reason, your affinity may be most resonant with the planet or planets that govern your Sun sign.

Just as we honor particular gods on their day of the week, so we honor each god in its seasonal time span. The Sun vitalizes and animates the presiding deity of the sign through which it passes. Therefore, the planetary god incarnates and is most present during its own season, and in the people born during that time period. If you are an Aries, you are an incarnation of Mars. If you are a Libra, you are an incarnation of Venus. It behooves all of us to become familiar with the archetype that seeks expression through us, to learn how to honor it and what happens when we do not.

All signs were created equal and make unique and indispensable contributions to the cosmic whole. There are no "better" or "worse"

signs. The soul's journey is one of education at the school of the zodiac. Each sign can be viewed as an appropriate reaction against the excesses of the sign preceding it, and as a necessary preparation for the succeeding sign. Each sign of the zodiac also has a crucial secret revealed by its opposite sign.

Each sign is assigned both instructions to follow and demons with which to wrestle. We earn the wisdom by wrestling with the demons. The instructions are open-ended and can be fulfilled in myriad individual ways during the course of your life. One has the free will either to follow one's instructions and become fully oneself or to blow it by surrendering to the demons. The zodiac is one of the original systems of self-cultivation, self-revelation, and self-evolution.

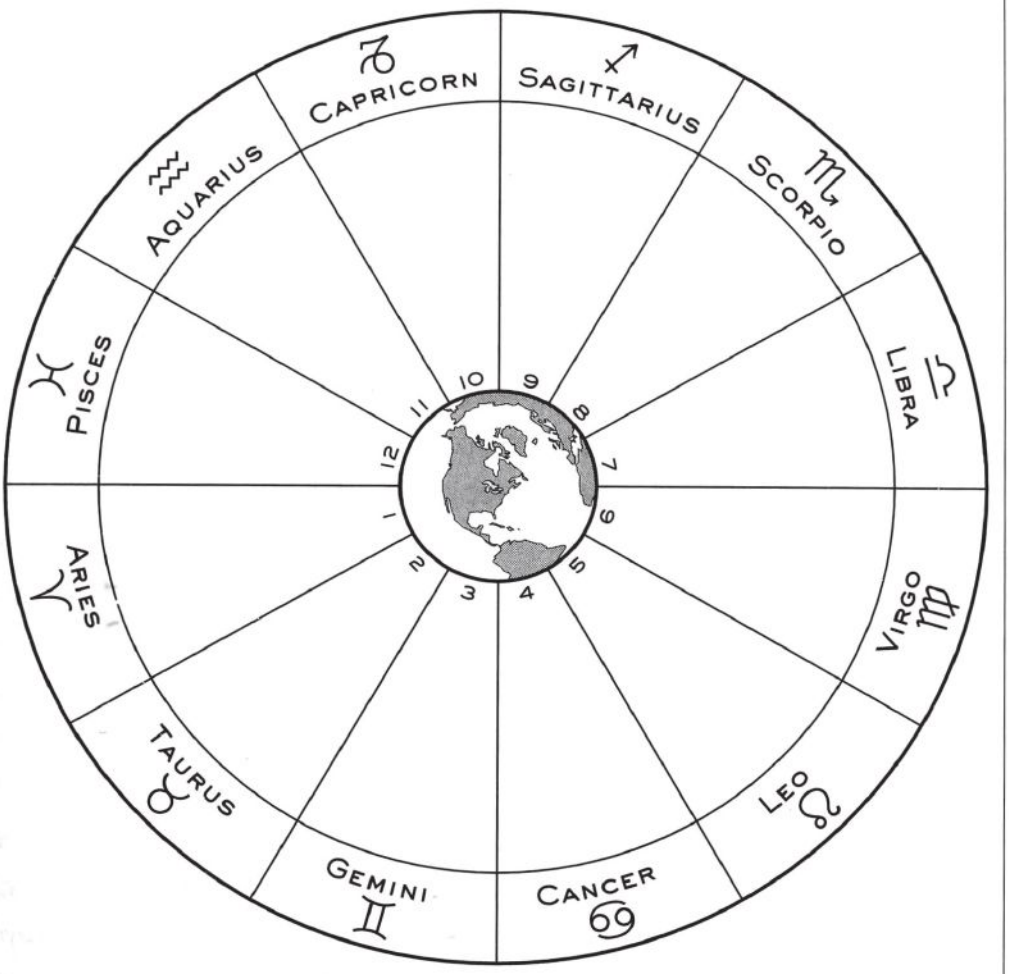
Each sign of the zodiac is described as *cardinal, fixed,* or *mutable.* Aries is a cardinal sign; Taurus is fixed; Gemini is mutable; Cancer starts again at cardinal; and so on through the zodiac. Cardinal signs symbolize dynamic energy. They initiate things, make things happen. Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn are cardinal because those signs, beginning at the equinox and solstice points of the year, initiate the four seasons.

Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius are the fixed signs, consolidating and stabilizing cardinal energy for use in the implementation of plans. People with these Sun signs tend to have fixed opinions.

The mutable signs—Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces—extend or communicate ideas out into the world, like a town crier.

In any person, or in any situation—a project, a business, even a smaller kind of theatrical venue like a party—you can feel the pulsing rhythm of the cardinal, fixed, and mutable energies initiating, consolidating, and extending.

Exploring the zodiac is a good overview introduction to the planets in action. By meeting them in this familiar form, we make ourselves ready to encounter them more deeply, each in their own subsequent chapter.



THE WHEEL OF THE ZODIAC

ARIES (≅ MARCH 21 – ≅ APRIL 21)
RULED BY MARS

Is this a private fight or can anyone join in?

IRISH SAYING

After winter's dormancy, Mars comes to life at the beginning of spring in as many different ways as there are individuals born at this time of year.

The great wheel of the zodiac begins with Aries, on the first day of spring, the vernal equinox. Aries answers the question, "What kind of energy does it take to be born in spring?" The answer is Mars energy—heat, dynamism, adolescent bravado.

Mars is the energetic god-force of emergent erotic vitality who presides over Aries. Life must push up through the frozen crust of the Earth at this time of year, so those born under the sign of Aries, the Ram, embody the struggle to emerge, to be distinct individuals, warriors, mavericks, and flirts. Aries is the Eternal Adolescent, perpetually in search of an identity. "Who am I?" Aries cry as they forever hurtle themselves into new experiences.

Aries people appear to be independent, yet because they seek their identity through others, their secret, as revealed by the opposite sign of socially self-conscious Libra, is that no sign cares more deeply about relationship. They prefer any kind of interaction—even negative—to none at all: "If we can be friends, that's great; if not, let's fight." Combat is a form of intimacy. If they cannot get anyone else to fight with them, they will provoke a fight with themselves.

Aries' job is to be catalytic, to make trouble, to be "bad." Testing the limits is a favorite pastime: "What are the rules and how can I break them?" But when they do break the rules, they almost always arrange to get caught. They delight in being perceived as rascals, since that at least provides an identity.

Another one of their strategies for exhilaration is to deal in emphatic contrasts: yes or no, black or white. Sarcasm, banter, irony, and bluntness are their main verbal tactics. They are strategists, though none too subtle. Whatever they are plotting, you can usually see it coming from afar, making them predictable to work with. They enjoy complicated triangles, as long as they are at the apex. If an Aries cannot be the best, he or she will feign disinterest.

Aries is the Ram, butting its way into whatever seems exciting. Because Aries rules the head, headaches are the sign that they have been doing too much butting—or butting in where they do not belong. In order to be successfully intrusive, an Aries must learn the Libran skills of charm, including how to flirt and how to challenge others diplomatically.

People born under this sign hate pretense in others, though they often fail to recognize it in themselves. If you want to know who other people really are, set an Aries loose in the room and watch him or her provoke others into self-revelation. Many of Aries' conflicts with others are projections of their battles with their own inner demons.

Aries people have good hearts and great spirits, provided they do not give up in their heroic battle against boredom, cynicism, and lethargy. It is as though they must continually fight the dragon of winter's inertia.

Aries natives need physical exertion or else they become cranky. They have a naturally high metabolism and really have to work at being fat—something they often do (as witness the girth of quintessential Aries Marlon Brando).

Aries natives pride themselves on their genius for self-justification, which they often mistake for rationality. In fact, they are so adamant and certain in their assertions that they often shake the confidence of their friends and adversaries (often one and the same). Directness, rather than subtlety, is both their strength and their bane, as all virtues prove to be liabilities if enthusiastic excess

is not curbed. Aries people tend toward self-absorption; therefore, they are assigned the task of pushing back the claustrophobic walls of narrow self-interest so they can use their dynamism to enliven the environment around them, rather than lay waste to it.

Aries is the first of the fire signs, and their emotions flare up and die down fast. Often gripped by the enthusiasm of initiating, one of their challenges is to cultivate persistence, the endurance to complete a project.

Fundamentally, Aries is the Hero or Heroine who follows the Path of Desire. Their quest encompasses the slow (and Aries hates slow) process of self-education, in which their desires become less and less selfish and gradually expand to include the well-being of more and more of creation. Their contribution to others is that they initiate, spark, enthuse, confront, and generally stir things up.

The Aries person embodies the power of the individual: he or she is wary of joining groups, following leaders, accepting fetters. Although the Aries personality can sometimes engage in shadow-boxing and require friends to calm it down, many times the fights are real and principled, and affect all of us in important ways. We all have Aries somewhere in our charts, and the Sun sign Aries helps to stimulate that exuberant, full-on, confident embrace of life.

TAURUS (≅ APRIL 21 – ≅ MAY 21)
RULED BY VENUS

After the furor of Aries, the energy of Taurus is languid, primitively nuzzling with the natural world. As the bees buzz through the increasingly fragrant fields, Venus incarnates, making Taurus the most sensually intelligent of all the signs. Taste, texture, color, music—all nourish the Taurean, who knows that one can starve from aesthetic as well as caloric deprivation.

The first of the fixed signs, Taurus's purpose is to harness and consolidate the wild energy of Aries by providing it with a vessel in which to take form. The gushing stream flows into a fertile plain,

yielding bounteous crops. Taurus is the god of agricultural stewardship, and urges us to collaborate wisely with the natural world. This is the season of awakening the power of the earth.

Think of Taurean Fred Astaire's graceful tap dancing as the modern expression of the ancient English tradition of Morris dancing, in which dancers with bells on their ankles would stomp the earth back to fertile vitality on May Day. In his top hat and tails, Astaire may also be thought of as an elegant insect suitor tapping out a rhythmic request to be invited into the flower. "May I come in?"—tap, tap—"It will be fun!"

In Taurus, the Aries Ram becomes the persistent, strong-willed Bull. ("I'll keep dancing until you let me in, because we'll both like what happens.") The positive side of stubbornness is sturdy endurance. No one changes the mind or pace of the Taurus native.

Taurus is the Steward whose job is to be a good "materialist." "Matter" and "mother" come from the same root word, the Latin *mater.* How we treat the material world is how we treat the feminine, Mother Nature.

Late April to late May (the period that includes Mother's Day) is the time when, in the northern hemisphere, all the world becomes a rain forest. Moist, luscious, fecund, and teeming with an exotic profusion of life-forms that have evolved over millions of years, the rain forest surely is the habitat of Venus in her Taurean expression.

The glyph for Taurus is thought of as representing the Bull's head, but the symbol was also meant to represent (with its circle) the womb, and (with its crescent) the Fallopian tubes. This symbol poses the question, "Why are we born? Indeed, why does Creation bother to manifest anything?" "For pleasure," Taurus responds, "and for conscious participation in the evolving interrelated beauty of it all."

As Venus incarnates through those born in late April to late May, she encourages cooperation in the conspiracy for ever-increasing pleasure. Venus is the goddess of attraction, and in her world all attractions are to pleasure and result in symbiotic symmetry—the

right bee to the right flower for the enhanced sweetness of the whole honey-loving world. The moans of pleasure uttered by the dog rolling on its back, by creatures surrendering to sensual embrace, by us when we enter deliciously hot water or taste an exquisite morsel, are her mantras of kinship. These languid ecstatic exhalations occur spontaneously when we are in right relationship to creation and find ourselves at home in the vibrant, pulsing hum of the natural world. In the Venusian Taurus world, there is no split between the material world and the spiritual. Rather, when we make something beautiful, we invite the invisible magic represented by Taurus's opposite sign of Scorpio to come live there.

While Aries was rushing toward an uncertain destiny, Taurus runs on biological time rather than adhering to man-made schedules. Projects are conceived, planted, tended, and harvested like crops. To Taurus, everything is biology. Culture is the biology of ideas.

In the human body, Taurus is associated with the throat. When not ground down by oppressive brooding, Taurus has a beautiful, deep, musical voice with a deep Orphean resonance. Think of Taureans Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and the deep-throated voices of actors Lionel Barrymore, Joseph Cotten, and Orson Welles.

Taurus is the best of all the signs at acquiring and consolidating wealth by cultivating all available resources. Give them a nickel and they'll invest it; a plot of land, they'll cultivate it; an idea, and they'll write an essay. But if Taurus forgets the concept of stewardship, of cooperation with the divine to make the garden bloom, then it feels exiled from the Edenic community garden. Then Taureans become consumed by the desire to possess, own, control, critique, and devour. The nightmare Taurus dinner party occurs when sensual Taurus is deprived of its contact with nature, and would comprise such exemplars as Karl Marx, Ho Chi Minh, Søren Kierkegaard (all sharing May 5 as their birthday), Sigmund Freud, Ayatollah Khomeini, Vladimir Zhiranovsky, and Niccolo Machiavelli. On

good days, Taurus sees the beauty of divine expression shining through all manifestations of the natural world. Taureans flourish by understanding that tending, caring, nurturing, and mating are their true tasks.

GEMINI (≅ MAY 21 — ≅ JUNE 21)
RULED BY MERCURY

The wing-footed trickster and messenger god Mercury incarnates through those born from late May to late June. The first of the Air signs, Gemini emerges from the heaviness of Taurus with a desire to soar into the lighter, more spontaneous world of abstraction, concepts, and open-ended plans. Aries got the river running, and Taurus put it to use by creating agriculture. Now Gemini cannot wait to leave the farm. Aries initiates, Taurus consolidates, and Gemini extends through communication.

Geminis are in love with words, language, ideas for the sake of ideas. They are considered the poets, bards, and storytellers, but not the philosophers (who are found in the opposite sign of Sagittarius). Indeed, Geminis are so taken with language that they sometimes use more of it than they need. A classic example is Gemini President John F. Kennedy's phrase, "Now let me say this about that." A Gemini admonishment is to talk less, say more. Geminis would do well to adopt the broad research and stretched-out horizon of Sagittarius in order to have something meaningful to communicate. They experiment with the power of ideas and will often express opinions they do not really hold, just to be provocative.

Gemini, which rules the lungs, knows that we are all connected through the air that we breathe. Words ride along on air currents and help us feel connected. The content is not as important as the contact. For Geminis, talking alleviates the anxiety of feeling wired and overwhelmed by the complexity of daily life.

Geminis serve the function of nerve synapses in the culture, connecting and coordinating disparate parties by facilitating infor-

mation flow. The symbol for Gemini is the Twins, of two minds about everything. Ping-Pong is their sport. They also crave sibling familiarity and have to be careful about acting too openly and casually around people they have just met.

The Gemini is most often the member of the family who will leave, seeking a larger world of experience from the one they were born into. Eternal sullen kid, Gemini poet-bard Bob Dylan leaves the Taurean agricultural Midwest and heads for the communicative coastal cities. As a consequence, Geminis can feel achingly lonely on the Sagittarian journey. Even with their apparent extroversion, they discover that fame can be a lonely place. Pop icons Marilyn Monroe and Judy Garland, both Geminis, are perfect examples of how traveling so far, so fast, being known by so many and yet truly perceived by so few, takes its toll.

Whereas Aries is the eternal adolescent, Gemini is the eternal preadolescent. Like Peter Pan, on some level Geminis never want to grow up. But while they fear age in anticipation, they actually relish it in reality. Geminis often come into their own in their middle years, when the outer world is no longer so intimidating. They finally slow down enough to contemplate their experiences and distill what is important from what is merely idly charming.

Also, like the flying leader of the Lost Boys, they often present themselves as overconfident to mask their insecurity. Androgynous and ambidextrous, they can play both sides of almost any role. Eternally restless, for them, routine is anathema.

The Gemini demon is that once they have talked about something, they think they have done it. People who live with these fast-talking charmers are all too familiar with the detritus of eight million unfinished projects lying around the house—a tangible history of Gemini's ephemeral enthusiasm and short attention span. Their environment tells the story of once-wonderful ideas that quickly became tiresome when the talking was over and the real work began. Their growth lies in sticking with things—projects,

relationships, jobs—through the hard, dull parts, once the glamour has worn off. Geminis love the flight but fear the landing, because back on terra firma they might be eaten by the ordinary.

Like Adam in the Bible, Gemini is the namer, the magician-poet, the one who gains power over creation by the act of attaching words to objects. The task for Geminis is to take themselves seriously (then others will, too) and to take seriously their fascination with the creative power of language. Geminis are communicators; their choice is whether to apply their gift to waffling, wit, or wisdom. To talk, to say, to name is to invoke. Wherever Gemini is in our charts is where we are assigned the task of understanding the magically creative power of words.

CANCER (≅ JUNE 21 – ≅ JULY 21)
RULED BY THE MOON

The Moon incarnates through those born from late June to late July. Cancer begins on the summer solstice, the longest day and shortest night, which is the consummation of a journey that began on the winter solstice, the longest night and shortest day. These solstice times are the two major turning points in the yearly dance of Light and Dark. At each solstice, a transfer of power takes place from an outreaching male energy (Sagittarius or Gemini) to an introverted feminine sign (Cancer or Capricorn). "That's enough of outdoors; let's go inside."

The Cancerian feminine force responds to Gemini's extended romp. The nights begin to grow longer and Cancer's lunar tide pulls everything into the womb, to home, to family. "Come on back home to Mama," Cancer croons. The Moon's phases reveal the manifold manifestations of Cancer as the Great Mother: nurturer, protector, devourer. Indeed, every aspect of your relationship with your own mother will in some way be played out in your relationship with Cancers. Cancers are everyone's surrogate mom, and everyone's surrogate child.

For Cancer, all relationships are colored by the mother-child dynamic. Cancers can alternately, and sometimes simultaneously, be the Good Mother and the Naughty Child, or the Bad Mother and the Good Child. They test love: "You say you love me; how about if I'm bad and I do *this*?" Those who do not leave in exasperation, but ride out the Cancerian mood storm, will find that the offer of a reassuring cup of tea, accompanied by sympathetic murmurs ("There, there, truly no one has suffered as you have") at the right moment, will often quell the most fantastic displays. Of course, even the right gesture, at the wrong time, could cost you your head. Or your hand. "Bite the hand that feeds you? What's wrong with that?"

The double jeopardy is that you can never feed a Cancer enough. On particularly moody days, they take on the devouring aspect of the Divine Mother, resembling an enormous insatiable "Feed me!" mouth. Relentless in their hunger, Cancers cry out, "I need to eat this, have this, be with this person."

Growing anything requires a container: a womb, a home, or a flower pot. Cancer says, "I feel what is needed to incubate life, and I respond." In addition to being hungry, Cancer provides for the hunger of others. Cancer's task is to set up housekeeping in order to create an environment in which nourishing can take place. Drawing upon the ambition of its opposite sign of Capricorn makes it possible for Cancer to extrapolate the wisdom derived from spiritual good housekeeping out into the market place for the general good. Cancerians Buckminster Fuller and Emma Goldman show the range: one invented structures of future domesticity; the other provided chicken soup in the middle of the Russian Revolution. As the Great Mother, Cancer identifies emphatically with the yearning of all creatures for home, homeland, and safe haven. The modern, vast crisis of exile and homelessness, in which both people and creatures are turned into refugees by the ruthless machinations of the greedy few, reminds all of us to cultivate the Cancerian concern, fierce protectiveness, and creative response characteristic of this sign. Emma

Goldman's memoirs, *Nowhere at Home: Letters from Exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman,* is dedicated to "all exiles, external and internal," a credo expressed also in the life of the exiled Cancerian spiritual leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama.

"All right, you strapping youth," Cancer says to Gemini, "let's take all of your diffuse male energy and build and grow something. Not some dreamy idea or plan, but something *real,* like a child, a house, a project, a wildlife sanctuary." Ever practical, Cancer continues, "Gemini Jack, you take this cow to market, sell her for money, and don't give me any of this magic bean business."

Cancer is the Crab who lives in the sea, which is ruled by the Moon—oceanic, menstrual, emotional, the mistress of all tides. Together, the Moon and Cancer rule all growing life, natural cycles, shifting tides, introversion, and brooding—in both senses of the word. All living things incubate in their own watery sac, their personal ocean; they emerge into a larger one.

Cancer presides over history, the womb of time. Most Cancerians are historians of some kind, whether they be interested in world history, cultural history, or family history. They have a definite preference for the old: houses, sweaters, culture, manners. They love to affirm life through rituals in which the tides of past and future flow together through familiar, time-honored ways of doing things.

Cancers have incredible memories. They never forget a good or a slight done to them or to anyone they consider family—and that includes plants and animals. As Gemini seeks to capture experience by expressing it, Cancer seeks to hold on by remembering. Cancerian Rousseau says, "Remember the natural world." Proust's Cancerian memory was triggered by the taste and smell of certain biscuits that called up the whole world of *Remembrance of Things Past.*

Cancers prefer small, dark, contained spaces, as does a crab under a rock. Their hard, defensive outer shell protects their soft underbelly. Unless they feel safe, they will be brittle, hard, and judgmental. Like the crab, they need to know when to let go of things

they have grasped in their pincers. Because of their reluctance to release the past and things that embody the past, their homes often look like a permanent yard sale.

Because their task is to protect life, Cancers are equipped with long, graceful emotional antennae with which they can feel and probe. "Is this safe? Could I live here? Can I eat it?" This sign rules the stomach, and a particularly sensitive stomach (gut feelings) is Cancer's primary physical receptor of stress of any kind.

Since Cancers are so good at feeling what is needed and responding, their Capricornian secret is that they are tremendous business and resource people. They can tell you anything from the best books to read to where to get your car fixed cheaply. They do a great deal for others, but they expect an equal return. Others often blithely accept the Cancer's help without realizing that a hidden accounting is taking place. Then they wonder why the Cancer is so moody, huffy, and aggressively withdrawn. When Cancers' generosity is reciprocated, they are jolly and playful, and their pincers become castanets.

Possibly one of the reasons that Cancers and Scorpios are such a common and good marital match is that both the Crab and the Scorpion have pincers. Also, each expresses the other's secret, trusting the other in a way that is rare. The Cancer lets the Scorpio reveal the secret judgmental side of its nature, while the Scorpio's secret is that it is actually as maternal as the Cancer. "Cancer is just a Scorpio in a housecoat," says astrologer Jayj Jacobs.

The Cancer glyph is the Crab, but also the breasts. Even Cancer men are maternal. In patriarchal cultures, they are often unsure about what to do with all of their extravagantly nurturing impulses. Cancer wants to plant a tree that may not bloom and bear fruit for twenty years, expressing faith in the continuing cycle of life nurturing life. Cancer is the custodian of the truth that "what we tend will then tend to us."

LEO (≅ JULY 21 – ≅ AUGUST 21)
RULED BY THE SUN

The Sun seeks its most radiant expression in this time of year and in those born in late July through late August. Leo is the child who bursts forth from the confines of Cancerian gestation. "Let me out of that sack! I am the solar child-king/queen, and I've come to perform." In Leo's passionate theater of life, pageantry and ceremony celebrate everything born of love, whether offspring of the heart, the mind, the body, or the spirit. Leo's imperative is that it must create, must be the artist using whatever medium is at hand.

Leo is both "fixed" and "fiery," adamant and impulsive, and always emphatic. Creative certainty, absolute edicts, and provocative proclamations are its basic modes of expression. Gifted with extraordinary talent as well as a love for grand theater, Leo's quandary is whether to create high theater or live melodrama. While in youth Leo may enjoy being the star of the play, in later years Leo discovers that it is also the playwright.

Leo's job is to produce, direct, present, and stage life's richness. The pitfall can lie in its singular vision of what is important now. All too often the "trip" of the moment is the only "trip" to be on. Everyone else must go along with it, or in Leo's mind they are deficient in some way. Invoking the prayer of its opposite sign of Aquarius, "Whatever is truly best for the well-being of the community," serves as a corrective to Leo's imperial grandiosity. Relaxed, receptive listening to others without an urgent agenda or sales pitch allows the Aquarian round table to convene. Leo still gets to be king.

Leos must struggle to emerge from the Cancerian Mother's domination; yet they sometimes feel that only the Mother can fully appreciate their Leonine brilliance and soothe their bruised pride when the assaults of the world have proved too harsh. Leos often move cockily out into the world, stand up to authority, and say, "Hit

me. Go ahead, I dare you. Hit me!" and then are shocked and dismayed when they get walloped.

Certainly showbiz (to the Leo, everything is showbiz) and especially Hollywood were made by and for these guys: Cecil B. DeMille, Samuel Goldwyn, Mae West, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Mick Jagger. In the realm of history and political intrigue, we also find strong-willed Leonine extravagants such as Napoleon Bonaparte, T. E. Lawrence, Fidel Castro, Benito Mussolini, and Mata Hari.

In the full flowering of Leo's exuberance we see the first really strong emergence of ego structure in the zodiac. "I am not like anyone who has come before me. Nor am I like anyone likely to follow. I am the King of the Age. I am George Bernard Shaw, Henry Ford, Aldous Huxley, Robert Graves, Herman Melville, Helena P. Blavatsky, even Jackie Kennedy Onassis. Wherever I am, I rule."

Like Taurus, Leo is fixed and wants to leave a structure behind, a really great show against which the creative efforts of all others will be measured. Like the other Fire sign, Aries, Leos are leaders. "I'm glad I am Jung and not a Jungian," said Carl Jung, a Leo.

If Leo has not studied, it is great at improvising and winging it on cleverness. The downside of this skill is that it is always haunted by its con-artist shadow. The guilty child part of Leo wonders what will happen when the grown-ups uncover the fraud.

Like Napoleon, Castro, and Mussolini, Leos can overreact, seeing the theater of counterconspiracy in the mundane. As a result they can be very quick, when their will is crossed, to invoke the Big Forces. "I am Good doing battle with Evil. Anyone who crosses me is the vanguard of the Evil Army, because no mere mortal could defy me in this way," Leo proclaims, when it may well just have been Frank the Greengrocer who was a little rude or impatient or failed to worship the genius of their latest creation. Similarly, they would like all of Creation to go into mourning should they come down with a common cold.

Leo is ruled by the heart (Leo the lionhearted), and therefore romance is the theatrical domain in which Leos are most likely to be as magnanimously generous with others as they are with themselves. Leo's task is to have its heart impulse governed by the authentic generosity that radiates from the Sun. Mature Leos understand that the creative energy they emanate does not originate with them, but flows through them. The fixed signs are always stewards of some resource. Taurus would say to Leo, "One possesses nothing, not even talent, solely unto oneself." The glory that enlightened Leos seek is not for the aggrandizement of the struggling child ego. Rather, it is an offering to ignite the spark of the marvelous in all of us.

VIRGO (≅ AUGUST 21 — ≅ SEPTEMBER 21)
RULED BY MERCURY

Here we have the mercurial mind in its analytical incarnation. Where the Gemini incarnation of Mercury was excitedly diffuse, Mercury's expression through Virgo is polished and focused. In Virgo, the scope of life energy contracts from the broad Leonine horizon to the detailed examination of what is at hand. Virgo comes after the trumpeting carnival of Leo's self-expression. As the lights dim, the tents are folded, the music fades, and the days grow shorter, Virgo gets serious and turns inward to ask the Big Questions.

Traditionally, Virgo is the critic, the analyst, the healer who cures society's ills by reintroducing standards of quality and purity into the culture. But to understand those attributes, we must first go back to the earliest symbols for Virgo, which were the Sphinx and, later, the Virgin surrounded by sheaves of wheat.

The Sphinx is the figure of a lion with a woman's head, the emblem of initiation, the asker of important riddles. As Virgo becomes more distinct from the Leonine lion, the figure of the Virgin with her sheaves of wheat emerges fully from the Sphinx. When the symbolism first arose, the attribute of virginity had less to do

with chastity than with the idea of a woman in full possession of herself, an oracle, a priestess, or a muse, similar to Dante's Beatrice. The woman says, "Follow me, and I will guide you in answering the Sphinx's questions."

The sheaves of wheat are emblems of disciplined sexuality that also refer to the abundant harvest that must be sorted and refined at this time of year. The poignant wafts of autumn air remind Virgo that all must be put in order for the approaching winter. Virgo appreciates both the beauty and the necessity of order. How one orders one's life in accord with the seasonal cycle will determine whether and how one survives. An important part of harvesting is dividing, separating, and calculating which seeds will be saved to plant the new crop. This task demonstrates Virgo's discrimination, a crucial trait that ensures survival of the whole community. It is from this primary metaphor that the rest of Virgo's attributes derive.

With Virgo, we have reached the halfway mark in the soul's journey through the zodiac. This time of introversion and seasonal transition lends itself to the task of cultivation of self: self-refinement. In searching for the soul, the Virgin is the guide.

The smoky, enigmatic, self-possessed beauty of Virgo women such as Greta Garbo, Lauren Bacall, Ingrid Bergman, and Sophia Loren should help us lay to rest the irritating pop Virgo image of the demure, chaste health fanatic wearing clunky shoes or, better yet, Birkenstocks—a cliché that has aggravated so many modern Virgo women.

Virgo's task is to harness its attention to detail, and its consequent critical insight, to the sense of service and healing proffered by its opposite sign, Pisces. Then pragmatism can wed with mysticism. "God is in the details," said the architect Mies van der Rohe. Virgo is the master diagnostician who, from a tiny slice of information or a fragment of a conversation overheard (the microcosm), can extrapolate the whole (the Piscean macrocosm). Its journey is

from atom to cosmos and back again, with a tendency to get stuck on minutiae. Virgos often can't see the forest for the trees or the tree for the molecule. They're great at "What's wrong with this picture?" as they can always spot the flaw, the imperfection; their challenge is to remember the bigger picture.

"Serve or suffer" is the old-fashioned dictum relating to Virgo. Virgo feels good when it remembers that it serves the great pre-existing order. Virgo suffers and feels neurotic when it mistakenly thinks that the only order that exists is the one it generates. Virgos might feel, for instance, that if they were not paying attention, the oceans might dry up. If Virgo does nothing to serve others, its finely honed, analytical, detail-oriented mind turns on itself and becomes its own harshest critic. Virgo can fret over minutiae, overwhelmed by the details of daily life in which, in a fit of anxiety, all tasks feel equally weighted: "Must save the world, must pick up the dry cleaning."

In its digestive and assimilative aspects, Virgo rules the intestines and the liver. Virgo must process, order, and assimilate all of its critical insight or else it is plagued by physical and spiritual indigestion.

As Cancer pulled in life energy, Virgo pulls in mental energy. This marks the beginning of theory, extrapolation, deduction, the Sherlock Holmes mind, and standards of excellence. Virgo is the deductive mind, which logically elaborates any accepted tenet—even if the tenet is wrong.

Mercury, the ruler of this sign, bestows Virgo's capacity to classify. One example would be Virgo Samuel Johnson's dictionary and critical commentaries of the eighteenth century. Another would be the Virgo healer shaman who knows all of the herbs in the forest, has tested them, studied their effects, and marveled at the profusion of detailed, abundant diversity.

Doing things right—nay, perfectly—is the Virgoan aspiration. They can, however, get hoist on their own perfectionist petard. When an opportunity comes along, the Virgo may say, "Oh, what a

wonderful opportunity! But I'm not ready yet, not perfect enough yet. Maybe in a few months or years, after I've practiced more, studied more, earned several more degrees, or done more research." This is the Virgo "racket." "When the teacher arrives, the student is ready," runs an old occult dictum. One need not be perfect to live; full-on participation in life is the process by which one approaches perfection.

Virgo's great talent lies in its discerning eye for order and pattern. As a vigilant researcher, through myriad paths of inquiry, Virgo discovers the order underlying everything and, at the same time, discovers that which it serves. With service comes devotion and the awakening of creative compassion. Virgo's mystery includes both intellect and reverence.

LIBRA (≅ SEPTEMBER 21 — ≅ OCTOBER 21)
RULED BY VENUS

Emerging from Virgo's analytical, scholastic reclusiveness, with Libra we enter the world of Venus: art, culture, and the desire to be maximally related. The first half of the zodiac is primarily concerned with self, with constructing the individual. Libra begins the second half of the zodiac, which is concerned with the collaborative endeavor of the social world, culture, and community.

Libra's glyph represents the setting sun, the west, which is symbolically the realm of the past, reminding us that the past is always alive in our present relationships. With Libra, we begin to contemplate all that has come before and to explore the realm of the other. A strong Libran drive is to find others in the past who were perhaps like oneself, to carry on their tradition, so as not to be lonely in history. Loneliness drives Libra's search for the other: "How can I connect with others to fight back the loneliness of nightfall after the Sun has set?"

Libra is the only sign of the zodiac whose symbol is an inanimate object, the Balance. "There are three coldhearted signs of the

Zodiac: Aquarius, Gemini, and especially Libra," the late Washington, D.C., astrologer Barbara Watters once said. She was a Libra, so she was bragging. Because these three Air signs are all mental, they have the capacity to look coolly on affairs of the heart. No sign is more related or more distant than Libra, both intimate and unreachable. The virtue of Libra is compassionate detachment, which means that no matter how intense the drama, Librans can step back and see all with perspective. The downside, which can drive its friends crazy, is a weird and confusing mixture of friendly, related charm and distance.

Libra's opposite sign is Aries, the maverick, the leader, the combatant, the warrior. "A Libra is just an Aries who has been to charm school," quips astrologer Jayj Jacobs. Libra is the iron hand in the velvet glove, loving pleasure, loving combat.

The Scales exemplify the tendency for Libra to equivocate, "On the one hand . . . but on the other hand . . ." Ironically, no sign can be more sure what everyone else should be doing. Libra can fixate on what others need to do at times when its own situation really demands its attention.

Libras' challenge is to follow their own advice and pay as much attention to their own development as to others'. If they do not, the kidneys (which are the area of the body over which they preside) will remind them that knowledge not acted upon turns toxic.

Libra can drive its friends crazy by continually asking how they are. What motivates Libra to do this—apart from genuine concern, of course—is the hope of finding out how it feels. Libra's insecurity can drive it to incessantly ask for the opinions of others about crucial personal matters. Not that Librans will necessarily follow the advice they receive; they simply want to make sure they've heard all sides of the argument. The irony is that everyone else seeks the counsel of balanced, detached Libra.

The lifelong Libran meditation is on the Venusian theme of relatedness: to the past, to culture, to tradition, to family, to others.

This meditation is both passive and active, its task being twofold: the active path, to observe patterns of relationship; and the dynamic path, to bring things into relationship. "Here, meet this book, this musical instrument, this person, this animal, this country, this historical time period." Libra builds bridges.

If you are new to a community, find a Libran to show you around. Libra's Venusian influence inspired the renowned salons of the past three centuries where extraordinary artists, philosophers, and politicians would congregate. Libra is a painter whose medium is people, attracting a rich and varied palette with which to paint an event. Libra is also the designer of the convivial environment, using beautiful props to create the perfect atmosphere in which the social event can take place. For Libra, beauty is the means, as opposed to Taurus, the other sign ruled by Venus, which views beauty as an end unto itself.

When the Scales are imbalanced, Librans feel compelled to right them. They have a high sense of social justice. Gandhi, for example, epitomizes the Libran desire to inspire large social changes through the art of gracious conflict. Similarly, Libran Eleanor Roosevelt served as her husband's social conscience. John Lennon expressed the Libran outrage at the Vietnam War—from a Venusian bed.

Librans are also known for their acerbic wit. In addition to the raucous ones, such as Groucho Marx, and the provocative ones, such as Timothy Leary, there are the lonely ones: Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, Oscar Wilde. Invitees at a Libran dinner party would also include P. G. Wodehouse, Virgil, e.e. cummings, Aleister Crowley, and Rita Hayworth. Entertainment would be provided by George Gershwin, Chuck Berry, Sarah Bernhardt, John Coltrane, and Thelonious Monk, with drinks served by William Faulkner and Arthur Rimbaud.

Librans are active, yet they continually need the pluck and spunk of Mars to fight the demon of indolence. Librans love languor. If they could run the campaign from the bathtub, they'd be

happy. They love asceticism, but they also love voluptuousness. They love being social, but they value solitude equally. Libra's task, accomplished in solitude, is to become fully effective by unleashing itself from the constraint of worrying about what other people think. Then Librans can be the social change artists who set huge, swirling social forces in motion while being charming and outrageous. The Libran revolution will be catered.

Scorpio
(≅ October 21 — ≅ November 21)
Ruled by Mars and Pluto

In spring, the vital force of Mars emerged from the earth into the light, whereas in Scorpio season, late October to late November, Mars descends to the dark underworld with Pluto as a guide. Springtime Mars had a teenage innocence and bravado, while autumnal Mars explores the realms of darkness.

Scorpio is the detective who comes to Libra's party and spends a long time observing from the corner. It tends to have a few very intense relationships rather than a large circle of friends or acquaintances.

Scorpio is the sharpest, shrewdest, most investigative intelligence in the zodiac. The three symbols associated with it, the Scorpion, the Eagle, and the Phoenix, describe three ways in which Scorpio uses this fierce insight, and delineate this sign's evolutionary path.

In the first stage, the Scorpion stings others and then stings itself in remorse. "Oh my God! I didn't mean to blow that person out of the room, destroy them, demolish them." Mars, guided by Pluto (who is fueled by plutonium), initially does not know its own strength.

At the next level the Eagle, who soars very close to the Sun, has a lay-of-the-land perspective. Scorpio observes the flow of power: who is doing what to whom, both sexually and politically. But the Eagle, still judgmental and predatory, swoops down on its prey.

In its most developed incarnation, Scorpio is represented by the Phoenix, the mythological bird of India who brought music to the world. Legend relates that as the Phoenix was about to die, it would sing a hauntingly beautiful song and all of creation would stop and listen, reminded of that which is truly important. Then the Phoenix would burst into flames and from its ashes the new bird would arise. Everything related to the Phoenix and its story is crucial to the understanding of Scorpio, for the Phoenix is Scorpio's key totem that holds the promise of redemption.

Like the Phoenix, Scorpio has the capacity to draw and focus the attention of others to what it deems important, and to the hidden mysteries of life. Scorpio knows that what is hidden is often most important. Like the Phoenix, Scorpio can go up in flames and emerge anew from the ashes. Scorpios are survivors. Whole chapters of life can go up in smoke, but the Scorpio emerges apparently unscathed, cavalierly brushing off the still-glowing embers. Ideally, the transformation that occurs is one that purges them of their tendency to judge others while leaving their discernment intact. The Phoenix represents the capacity for empathic observation without judgment, and therefore the capacity for compassion. This is not an easy job.

While Taurus, Scorpio's opposite, is concerned with personal power, possession, and stewardship, Scorpio is concerned with the use and abuse of collective wealth and power. These are also the two signs that deal explicitly with eroticism. Taurus represents sexuality for procreation; Scorpio (which rules the sex organs) represents sexuality for recreation.

Both Scorpio and Aries are ruled by Mars, which means they both must follow the path of desire. While Taurus pursues material or physical desire, Scorpio pursues the metaphysical alchemical desire. Alchemy, which was considered a Scorpionic art, was not as concerned with changing lead into gold as with transmuting the metaphorical lead of impure or selfish desires into the gold of purified desire.

Scorpio's insight into and fascination with the big issues, such as death, give rise to the dark views of Scorpios Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Albert Camus, as well as Dylan Thomas's raging against death. We can see the black Scorpionic humor in the work of Evelyn Waugh and Kurt Vonnegut, who shares Dostoyevsky's birthday. The investigative insight of this sign, when harnessed to a scientific impulse, can be seen in the pioneering breakthroughs of Scorpios Marie Curie and Jonas Salk.

Scorpio reminds each of us to ask, "What is my Phoenix's song and in what way will I sing it? If all of creation would listen to my song, on what would I have us all focus?" As the Phoenix must sing her song in order to move to the next phase of life, so our progress in our own journey toward self-development depends upon a generous act of beauty. Or sex. Take your pick.

SAGITTARIUS
(≅ NOVEMBER 21 — ≅ DECEMBER 21)
RULED BY JUPITER

Jupiter seeks incarnation through those born from late November to late December. This god of expansion makes Sagittarius eager to leave Scorpio's intense, focused introspection. Jupiterian natives leap into the grand journey, whether of the mind, the spirit, or the body, seeking to step outside parochial concerns and become citizens of the world. The nature of Sagittarius is one of broad inquiry and fascination with cultural diversity. An odd Sagittarian paradox is a passion for variety (of people, countries, cultures, food) along with a profound intolerance. "Why am I surrounded by idiots?" is the Sagittarian's mantra of exasperation. The astrologer Dane Rudhyar once said, "Gemini [Sagittarius's opposite] has tolerance but no real understanding, whereas Sagittarius can have understanding even when he is most intolerant." A little Gemini charm, tolerance, and uncertainty could go a long way in sweetening the tendency toward Ayatollah-like righteous Sagittarian certainty.

The Sagittarius part of us experiences life as a journey rather than a destination; it enjoys the hunt rather than the quarry, the search or the research rather than the discovery itself. The quest is the most enlivening process for Sagittarius, which is also why it is thought of as the workaholic: the scientist who stays at the lab when everyone else has gone home, or the writer or composer who works late into the night. Sagittarius does not want to work within the accepted confines of other people's timetables. The journey cannot be regimented by artificial time structures, and routine is anathema.

The breadth and scope of their journeys, whether literal or philosophical, makes them intellectual collage artists. Sagittarius is the Philosopher, fascinated by systems and ways of organizing information, willing to explore the diverse philosophies of different cultures. Perhaps it is often happily skeptical of what it finds, because if it were truly satisfied, it would have no reason to keep going. Sagittarius is the Teacher on whatever level it chooses to enact this function. It cannot help but be great at this, since learning is its passion.

If the circumstances prevent physical travel, Sagittarius resorts to rich inner journeying. Unusually independent, reclusive Sagittarian women writers such as Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, and Louisa May Alcott embody the storyteller as traveler. Sagittarian men (for whom travel was possible) include writer-journeyers such as Joseph Conrad, Jonathan Swift, and Mark Twain. But perhaps nowhere can we see more purely the spirit of the fiery philosopher-teacher-writer railing at the fetters of mind and body than in the Sagittarian poet William Blake, who expressed himself in both painting and writing. (Using more than one medium is a common Sagittarian passion.)

The Sagittarian is the explorer who not only journeys to the borders of its field and/or its culture, but also crosses them. They are the Marco Polos of the zodiac. It is common for Sagittarians to have long hair, which can be blown by the winds of change. In terms

of fiery musical expression, Sagittarius ranges from Beethoven to Jimi Hendrix.

Sagittarians can be both hardworking and madcap, often combining the two by working hard at being madcap. They almost always create a unique job function as a synthesis of their diverse talents and interests. One can imagine a Sagittarian with degrees in science and literature, or being a lawyer and a circus performer. When they follow their enthusiasms, they tend to do it thoroughly, finding out everything that can be known on the subject of their latest endeavour. Because Sagittarius governs the circulatory system and the thighs, Sagittarians like and need exertion and will thoroughly study their chosen sport. They take themselves and their pursuits—even their madcap whimsies—very seriously.

Sagittarius is the life energy in all of us that is devoted to diversity. Ideally, Sagittarius expresses a consciousness that asks questions of, and is willing to learn from, anything or anyone, as long as they are smart. Sagittarians fight to preserve culture: its history, its laws and systems, whether man-made (lawyers) or cosmic (philosophers). They are always at work to find the fundamental principles, ways of organizing information they have accumulated into meaning, and ways to turn that information into wisdom and guidance.

CAPRICORN
(≅ DECEMBER 21 — ≅ JANUARY 21)
RULED BY SATURN

Saturn incarnates through those born from late December to late January, giving them an old-fashioned love of hardship, rigor, training, and overcoming adversity. Capricorn begins on the winter solstice, the longest night and the height of dark, introspective power. Once again the energy of exploration pulls inward, as in the opposite sign of Cancer, to harness itself to the task of building a real structure. Just as Cancer wanted to build a home in which to nurture a family, so Capricorn wants to build a state, an empire, a large

collection of homes, in which a civilization can grow. Capricorn's task is to transcend its tendency as a lover to provide material security but leave its partners emotionally high and dry (and cold).

Capricorn's totem is the Goat. When astrological symbolism arose, there were two kinds of goats: the domesticated animal, gloomily chained to its post, and the wild creature. These refer to the two aspects of the Capricornian nature. If Capricorn feels chained, duty-bound, it has an extraordinary capacity for deep gloom. Under this aspect, Capricorn can be responsible and "good," though hardly joyful. In contrast, if Capricorn is free to find its own path, then it has the feisty, randy, Pan-like zest of the wild, sturdy mountain goat.

The goat can climb any mountain, so one of Capricorn's main issues is deciding which mountain to climb. Often the Capricornian experience is one of attaining the summit only to look around and say, "Oh, blast, wrong mountain." But from the top of even the wrong summit, often the correct one is in sight. After a momentary lapse into depression and resignation, Capricorn can then turn again to delight once the proper solo journey is mapped out in its mind. Capricorn's task is to be able to climb solitary heights where no one else can go, and to offer us a vision of what we might create together.

The climb up from the lowly valley to the summit of social attainment has become synonymous with the name of Capricornian Horatio Alger. There is also an authoritarian streak in Capricorns that, in politicians, compels them to create a state in their own image—think of Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin, Richard Nixon, and J. Edgar Hoover. (It is curious in this regard that Hoover's three main nemeses in his mind—Stalin, Al Capone, and Martin Luther King Jr.—were also Capricorns. Doubtless he perceived them as building a threatening state within his state—empire versus empire.)

The Capricornian impulse can become weird and out of touch because Capricorn is so insular. Characteristic solitude, combined

with a fierce work ethic, management capacity, and a hungry ambition, can produce an extremely "successful" (in the world's terms) character. The problem with this kind of success is that Capricorns end up surrounded by worshippers, obedient children, and yes-men who cannot help steer them back to reality. Capricorns can get way out of touch, especially when they climb the wrong mountain but receive acclaim for it. Capricorns tend to hole up like a hermit without a religion, a trait that contributes to the reclusive managerial styles of Capricorns Howard Hughes and Aristotle Onassis.

Nothing is enough for a Capricorn; no amount of money, fame, or acclaim can compensate for the hunger and the feeling of lack on some level left over from childhood. Capricorns are born old, little gnome children, and they feel very lonely, hence their craving for acceptance. This may explain why certain male Capricorn writers are so obviously out to prove their machismo: Jack London, Henry Miller, E. M. Forster, or the opposite-signed Cancer Ernest Hemingway.

We can see the dark, Gothic, beginning-of-winter humor in the Capricorn cartoonist Charles Addams; the Gothic sensibility, minus the humor, in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe; and the somber, deadpan delivery of the host of *The Twilight Zone,* Rod Serling. *The Twilight Zone*'s theme music is the perfect background to the weird Capricornian moods that occur when there is too great an isolation, for which the only remedy is to connect to a larger, external purpose. In the realm of pop icons, think of Elvis Presley and Janis Joplin, lonely at the top—the top of the wrong mountain.

Capricorns need friends who cannot be charmed or awed and who know how to give them a hard time without provoking immediate retreat. No small task. Capricorns have an opinion about everything, no matter how ill-informed, and they have difficulty dealing with equally firm opinions directed against them. They can dish it out, but they certainly can't take it. The slightest bit of criticism, and the Goat's eyes moisten and it darts up the mountain.

Capricorn's rulership of the knees reminds us of this sign's assignment to cultivate humility and flexibility rather than rigidity.

So what might the right mountain be? Capricorn, beginning as it does on the winter solstice (King Arthur's birthday), heralds the season of the Redeemer. The days grow longer and the light returns, rekindling the spirit in all of us. When Capricorn is devoted to something larger than itself, it builds a structure that serves the collective being. Joan of Arc's lonely Capricorn vision helped unify France in the Middle Ages. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech wonderfully expresses the noblest drives of this sign: to scale the mountain, have a vision, and return to deliver the sermon that inspires us all to build a just society.

AQUARIUS
(≅ JANUARY 21 — ≅ FEBRUARY 21)
RULED BY SATURN AND URANUS

Both the god of tradition and the god of innovation rule the psyche of those born from late January to late February. The fact that two such contrasting gods seek incarnation in the same individual accounts for the complexity and wide variety of expression of those born under this sign. This gives rise to the paradoxical character of bold shyness of these very private public people.

Reacting against the reclusiveness of Capricorn, Aquarius wants a media fest. "To hell with talking to myself," says Aquarius. "I want to talk to the world." Ruled by Uranus (called the higher octave of Mercury) Aquarius represents our desire to communicate on a massive scale through airplanes, radio, TV, film, satellites, modems, computers, public relations, and discourse of all kinds. Its symbol is the Water Bearer, the woman pouring forth the waters of new life. Because Aquarius is an Air sign, however, the water represents wave energy. We can also think of the symbol as that of a woman with a broadcast microphone in her hand. Aquarians want to be heard and they want to communicate as rapidly as possible, getting as close to

immediacy as they can, going faster and faster so as to approach the instantaneous.

Aquarius's glyph, two parallel horizontal wavy lines, also has to do with fast-flowing currents of energy. The water is highly charged, inventive, electric energy. It cascades into society, either strengthening the preexisting structure or disrupting it. The result depends on the capacity of that structure to absorb innovative change. Aquarius wants to be hooked up, so Aquarians are often those who invent new forms of communicating, like Thomas Edison; or new forms of thought that shake up the status quo, like Charles Darwin.

Aquarius's rulership by both Saturn and Uranus reveals the truth that stability is dependent upon progressive change. Aquarius rules the ankles, which is the part of the body that must be both sturdy and flexible for quick, sure movement.

Aquarians are an incredibly diverse group of people, including those who serve the established order (Saturnians) and those who seek to bring it down so that a more life-serving culture can emerge (Uranians). Aquarius is a sign of both traditionalists and futurists, impulses often intertwined within the character of the same person. Aquarius is the culture in dialogue with itself.

As with all Air signs, Aquarius knows that we are all united through the air that we breathe, and, in the case of Aquarian Charles Lindbergh, fly through. Also, being a fixed sign, it wants to consolidate this communication in real forms, real rituals of communicative communion, such as forums, films, and the Arthurian Round Table.

Aquarians often feel either ahead of or behind their time. Reformers, inventors, upholders of principles of universal equality and social organization are typically born under this sign. Aquarians are always giving you information, whether you have asked for it or not. Sometimes useful, amusing, trivial, or ingenious, it may be blarney or truth, but all delivered with the same adamant confidence of the opposite sign of Leo.

An image ("worth a thousand words") is an instant form of communication that unifies diverse attention and compels it to focus on one thing. A perfect example of the Aquarian impulse is the televising of the Earth from outer space back to us. By focusing on that image, we are unified into a larger global community, which is a primary Aquarian aspiration.

Aquarian film directors D. W. Griffith and Sergei Eisenstein both documented the spectacle of national emergence and helped build social identity in their countries' audiences. Film, TV, and radio are particularly Aquarian because they require team effort; it takes a group not only to make each media event happen, but to experience it as well.

Whereas Leo can be completely oblivious to the reaction of others, the Aquarian demon is hypersensitivity to the rules of the group. When something comes along for them to respond to, they scan for the group rules in a microsecond. "How should I respond? What does the group expect?" When their attention goes back inside, they find that their own authentic response has frozen and they have no clue what they feel. This fundamental uncertainty increases their fear and therefore their dependence on the group, which they also fear will disapprove of them. Hence the paradoxical shy extrovert. To liberate themselves from this Catch-22, they must learn first to check in with their own hearts, and only then to go out and wonder what everyone else is thinking.

Successful Aquarians are very public, like Franklin D. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Adlai Stevenson, and Ronald Reagan. They need "a little help from their friends," which they would prefer to be the whole world. They require collegial applause in order to overcome their inertia and complete the project at hand.

Just as Aquarian Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart broke the boundaries of music, so Aquarian writers James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Norman Mailer, William Burroughs, Jules Verne, and Charles Dickens did so in literature.

Being both an Air sign and a fixed sign, Aquarius represents the power of thought as it takes on form. The act of focusing on an image is the portal through which its abstract imaginings become real. The Aquarian constellates community by broadcasting a vision of an inclusive society, inviting each of us to participate.

PISCES (≅ FEBRUARY 21 – ≅ MARCH 21)
RULED BY JUPITER AND NEPTUNE

Jupiter incarnates in those born from late February to late March with Neptune as its tour guide. Whereas Jupiter's journey was an external quest in Sagittarius, here Jupiter dives into the oceanic realms of dreams and mystery. Pisces is the dreamer, the romantic, the cosmologist (Copernicus, Galileo, Dr. Seuss, and Einstein). As Virgo, its opposite, was the detail master, Pisces is the master of the overview. As the two social critics of the zodiac, Virgo says, "This is what's wrong," while Pisces says, "This is what could be." Everything dissolves back into Pisces, the last sign of the zodiac, to be reimagined before the cycle starts once more with Aries.

The emblem for Pisces is two connected fish swimming in opposite directions. One fish goes way out to the edge of the universe, and the other goes way down to the bottom of the sea. Ideally, both fish flow rhythmically to the center, touch base with each other, and flow back out on their missions again ("to boldly go where no fish has gone before"), weaving together and apart like a strand of DNA.

If the fish become unconnected, the result is an unconscious Piscean manifestation of unbalanced extremes. Examples include the aimless wanderer, the voyager, and the introvert mired in the depression and addiction that haunt this sign. Pisces' nervous systems are so sensitive that they have very strong reactions to very small doses, whether of chemicals or emotions, so it is crucial for them to exercise discrimination as to what they take or assimilate into their systems. Because of this sensitivity, trust is paramount for

Pisces: Who can they let into their zany dreams, who can they trust not to poison them?

Pisces is the most sensitive of the signs. Their boundaries are so thin that they pick up too much information just from stepping out into the street: radio waves from Arcturus, fragments of passing pedestrians' thoughts. They have to learn how to tune their radio dial to the frequency they want to pick up rather than being distressed by the static.

Pisces lives in the unconscious of the collective. It is in touch with what the culture has forgotten or repressed: dreams that dart, fishlike, beneath the surface. The Piscean task is to retrieve what the culture has denied, to bring it back to surface awareness.

Pisces is co-ruled by Neptune, the principle of dreams, vision, imagination, and illusion. Neptune is represented as a trident on which one can become hooked. When an individual, a family, or a culture lacks a vital mythology, people get hooked on anything that numbs the pain of alienation—drugs, alcohol, cults. In their correspondence, Carl Jung and Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, discussed their shared belief that there is no cure for addiction without a spiritual awakening.

Pisceans want to—and often do, imaginatively and psychically—leave the decadent cities and occasionally the planet itself. This allows them to provide a needed perspective on life back down on Earth. Pisceans can be physically present and psychically gone, as in the trance states of Piscean psychic Edgar Cayce. Sometimes their unclarity, wooziness, and uncertainty of it all, as revealed in their rambling discourse, can drive you mad. "I'm either going to get married or go work on the Alaska Pipeline." They cannot be reasoned with.

Pisceans easily live in past or future, but it is very difficult for them to focus on the present. Possibilities are often so much more intriguing than the present reality; this is their gift and their bane. Their challenge is to find the form with which to express themselves. Music is one option because it feeds their desire to be swept away.

They prefer to keep a very low profile in order not to attract the attention of a potentially hostile gaze, and frantically seek to mimic other people's forms of expression so that they fit in—yet in their efforts to sneak by, they in fact attract a great deal of attention, like a naked smuggler.

Liberated Pisceans live on the edge, over the frontier—think of Einstein, Wild West lawman Wyatt Earp, or the explorer Sir Richard Burton.

If their ambivalence toward life is unresolved, Pisces tend to do just enough work to feel put upon, but not enough to ensure success. Thus their primary demon is an attitude of tragic-romantic melancholy expressed in their addiction to self-sabotage. They are martyrs with a salvation complex that leads them to meet everything with the question "Can I save it?" or "Can it save me?" Channeling that impulse into compassionate behavior without self-sacrifice is their noble path.

Pisceans want to see the whole picture, which can be overwhelming and can make focusing a challenge. When overwhelmed, they tend to make obsessions rather than decisions. Incorporating Virgo's practical grounding and attention to details is Pisces' essential task for manifesting their dreams. Pisces' association with the feet provides the corrective: grounding, feeling one's connection to the earth—in *ch'i gong,* breathing through one's feet.

Pisceans are in touch with such psychic and emotional depths that they fear loss of control. This can produce two impulses: to build a lattice-rope bridge of intricate theory across the abyss, or to fully embrace the mystery and be the culture-doctor, the mad shaman-mystic-priest. The challenge is to be as Einstein aspired: a complete human being, both mystic and scientist.

Pisces is a Water sign, and like all Water signs it is indirect. Through its gills, Pisces filters all the system's cloudiness and toxicity, therefore no sign needs to be more spiritual, simply as a pragmatic survival tool. Pisces must cleanse itself through that emptying

of self which occurs during Zenlike contemplation. In their solitude, they connect to everything. At their best, they yearn not to possess, but to be possessed by the force of the unknown. They are the custodians of the possible, opening us up to a sense of awe, wonder, and mystery.

THE HOUSES

When you look at a chart, you will see that the planets land against the backdrop of the zodiacal wheel. They also land in houses, which are stationary pie-slice divisions of the sky, numbered one through twelve. The border of the first house in a person's chart can be thought of as simply the line of the eastern horizon when that person was born. The borders of the other houses are derived from that point, either in equal division of space (equal house system) or in more-complex house systems. Owing to the angle of the Earth's axis in relationship to the Sun, the speed with which a sign rises in the east varies with the time of year and the latitude of the birth. That is why most modern people take advantage of the luxury of astrological software to calculate these complexities.*

Because the line of the horizon changes by one degree every three minutes, the position of the planets in the houses depends upon having an accurate birth time for the person whose chart is being calculated. I do many readings for people who do not know their birth time, because it was not recorded in a family album or in hospital records, or listed on the birth certificate (the most likely sources). Sometimes we go on the vagaries of mother's memory, and sometimes simply calculate the chart for dawn or noon. I explain that even without a birth time, there are a multitude of

* A company called Astrolabe provides a chart calculation service as well as an extensive array of astrological software. Its mailing address is P.O. Box 1750, Brewster, MA 02631; or phone 800-843-6682. Astrolabe's web site is www.alabe.com.

meaningful patterns to explore (the planets in their relationship to each other against the backdrop of the zodiac.) Without the houses we are simply peeling back and tossing away one transparent layer of specificity.

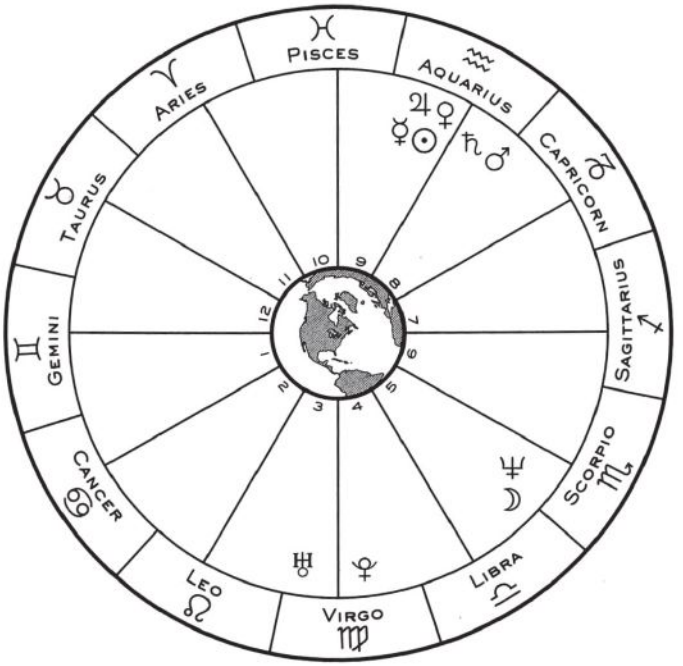
The houses answer the questions, "Where will the action of the planet take place? Where will the drama of life unfold?" The houses in which our planets land describe the realms of life with which we need to do work. When houses are empty (with no planets in them), it is because we already possess what those houses represent. Those themes are important, but they are not primary issues in our lives.

The houses have an affinity with different signs of the zodiac. House number one is very much like Aries, house number two is like Taurus, and so on.

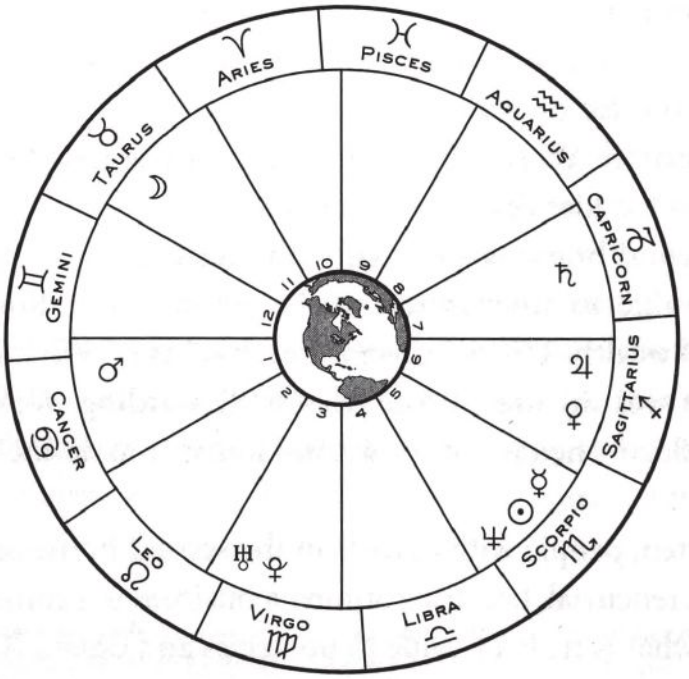
The first house shares Aries' dynamic aggression in meeting the world, and represents our identity. This is a crucial theme as we become increasingly conscious players in our own lives, capable of dancing even more effectively in the larger social world. When gloomy people say to you, "Well, who do you think you are?" the positive response of a person with planets in the first house is "Good question. Wrong tone." The task of the first house is the heroic quest for identity through action.

The second house, associated with Taurus, is a meditation on what is of value, in other words, wealth. As we know, money is only one type of wealth. The question for each of us is "What is our definition of a wealthy life?" Close friends? Rewarding work? Time to think or reflect? The task of the second house is to define wealth for ourselves.

Very often, people with planets in the second house are thought of as entrepreneurial, because running a business is a constant rumination on what is truly of value to ourselves and others. The planets that are in the second house will describe what people value most.



SUSAN J. ZAPOLSKI
January 28, 1962, 1:55 P.M. EST
Washington, D.C.



BRIDGETTE A. ROBINSON
November 4, 1960, 8:05 P.M. MST
Rapid City, SD

OPPOSITE: The pattern of charts and the distribution of planets throughout the houses are as infinitely varied as the people they represent. Here are the charts of two equally intensely creative and effectively disciplined, powerful women. Yet their styles and instructions are completely different. The planets are predominantly above the horizontal line of the horizon (the visible realm) in the chart on the top, accurately describing this woman as enjoying being visible. The woman in whose chart most of the planets lie below the horizon (the invisible realm) has a definite strategical preference for being hidden.

The third house is associated with Gemini, the principle of communication. It asks the question "What do we think interesting communication is?" The sign of the zodiac on the third house and the planets in the third house will give us the answer. Pluto in Virgo in the third house answers, "Detailed, critical, intense discourse is the most interesting kind of communication," whereas Mercury in Gemini in the third house prefers casual, ritualistic banter. The task of the third house is to act as a community nervous system, connecting and coordinating through information flow. People with planets in the third house often have two, three, four, five, or more projects going at once.

The fourth house, associated with Cancer, is at the bottom of the chart and has to do with our roots: the family we were born into, our idea of what home should be. The planets there describe our early environment as well as our sense of how we define security. The task of the fourth house is to realize a family that fulfills our needs for home and safety.

The fifth house, which is associated with Leo, is concerned with passionate self-expression and creativity. In what activities do we find rewarding artistic expression? Music? Dance? Cooking? Macramé? The earliest form of self-expression and theater is ritual, so the fifth house describes the kind of theater, entertainment, and

rituals we find most gratifying. The task of the fifth house is to create drama—or else live melodrama.

The sixth house is associated with Virgo, and is the domain of daily work viewed as a form of service. It is also concerned with personal health. The associative linking of those ideas implies that our personal health is directly related to our satisfaction in daily work and our capacity to view daily work as a kind of service. The task of the sixth house is to find meaningful work that benefits not just ourselves. If we do not, the planets in the sixth house (and the signs of the zodiac on the sixth house) will indicate the part of our body and our energy system that will be the first to warn us that we are off kilter. The Moon in the sixth house, or Cancer on the border of the sixth house, describes the stomach as the part of the body that will begin to register distress.

The seventh house, associated with Libra, is the first house that is above the horizon, in the visible realm. The seventh house presides over the domain of partnership and intimacy. The task of the seventh house is to gain identity through intimate interaction with others. People with the Sun in this house are very often counselors, like Carl Jung. The seventh house will describe not only what we are drawn to in other people, but also what aspects of ourselves attract them to us.

The eighth house, ruled by Scorpio, is one of the most mysterious, complex, and least understood parts of the whole astrological vocabulary. In old astrology books, the eighth house is death, sex, investment banking, taxes, other people's money, inheritance, shamanism, and magic. What is the organizing principle behind this garage sale of ideas?

The eighth house is the invisible. In the ancient world, a person with planets in the eighth house would be the member of the community who mediated with the invisible forces on behalf of the visible community. It is the realm of inheritance, the tangible symbol of communion with our ancestors. Death is when someone

becomes invisible. ("Where did Frank go?") In the ancient world, sex was thought of as an invisible, magical force. Falling in love is invisible, as is music. Auras, force fields, and electromagnetic waves are all invisible and associated with the eighth house. This house says that most of reality is invisible.

Years ago there was a wonderful story in the science section of *The New York Times.* Scientists had discovered that beneath and around every river is an invisible river teeming with microorganisms. They found that the health of the visible river depends upon the health of the invisible river. Eighth-house metaphysics 101 says that around everything (a body, a cup, a plant, a society) is an invisible body (or cup, plant, society) and that the health of the visible depends upon the health of the invisible force field that surrounds it.

In the ancient world, everything associated with the eighth house was sacred; in the modern world, everything associated with the eighth house is taboo. As an eighth-house person, if something is taboo, you will be interested in it right away. The task of the eighth house is to restore the taboo back to the sacred.

It is heartening that after the eighth house of death comes the ninth house of long journeys. The ninth house shares Sagittarius's passionate eclecticism and asks, "What do we study? How do we learn? What do we teach?" People with planets in the ninth house are researchers, publishers, teachers, promoters—all passionately curious, often well traveled. The task of the ninth house is to investigate and disseminate the stories of a culture's past to ensure its future.

The border of the tenth house is the top of the vertical axis that runs up and down the chart, called the midheaven. It is the middle of the heavens, the highest point the Sun reached on the day of your birth. Symbolically, the midheaven is our social antenna: what we radiate out, and what we receive.

The straight term for the tenth house is "profession." But the larger concept behind the tenth house is that it is one's public per-

sona and vocation. It is not only the work one does, but the work one wants to do. It is one's gift to the world. The task of the tenth house is to find the means of giving it—ideally, while getting paid.

The eleventh house is associated with Aquarius, and is concerned with community and teamwork. In medieval astrology, the eleventh house was called the house of hopes and wishes. This is a wimpy title, but in feudal times, true community could only be a hope or a wish. In the modern world we are engaged in a more spirited experiment: democracy, or at least a kind of positive anarchy.

People with planets in the eleventh house like networking and community affairs. Eleventh-house people (like Aquarians) do not like working under people, but love working alongside people. Vertical organization is anathema to them; horizontal structures of collaboration are ideal. The task for people with planets in the eleventh house is to catalyze a group or bring a team into being.

As Pisces is the last sign, the twelfth house is the last house above the horizon. Since everything above the horizon is collective, this last house represents the culture's unconscious, home of all that society has forgotten, exiled, or suppressed. The twelfth house gives us a Piscean empathy with those parts of society that have not been invited to the mainstream party. We identify with the myth of exile.

I once got a fortune cookie that was very twelfth house; it said, "You will go far, but be sure to come back." The Piscean twelfth-house journey is to dive deep down and bring back jewels from the bottom of the sea of the collective unconscious to share with the onshore community, even though it may be tempting not to return. The task of the twelfth house is to restore to living memory something essential that has been forgotten.

ASPECTS

Aspects are key angular relationships between the planets. It's easiest to appreciate them by drawing your chart, or at least vivifying

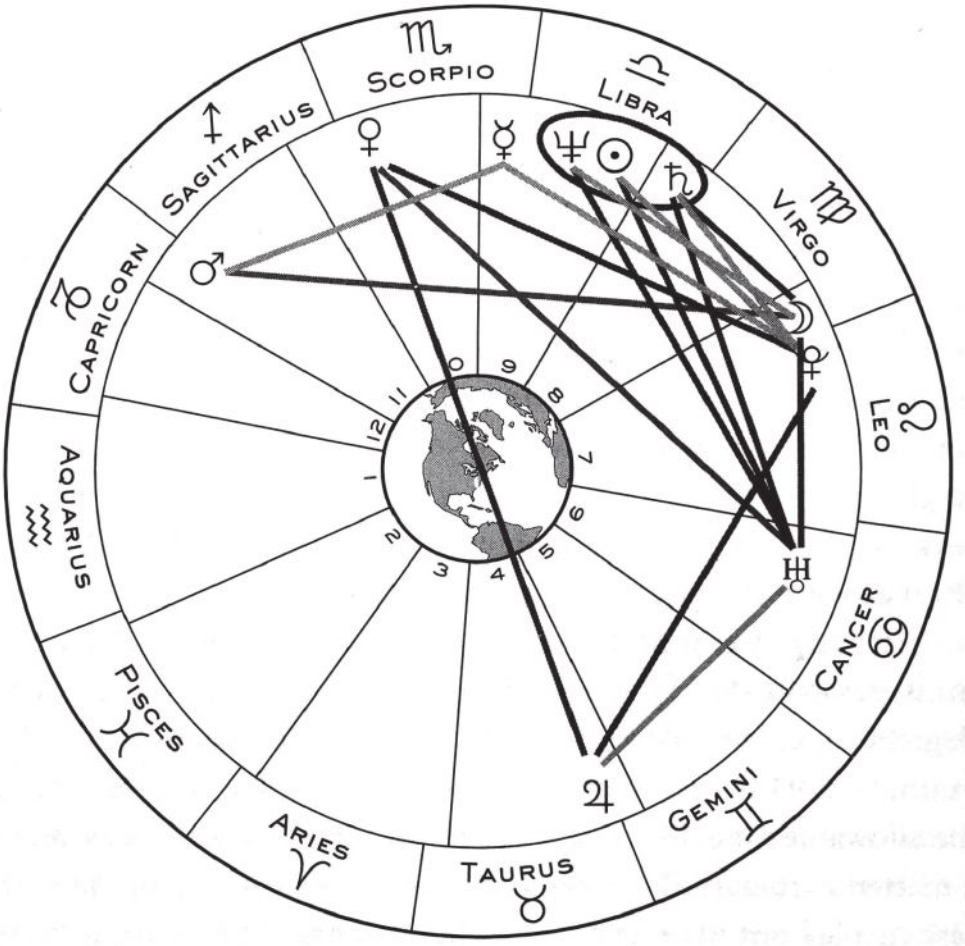
your computer printout with colored markers. When the aspects are drawn in with color, the unique personality of the chart comes alive.

Think of your chart as a map of your spiritual nervous system. Draw a yellow circle around any planets that are *conjunct* (right next to each other). Draw a red line between any planets that are *square* (90 degrees apart). Red can also be used for the variations on the square: 45 and 135 degrees. I like to draw a purple line between planets that are opposed (180 degrees apart). Dividing the circle of the chart by three, we get 120 degrees, called a *trine.* Draw a blue line connecting any trined planets, to represent an easy relationship between them. A variation of the trine is a *sextile* (60 degrees), which shows a creative planetary relationship. Connect the sextiles with green to show lively creativity. These lines are the vivid representation of the aspects. Even without worrying about what it all might mean, people really enjoy and derive soothing benefit from simply gazing at their charts drawn in this fashion. Think of your chart as your own personal mandala.

As we color in the aspects, it is natural to wonder how exact our measurements should be. Astrologers usually allow between 5 and 8 degrees on either side of a planet to be counted as an aspect. For example, a 93-degree angle is considered a square, because it is in the allowable range. This range of measurement is called *orb,* and is a matter astrologers love to quibble about. As you explore how the planets play out in your own psyche, you may find yourself developing your own thoughts on this matter.

Once the colored lines are drawn in, think of yellow, red, and purple lines as the places where you are feisty—assigned the task of harmonizing seemingly contradictory planets and principles. The assigned task of these "hard aspects" is to get two apparently estranged principles to dance together.

In my own chart, depicted in the accompanying figure, the Sun (basic self) is snugly between (conjunct) Neptune (principle of



CAROLINE W. CASEY
October 14, 1952, 1:38 P.M. EST
Washington, D.C.

idealistic imagination) and Saturn (pragmatism, "realism," and discipline). They are all in the ninth house, which represents infinitely varied forms of storytelling, traveling, and teaching. So my assignment is to be a realistic idealist, to teach, and to be devoted to Visionary Activist Principle Number One: Imagination (Neptune) lays the tracks for the Reality Train (Saturn) to follow. All three planets are square Uranus, the principle of inventive rebellion. Saturn square Uranus assigns me the task of being a "disciplined wild person"—which, of course, I would wish for us all. Principle Number Seven tells us that creativity comes from the wedding of paradox.

Trines and sextiles describe an established harmony between two planets. We enjoy their attributes with the grace of ease; the talents they bestow are so intrinsic to us as to sometimes be invisible. I think of these as places where we bartered with the gods before we were born: "Okay, I'll be born into that family—which will teach me in microcosm about everything that needs healing in the world—but I want certain things guaranteed." For instance, I have Venus (artistry, relationship, intimacy) in Scorpio (intense transformation) in the tenth house (profession). This is trine Uranus (inventive rebellion) in the sixth house (work, viewed as healing). So I am professionally intimate, and I wanted a guarantee that in my work I would meet other extraordinary teammates, change agents, and inventive healers. Like you.

TRANSITS

The final part of astrological grammar that we are going to address is a way we move a chart through time, which is called a transit. We look at where the planets are right now in the sky, or at any point in time we want to examine. These "transiting planets" move around our natal charts like sweephands of a clock, timing different stages of unfoldment.

A transit is an assigned task of integration. When a planet moves around in the sky and activates a specific part of your birth chart, it wants you to integrate what it represents. As you become intimate with the planets, you can begin to feel when some part of you is getting activated by one of the planets in its transiting position.

The transiting planet will describe issues that are in play. It might hit where the Sun was when we were born, which means the transit concerns our sense of identity. This is a big transit, as would be a transit to the Moon, which governs the inner emotional domain of life. It might hit Mercury, the way we think about things. Or Venus, in which case the arena of the transit will be in our relationships. It might hit Mars: how we do things, or our erotic encounters in life. It might hit Jupiter: what we think is important to learn, and how we learn it. Or it might hit Saturn: our views on and relationship to authority. Latent issues either flare up or become lit up by transits.

RETROGRADE MOTION

From the Earth's perspective, a planet can look as if it is standing still (or *stationing*), when it is about to change direction, forward or backward. When a planet appears to go backward (the Earth is actually passing its orbit) we call it *retrograde motion.*

Retrograde planets recommend any activity that begins with the prefix *re:* reflect, research, renovate, repair, rewrite, reconnect, rejoice, remedy, rehearse—re-anything. A retrograde planet refers to that part of our personal and collective psyche that has gone on a vision quest to reinvent itself.

The only reason people say, "Uh-oh!" when a planet is retrograde is that we live in a culture that overvalues forward push and undervalues inner dream. We experience frustrations when we willfully push ahead and resist the cosmic directive to reflect. When planets are retrograde, they instruct us to consider in order to avoid disaster.

• • •

So now we return to the three functions of astrology. In our ensuing journey through the planets, we will first describe the flavor of the interaction: What's up? When? Second, we will delineate our instructions: What do the planets want of us, inside and out, and how do we dance with them? And, third, we will celebrate by honoring their transitions through our lives.

We call this celebration *ritual.* It is through ritual, both personal and collective, that we reverence and enliven those parts of our selves that connect us to the external forces that sway the universe. In this way we become active, dynamic participants in the dance of life.

We now embark upon our journey of intimate encounters with the planetary gods, beginning with a slow dance with Saturn.

Planet: Saturn

Signs: Capricorn; Aquarius

Glyph: ♄

Key words and qualities: Form; structure; laws; "author"-ity; focus; boundaries; discipline (being a disciple); responsibility; the capacity to respond appropriately to time's demands.

Color: Indigo

Metal: Lead

Physical body affinities: Spine; bones; teeth; skin; the structure and boundary of the body; the body's center of gravity (the will center), located right below the navel.

Day of the week: Saturday ("Saturn's Day")

Festival: Winter solstice (also called "Saturnalia")

Way of honoring: Get a job—or, rather, create a job. Saturn says, "He who hesitates gets bossed." Either we work with our Saturn or someone else will. Also, we can honor Saturn through introspection. Solitude is the cure for loneliness. Saturn asks the question "Whose movie am I in?" then reminds us to reassume directorial control by inhaling our authority back from the world.

Shadow, when not honored: Depression; inertia; fear; claustrophobia. When Saturn has us down and it feels like we're doing resistance training in life, Saturn says, "Literalize it by lifting weights." If we're off rhythm, Saturn tells us to drum our own rhythms. We can also make use of deep, rhythmic breathing as a way of finding our center.

SATURN

♄

THE POWER OF DEFINITION

I Must Create a System
or be enslaved by another Man's
I will not Reason and Compare
My business is to Create!

WILLIAM BLAKE

The Saturnalia, the ancient world's often orgiastic carnival celebrated at the winter solstice, was a societal ritual of casting off the constraints of the previous order. At this time the Greeks loosed the chains from statues of Saturn. On this longest night of the year, the old order was sacrificed, unbound, and a period of timelessness was celebrated out of which the new order would be born.

Saturn, known by the Greeks as Chronos (or Time), is the farthest planet from the sun easily visible to the naked eye. Saturn thus demarcates the boundary between the visible and invisible.

The planet Saturn is bounded by a unique ring system that has been a source of wonder for its symmetric beauty since Galileo first gazed upon it through his telescope in 1610. Ringmaster and Ringleader, Saturn's province includes time, boundaries, laws of limitation and definition, form, structure, and authority.

We begin with Saturn because he presides over the new year and new beginnings, as well as being the god who defines our terms and our tasks.

THE INNER AUTHOR

Authority contains the word *author.* To accept the responsibility of being the authors of our own lives, we must reclaim our authority. Saturn often gets a bad rap from people who know a little or even a lot about astrology and associate this god with hardship, fear, and loneliness. But those negative associations are merely symptoms of fending off rather than embracing the Saturn part of ourselves, of not honoring the god properly. Fear is a symptom of loss of authority; when we give away our authority, we *should* be afraid.

We give our authority away all too readily—to our father, our employer, our lover, the cop, the state, and even the random cuckoo person. A friend tells the story of a scene she witnessed in New York: a man was wandering along a crowded subway platform approaching people, not violently, but in a crazily emphatic way. He would stare at each one intently (perhaps he was a Scorpio), saying to one person, "You're out!" and to another, "You're in!" As he went from person to person declaring them "In!" or "Out!" it was clear that everyone was really hoping he or she would be declared "In!" We have a vestigial tribal dread of being deemed an outcast, of not being chosen for the team. If our desire to fit in is so strong that we will give our Saturn away to a random crazy street person, what about the random crazy political leader? The word *idiot* comes from the Greek word *idiotis,* meaning "one who blindly abdicates personal well-being to the public domain."

Saturn is the part of us that is the casting director who inherits the conditioned script from family and culture by which we unwittingly cast people in the movie of our life. The script tells us how things are, how the world works, and what we can expect. The idiot within hires unsuitable lovers, incompetent policemen, abusive

bosses, and other guaranteed failures. These oppressive figures appear to act independently of us. Because we cast them in our drama, however, they really function according to the inherited scripts, which constrict our expectations. And expectation has everything to do with outcome. Self-possessed Saturn, by contrast, liberates us from our complicity in other people's usurpation of our authority.

SATURN IN YOUR BIRTH CHART

The position of Saturn in your chart records the quality of your earliest encounter with authority. Think of your father's beliefs, spoken or not, about what is or is not possible in life, and how he made you feel. Have you had subsequent relationships, under different guises, where similar conditions prevailed?

If a woman had an overbearing, tyrannical father who had little respect for her creative autonomy, a template is formed whereby her inner casting director will unwittingly hire similar men as lovers. This casting director will send forth a casting call: "Seeking energetically depressed, tyrannical men who will sabotage my creative drive and judge all my creative impulses to be unrealistic and impossible." At a certain point of critical despair (the technical term is that one has attained the profound state of "had it"), that woman will declare, "I am writing this role out of my movie! Henceforth, I am casting for self-sufficient, emotionally supportive, pragmatic dreamers who adore me." Only when we have become exasperated enough to see the irony that we are complicit in our servitude can we break the chains of patterned expectation.

Traditionally, men have often "hired" women to live their spiritual lives, while women have "hired" men to enact their ambitions. These relationships are neither conscious nor enlightened, and while they make no one happy, for centuries they have nonetheless been proffered as templates of conformity. We now aspire toward much more fun models in which every man works on his own spir-

itual relationship to life and every woman lives out her own ambition. Living through other people, whether our children or our lovers, will ultimately lead to a melodrama at some point. "What do codependents see when they die? Someone else's life flashes before their eyes."

Rewriting our personal scripts builds up the spiritual muscle tone we need to participate in rewriting the culture's collective script. "We used to be unconsciously casting for immature, unimaginative leaders motivated by greed and expediency to play the role of our political leaders. But now we are writing that role out of the movie. Henceforth we are casting for women and men embodying and motivated by long-term pragmatic vision and ingenuity for the good of the entire community, yea, unto the next seven generations of unborn!"

A daily experimental meditation for all of us would be to catch ourselves expressing an undesirable "reality," such as, "I'm overwhelmed by all the emotional responsibilities in my life," and restate it as if you had already solved the problem: "I *used to be* overwhelmed, *but now* I attract sufficient grace and support from the gods that my previous burdens have become sources of joy and renewed enthusiasm." Remember our first Visionary Activist Principle: Imagination lays the tracks for the Reality Train to follow.

Saturn says that we will encounter any inner issues we shirk, or qualities we refuse to possess, outside ourselves in a form we might not like so much. Without our inner authority, outer authority will direct us: "He who hesitates gets bossed." It is crucial to bring Saturn issues into consciousness so that we do not jeopardize our self-determination in a conflict with external authority. If we do find ourselves in such a situation, the extent to which we have not dealt with our Saturn issues will determine the frightening or burdensome ferocity of the encounter.

Challenging external circumstances drive us inward to make an appointment with Saturn to rewrite the script. "How do you want

your life story to proceed?" inquires Saturn, the inner author. If we do not go inward willingly, then Saturn will reach up and yank us down forcefully. The involuntary yanking downward is very often experienced as depression, but is instead a reminder not to live life by default.

EARNING INSIGHT

Saturn has traditionally been called "the dweller on the threshold," or "the ring-pass-not." These monikers refer to the scary initiatory ordeal each of us must undergo in which we encounter all that holds us back or keeps us fearfully obedient to a life of oppressive limitation. Usually, the catalyst for this transformation is an experience in which we break a rule, violate a taboo, or otherwise disobey the tribal elders.

Years ago I traveled with a group through the Yucatán Peninsula. We arrived at Chichén Itzá late at night on the dark of the Moon, and passed the locked gates of the pyramid site on the way to our hotel. Everyone else went to bed, but I strolled past the gates once again and found that now they were mysteriously unlocked—a clear invitation to break the rules. I groped along the path in complete darkness until suddenly the Great Pyramid loomed above me. Even though climbing it was prohibited, I felt compelled. My heart was pounding as loudly as I had ever heard it. At the top, hot gusts of air were being exhaled through the monstrous mouth of the temple portal at the apex. Remembering the teachings of Carlos Castaneda on his own apprenticeship in dealing with spooky invisible forces (basically Mexican *feng shui*), I kept trying to find my right spot on which to perch. One particular spot was way too scary, so I moved to one with a more tolerable level of dread. There I stayed through much of the night. As I descended, I was full of exuberant confidence that filled all of the previously fearful pockets of my life. "Nothing can stop me now!" my previously terrified heart exulted.

Later, speaking with our guide, I described the ascent and the particular point on the summit that had been way too scary. An otherwise extremely rational scientist-scholar, he paused and said that on that exact scary spot, some weeks earlier, a fellow Mayan scholar had stood and playfully called out, invoking Chac, the Mayan god of lightning. Suddenly a dark cloud moved swiftly toward the pyramid's summit and a lightning bolt struck the man dead as he stood in the midst of a throng of tourists.

The initiatory ordeal is by definition a solitary experience that leads us to self-reflection. Solitude, Saturn's sacramental activity, is the portal to the magical realm where power larger than us resides. Very often when we are alone we feel most connected to everything. Time spent alone allows us to "consider" our lives, to align the inner gods with the outer gods of the cosmos, to disentangle ourselves from the phantasmagoria of seductive distractions.

Without reflection, we become as vulnerably off balance as if we were sleep deprived. The resulting lack of clarity is what predisposes us unconsciously to hire other people to play out parts of our lives. As Carl Jung said, "The highest, most decisive experience is to be alone with one's own self. You must be alone to find out what supports you, when you find that you can not support yourself. Only this experience can give you an indestructible foundation."

Rather than helping us fend off loneliness, Saturn encourages us to embrace it. We live in an antireflective culture, where much of what passes for entertainment is merely a distraction from the terror of being alone. We manufacture "pandemonium," which originally meant "making a lot of noise," in order to drive away the scary parts of our psyche, our demons. But partying will not cure loneliness. Solitude is the cure for loneliness; like cures like.

Saturn teaches that the initiatory ordeal of pushing through dread precedes self-possession. The spiritual traditions of many cultures require a time of arduous solitude as a necessary prerequisite to self-knowledge. I once spent a week alone in a Tibetan retreat

cabin, fasting on nothing but roasted barley tea. Even though I was on a Zen meditation retreat (the cabin had been borrowed from the Tibetans), each night I was visited by remarkably vivid Tibetan demons. I accounted for this by the fact that previous solitary inhabitants had been skilled in the remarkable Tibetan Buddhist discipline of potent imagining. I had inadvertently borrowed their residual demons as a means to experience my fears.

By the end of the week I found myself rocking back and forth in a manner I had previously only associated with mental patients (who may very well be unconsciously practicing traditional spiritual disciplines without a context of guidance and meaning). Upon subsequent reflection, I understood that I had traveled way out there, and that the rocking was a way of rocking myself back into the rhythmic embrace of the cosmos. In both of my initiatory ordeals, if I had not leaned into my fear, but had turned around halfway up the pyramid or left the cabin in the middle of the week, I would have felt disappointed and crazed.

Hitting Rock Bottom

Saturn says not only that insight must be earned but also that breakdown precedes breakthrough. On another occasion, while camping in the Mexican rain forest, I experienced a night of profound vision ("All really is One—what a relief!") only after undergoing an extreme ordeal. I had spent weeks in the freezing cold jungle followed by the most amazingly dramatic illness, which included Olympic-class projectile vomiting among other feats. While recovering, I had crawled under a tree, where I was eaten alive by chiggers. I now like to think, "Ah, good fun and well worth it. But while I *used to* have to earn insight through arduous physical hardship, *now* I can glean profound insight from lying on the beach."

It is hard work to break free of the constraints of suppressive orthodoxy, a.k.a. the Reality Police. Right before a change, we encounter all our obstacles to that change. This is known as a "sun-

set effect": as a pattern goes down, it glows most vividly. Just before people are ready to change, they often thrash around, saying, "I've already worked through these issues, so why am I dealing with all of this again?" The answer is, "These issues are coming up again because you've *almost* resolved them." When you feel this intensification coming on, remember Saturn's motto: "Things are so hard, I must be almost done."

Humbling experience is often a gift from Saturn, who loves to remind us that it is a long road from insight to full mastery. I have done readings for innumerable big-time spiritual teachers, and have yet to meet a person who has fully mastered or embodied his or her own teachings. On my radio program, *The Visionary Activist Show,* I invite anyone on who has a piece of the puzzle for co-creating a more loving and ingenious world. After one guest's visit, I received a number of letters requesting me to "screen my guests for know-it-all arrogance." I responded by saying that this would be an impossible task, and that neither I nor any of my guests were meant to be exemplars, but rather that we—listeners and guests alike—are all aspirants.

Saturn says there is no shame or blame in landing hard, as long as we acknowledge that we have been thrown by the spirited horse of our own teaching. Undaunted (or medium-daunted), we dust ourselves off, regain a sense of humor, then remount—in order to dive again.

Saturn advises us not to resist emotional currents, but swim with them. Joseph Campbell said the only advice he would ever give is, "If you find yourself falling—dive!" This expression originates in the story of James Joyce and his daughter, who was diagnosed as schizophrenic. He took her to all the great healers of Europe, to whom he said, "She's not mad, she's a genius like me, exploring the unconscious." When they finally arrived at Jung's doorstep, he basically said to Joyce, "You're a genius—she's nuts; the difference is, you're diving, she's falling."

A kayaker friend told me that in the Potomac River there are dangerous currents, known as "keeper currents," which go from the surface of the river all the way down to the bottom. If you fall into one, the natural response is to struggle against it to come back up for air. But if you fight it, you will drown. The only way out is to go all the way down to the bottom and come up with the current on the other side. Very often, dealing with dark moods is like falling into a keeper current. You want to struggle out, but Saturn says, "No, you're in a keeper current. Go all the way down and you'll come up the other side." You need faith to do this because sometimes the bottom is quite far away. If you have not touched bottom, you begin to worry. Maps and philosophical systems can be reassuring navigational guides.

One of Saturn's essential maps and quirky navigational guides is the Gurdjieffian level system, which is an amusing model for characterizing what is or is not possible. In this system, down is up, and is definitely the way through the dark and the terrifying into freedom and clarity. Created by Gurdjieff, a Capricorn teacher with a strong trickster streak, it starts with "negative 6,000 consciousness," which is primitive, superstitious belief. Up one level is negative 3,000, which is community belief, group mind, conventional thinking, consensus reality. The next level up is negative 1,500, called King Ego: "I'm a unique individual who has been to Esalen, and therefore I no longer have to obey the dictates of the group."

Rising another level is negative 768, called "theoretical mastery," in which the initiate succumbs to the illusion that he or she has theoretically mastered entire cosmologies of how the universe works. The next level is negative 384, the domain of depression. One says, "God, I was so pretentious. I thought I knew everything in these previous states of existence, but now I just feel bleak and empty. Life sucks." Near the top is negative 192, suicidal panic. This is close to breakthrough. The last negative state, negative 96, is complete remorse, the realization of having stingily refused the generous

offers of the universe to play. One says, "Oh my God, I've really blown my life."

Finally the soul arrives at the next level, zero—"Ah, clarity!"—the perception of how things actually are. Then we ascend into the positive levels, where we are agents of laws (read "planets") rather than subject to them. It is in these upper clear realms that we are capable of creating prophecy rather than living prediction. Gurdjieff's (read Saturn's) crucial joke is that the negative numbers refer to the number of Saturnine laws or constraints upon imagination to which we are subject when we are vibrating at that level.

The implications of Gurdjieff's levels are wonderful. One joke is that we are not meant to believe in his system, because that would put us right down at the bottom of it, at negative 6,000. Another implication is that theory tends to degrade into belief. One generation's negative 768 insight becomes the next generation's negative 3,000 belief. This also occurs when you take on somebody else's original work without doing your own. A Tibetan scripture says, "Knowledge must be burned, hammered, and beaten like gold. Then one can wear it as an ornament." We must never uncritically, hence passively, receive teaching of any kind, let alone "spiritual teaching."

Finally, we accommodate or descend to the level of the company we keep. We all know that after spending time with certain people, we feel as if much less is possible. We sentence ourselves to voluntary prison when spending time feels like serving time.

We go up and down these levels all day, but we tend to have a home base. This system allows us to become aware of where we are, and by doing so, we are immediately granted the power of the clear zones. Acts of attention put us on the express elevator to transcendent clarity and amused confidence. In the "company town" model, where you have a full-time job that you hate and are so depleted and exhausted that all you can do when you get home is order pizza and turn on the television, three thousand laws are always limiting what is or is not possible for you.

Fast food is negative-3,000 food that drugs us into consensus reality. During the Gulf War, which I bitterly opposed, I indulged in a Big Mac for the first time in twelve years. For about two hours afterward I had no problem with our foreign policy.

Anything, including astrology, can be practiced on any level. One can go to an astrologer and get a negative-6,000 superstitious, fear-inducing reading or a negative-3,000 conformist reading, or a negative-1,500 predictive reading. The reason predictions are unpredictable is that they completely depend on the level on which they are staged. This is why Visionary Activist Principle Zero exhorts: "Believe nothing, entertain possibilities." Even if, because of some fluke, something we believe happens to be true, we are still giving our Saturn away. If we believe in the truth, but we have not earned it through our own work and observation, we are still limited by negative-6,000 superstitions or negative-3,000 group-mind social edicts.

Another of Gurdjieff's pranks is that as one goes up the scale toward clarity, one is actually becoming more psychotic. Negative 384 is depression; negative 192 is suicidal panic; negative 96 is remorse. The next time a friend or client calls up and says, "Oh, I'm so depressed," you can respond, "That's fantastic! Stay with it! Suicidal panic, remorse, then you're home free!" Of course, these upper levels are dynamically unstable, and you do not want to stay there alone for too long. We need the convivial support of our community to survive breakthrough.

The level chart demonstrates why we cannot judge another person by simple rules of outward conformity. Someone may be eating her steak in a reverent, clear manner, while another might be viciously, self-righteously chewing his tofu in a state of negative 3,000, simply because everyone around him is eating tofu. Saturn reminds us that it is the inner intention that determines the level of limitation.

The real secret of the Saturnine level chart is that in the upper levels of clarity we playfully move between being the agents of the gods and being their transparency in the unique way that only each one of

Gurdjieffian Level System



24
12
3

Co-creation/Being
Agents of the Gods



0 Clarity



-96 Remorse



-192 Suicidal Panic



-384 Depression/Everything Sucks

-768 Theoretical Mastery

-1,500 King Ego



-3,000 Societal Mind

-6,000 Superstition



us can offer. This is the goal: to live in the upper realms, where full creative participation and service to life is possible. The more time we spend at a particular level, positive or negative, the easier it is to return there. Food, music, friends, films, entertainment, and books all encourage a particular level by their vibrational hum. Harlem minister Reverend Ike reminds us that "you don't owe it to anyone to talk negative talk with them. Which is why I tell you all every now and then, change your phone number. People ask me if I ever go back home, I say, 'Hell, no, I haven't been there in years.'" This Saturnine level map encourages us always to consciously choose the literal and psychic nutrients that support a desirable level of creative freedom.

Being Cool

Saturnian success in all aspects of life is contingent upon accepting self-responsibility. The Yoruba word from which we get our expression "cool" originally meant "responsible." The concept of "cool" popularized by jazz musicians is actually identical to the Yoruba usage. "He's a cool cat" meant "he's cool-headed; he takes care of what he should tend." We will return to this all-important concept of "cool-headedness" in Mercury's chapter. Mercury governs the head, and in this respect it is interesting to note that the alchemists referred to Saturn as *Mercurius senex* (Old Mercury). Saturn says it is a cultural imperative to restore "cool" to its original definition and overcome the part of ourselves that is resistant to being "cool," that says, "Uh-oh, might get something done."

Carl Jung was cool. Someone once asked why he did not take the psychoactive plant substance mescaline, to which he replied that his reluctance was not a moral one. He felt that diving into the unconscious always bestows upon us new tasks and responsibilities, and that our dreams and intuitions bestow upon us a sufficient amplitude of assignments. He said that in the unlikely event that he felt he had completed all that his unconscious had already assigned him, then he would take psychoactive plant sacraments.

Saturn's tough reputation is accounted for by its infliction of pain on those who try to avoid its dictates. Unlived tasks, especially the unfulfilled responsibilities of living one's dream, can poison the psyche.

A cultivated Saturn is, on its highest level, the Teacher who has the ability to respond appropriately to any circumstance. Saturn's qualities are weight, seriousness, form, structure, and heaviness. The word *guru* in Hindi comes from the root *gur,* meaning "heavy" or "weight." The word *heavy,* as used in the 1960s, meant "really substantial, having weight." Saturn is the guru, the self-possessed cool-headed person who takes care of responsibilities.

Saturn is the container of our lives, comprising all of our responsibilities, all the things we have signed up to do—the children, the work, the projects. Saturn makes a complete orbit every twenty-eight to thirty years, changing signs every two and a half years. So two and a half years is an important interval, as is one-quarter of twenty-eight, since it makes a 90-degree angle (a square) to itself. We have all heard about the "seven-year itch." Saturn prompts you to reassess your commitments every two and a half years in a minor way, every seven years in a big way.

Reassessment occurs when we wake up in the morning and reflect, "Well, here's me and there's my life. Do they match?" The degree to which they do not match creates an irritant, like a grain of sand in an oyster. Dissatisfaction is an uncomfortable but necessary ally for change. Playful work begins with the intention to create a more appropriate life. External guidance can be useful, as long as we never surrender our Saturn to the predictions of a counselor, an astrologer, or an analyst.

THE THEATER OF EFFECTIVE MAGIC

A client of mine was so depressed that her therapist wanted her to take antidepressants, whereas her acupuncturist wanted her to be treated with needles. So she asked me, her astrologer (not for want

of a staff was this person down in the dumps), which course she should pursue. We went back and forth for some time, examining both options but going nowhere, when finally Saturn, speaking through me, said, "Actually, it doesn't matter! If you define and clarify your intention, then either course of action will be effective or else the appropriate path will become clear and unconflicted. Concentrating on 'which' or 'how' is a big distraction, and only serves to amplify quandary and paralytic angst."

We had her ritually declare her intention to be healed, by saying it, writing it down, burning the piece of paper, and taking the ashes away with her to scatter in the river. Some months later she called to say that the ritual act had really set her life in motion. She had pursued neither course of therapy offered by the professionals, but had devised her own. Having thrown out many elements of her deadweight past, she was bopping away on her life course and feeling quite splendid.

Saturn says concentrate on what, not on how. Clarify and focus. Then declare your desire to the universe through ritual—remember Principle Number Four: "The only way the gods know we're asking for help is ritual." For our purposes now, we will define ritual as any physical act, be it mundane or theatrical, that we imbue with invisible intention. We can merely sweep the floor, or we can sweep out the past as we sweep the floor. The ritually expressed intention magnetizes us to external opportunity in accord with our desires.

Neuroscientists have found that brain cells fire not just upon action, but immediately upon formation of an intention. Saturn is the part of us that sets our intentions, that gives us the power to focus and define our boundaries, our terms, and our purpose. Through intention, we begin to grow the form in which that intention will be realized from inside out, rather than having it externally imposed.

Saturn says, "There are no arbitrary impediments." All obstacles are intended to catalyze us to experiment with different parts of our

psyche that we would not explore unless compelled. In times of extremity, we will try things we might not think of in less demanding situations. When all else fails, try magic.

Because it represents structure, Saturn is reflected in our dramas with our spine, bones, and teeth, as well as with our skin—our boundary. The spine is the literal and symbolic arena in the body where all of our experiences of feeling supported (or not) are enacted. People often experience lower back pain when they encounter any loss of support, especially the death of their fathers or economic dread. Part of physical healing requires opening to other modes of support. We must ask for help from the realm of the invisible, often the spirit realm of ancestors and dreams.

One way to perform a Saturn ritual is to enact the metaphor physically. For example, innumerable traditions have "unbinding rituals." The Yoruba suggest that you tie a cord loosely around yourself, imbuing it with the symbolism of the current restraints you wish to shed. The cord is tied in such a way that it drops as you raise your hands. Houdini may be thought of as a high priest of Saturn, as he took this ritual to amazing extremes.

Saturn teaches the art of mundane physical magic. If you're feeling constrained, tie yourself up—and escape. If you're feeling weighed down, lift weights. Saturn transits can make you feel as if God's knee were on your chest, or as if you were doing resistance training with weights on. Eventually, you will reach a point when you unstrap the weights and realize how strong you have become.

We feed Saturn when we actively choose our focus. Saturn says, "The truth of what we worship is what we spend our time on," regardless of what we say is important to us. A friend of mine says she never clips coupons, because it's a trick to get us to worship industrialism. When we do not consciously choose our focus, we get mugged by myriad distractions—time theft.

CAUTIONARY TALES: EATEN BY SHADOW

One of the pitfalls of reclaiming our authority is the temptation to become authoritarian. Tyranny, rigidity, and insecurity are symptoms that indicate we have been eaten by the shadow side of Saturn. When we're out of touch with our inner rhythm, we lose our sense of confidence, flexibility, and humor.

The tarot card associated with Saturn is the Devil (Saturn's shadow devolves into Satan), which depicts a devil who has two Adam and Eve figures in chains. The chains are loose, however, so the people can take them off at any time, once they realize their true situation. The devil, Saturn, makes a hand gesture resembling the Vulcan salute, which means "All that you see is all there is."

Each tarot card has an emotional attribute; the Devil's Saturnian quality is mirth, and his jokes are manifold. The chains are loose—we can take them off! The visible world is but a tiny proportion of reality—ha, ha! Laughter breaks the trance of bondage and elicits liberation. One of the most serious teachings of Zen Buddhism is to get up every morning, stare in the mirror, and roar with laughter.

Saturn says that humorlessness is one of the early warning signs of conforming to the Reality Police. Swami Beyondananda (a.k.a. comic philosopher Steve Bhaerman) reminds us that we live in a culture that suffers from irony deficiency. A humorless atmosphere arises when we have become rigid because of not doing our inner work.

A Jungian analyst friend and I were looking at a photograph of a potter who was making beautiful, large, feminine, womb-shaped pots. My friend said, "Mmm, careful of that guy. He's very rigid." I said, "Why do you say that?" "Look," he replied, "he's working on the outside with these beautiful feminine forms, and unless he's really working on himself, it's going to constellate the opposite, a kind of inner rigidity."

If we are antiauthoritarians, we fight against tyrants, but very often this act will constellate the tyrant in us. We might even say that in the 1960s, activism failed because of an inattention to inner work. People who were antiauthoritarian became tyrannical and authoritarian. All who seek to create a better and more just society—whether we are inner-city activists, environmentalists, or feminists—risk becoming the animus-dominated new patriarchy. In fighting against something, we can become humorless, a symptom of loss of Saturn: "Uh-oh, almost lost my sense of humor."

Another useful metaphor for Saturn comes from sociologists who shot videotapes of people walking down the street. They then took these clips into prison where they showed them to muggers and asked them which people they would choose to mug. The muggers replied that they would mug the ones who walked in an arrhythmic or uncoordinated manner.

There are many ways of getting mugged, not just on the street. You can be mugged in a conversation, in a relationship, or at work. The telltale sign is loss of one's authority and sense of self, a feeling of being off balance. Saturn is our ballast, our basic center. In fact, this god lives in our real center, the psychic uterus, right below our navel.

The word *hysteria,* derived from the Latin word for uterus, addresses this Saturnine issue of loss of center. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says, "Women being much more liable than men to this disorder, it was originally thought to be due to a disturbance of the uterus. . . . Former names for the disease were *vapours* and *hysterical passion.*" A therapeutic colleague once described hysteria as occurring when one enters a world that is not of one's own definition. The process begins with detachment, which becomes loneliness, which becomes hungry yearning. Hungry yearning tilts us off balance so that we easily fall into someone else's game, where we then thrash crazily like a hooked fish. Thrashing crazily could be

called the predominant symptom of the late twentieth century. But flailing is actually a healthy reaction to an unhealthy situation, as when a fish attempts to become unhooked.

Historically, hysteria has been observed most frequently in women who have had to live in worlds defined by men. But now the masks have come off, and thrashing crazily is available to both sexes in recognition that neither is in a world of its choosing.

In the Saturnian domain, to heal from this loss of balance or center, one has to become the opposite of arrhythmic—to become self-possessed of one's own rhythm. When we are suffering the symptoms of loss of Saturn, characterized by feeling vulnerable, frightened, or depressed, then we must regain our internal rhythm. If not, our frustrations will be forced deep within, where they will become toxic and eventually erupt in other domains, such as health. So, we drum, dance, lift weights, train, and breathe—slowly, deeply, rhythmically.

Whenever we are trying to resolve something, the god of rhythm advises: pulse. Put tension and attention on the issue, but then take it off. For instance, while intimate relationships certainly have their own tensions, sometimes they become a repository for the tensions and dissatisfactions of other parts of life. How do we tell the difference? If we just lean on the challenging issue and repeat, "Should I stay in this relationship or not, should I stay in this relationship or not . . . ," nothing can move. Saturn tells us to pulse instead. Ask the question, "Should I stay or leave?" then take the pressure off and go to some other part of life. When you return, ask yourself, "Is the relationship the source of the dissatisfaction, or merely the repository of all my misery?" Ask questions that enlist Saturn to help you define your life.

Each of us has a unique rhythm. The essence of effective body work or meditation is reestablishing the body's pulse, getting the body reacquainted with its own rhythm. Saturn work is solo work

because we have to go alone and undistracted on an inward journey to find our unique pulse. Saturn is the part of our psyche that keeps the beat, playing bass in the band, several layers beneath the busyness of the world.

TRY THIS AT HOME: INHALING YOUR AUTHORITY

A temporal-cultural (as opposed to eternal) truth is that very few people are honored, validated, or approved of by their fathers. Saturn in our chart invites us to give up that wired-to-fail yearning for external approval (a yearning disability). Why not make a magical commitment to yourself right now that you are willing to give up seeking the approval of your father (or anyone you may have hired as a stand-in) by the time you finish reading this chapter.

Saturn says it is good to set ourselves small tasks like this. Carlos Castaneda's colleague Taisha Abelard remembers being given an assignment by her teacher. She was to go off by herself, into a cave where she was to remember every erotic encounter she had ever had, and to inhale back in her authority from that encounter. This is very Saturnian, to ask, "To whom did I give away the capacity to feel good about myself?" and to inhale that power back in.

Breathing exercises and meditations are found in all cultures, reminding us that we have the capacity to choose where we place our attention and on what we spend our time. The root word for breath and spirit in many cultures is the same. Breathing is the bridge between the conscious and the unconscious, between the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems. We breathe without thinking about it, but we can also control our breathing.

Take a deep breath. Inhale your authority, calling it back from the wild reaches of past disbursement. Exhale, feeling relieved and calm. Taking back your Saturn does not deprive any other person of something that they need. Carrying other people's Saturns around just weighs them down and gives them a grouchy swagger.

Imagine taking a golden knife (Saturn's scythe, a curved knife symbolic of harvest, death, and rebirth) and cutting any cords that are attached to your center, right below your navel. Follow those cords to the people who are leaning too heavily on you, and cut the cords of dependency at their end, too. See those people standing strong and radiant on their own two feet.

The Chinese art of *ch'i gong* provides us with the coordinates of the center. Imagine a vertical line from the base of your spine to the crown of your head. Now imagine a horizontal line from the small of your back straight through to just below your navel. Place your attention at the point where these two lines intersect. This is a place where there is never any fear.

Because the color associated with Saturn is deep blue-violet, imaginitively inhale deep blue-violet as you center. Inhale this color into an imagined circle surrounding you. Here you are self-possessed, inwardly focused, gathering your wits, autonomous, resetting your rhythm. Return to this slow, deep, rhythmic breathing whenever autonomy and courage are desired.

THE OUTER PLANETS



ALIGNING WITH THE CHANGE GODS

CSICOPS is the Committee to Scientifically Investigate Claims of the Paranormal. As the name suggests, they are a single-eyed division of the Reality Police. The Change Gods prefer the metaphysically parallel group CSICON, the Committee for Surrealist Investigation of Claims of the Normal. CSICON offers $10,000 to any "normalist" who can produce "a perfectly normal person, place, or thing—or even an ordinary sunset, or an average day."

Whereas Saturn describes the personal and collective script that we have all been assigned, the planets beyond Saturn (or "trans-Saturnian") teach us how to transcend and further rewrite these scripts. Self-possessed Saturn gets us to the clarity of level zero in the Gurdjeffian system (see page 80). Allied with what the outer planets represent, we begin to explore the clear zones of creative power. Pluto, Neptune, and Uranus are the Change Gods, the forces of dynamic transformation who hold the keys to personal and social liberation. We dance with them now to generate energy with which to vitalize the inner gods of individuality. The task of these outer-planetary gods is to liberate us from being unconscious subjects of laws that govern the collective and initiate us into being con-

scious agents of evolutionary intelligence. We have defined evolutionary intelligence as the most ingeniously lively and cooperative possibilities of mutual aid available at any moment.

These Change Gods will do whatever it takes to liberate us from the constraints of our conditioning so that we may exercise our full imaginative freedom. This sometimes results in a bumpy ride. The name Pavlov should ring a bell. He was the Russian scientist who experimented with conditioned response in animals. When there was a flood in his laboratory, none of the surviving dogs retained the least trace of their conditioning. And so it is with us when we undergo startling disruption.

When we have been stripped of familiar certainty, the Outer Planet parts of us rejoice: "At last, these humans have run out of plans—now we can work with them!"

Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto describe collective weather patterns. We all suffer under the illusion that the issues we confront are private. Yet even in isolation we are connected. We are all swimming in the same ocean, subject to the same tides and currents, undergoing similar challenges and exhilarations. Overcoming the illusion of isolation allows us to hearken back to an archaic memory of community where there is no such thing as a private problem.

Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto want us, individually and collectively, to become them, or at least to become their agents. "Change! Dissolve! Transform!" they exhort us.

When Uranus shatters an old pattern of familiar misery, we first become awakened; then we become awakeners, agents of Uranus.

Neptune dissolves our old visions and values to allow new visions to come alive; we then become visionaries.

Pluto is the Lord of the Underworld, the domain of death, rebirth, initiation, and transformation. When Pluto works us over, we first become transformed; then we become agents of transformation.

OUTER PLANETARY CONJUNCTIONS AND PERSONAL-SOCIAL EVOLUTION

When any two of the three outer planets come together in the sky (an event referred to as a conjunction), their union heralds a time of great changes, from massive cultural upheavals to potential evolutionary leaps.

In the twentieth century, there have been only two outer-planet conjunctions. The first of these, between Uranus the awakener and Pluto the transformer, presided over the whole 1960s and was particularly emphatic from 1964 to 1969. This conjunction describes the sixties as a wedding of their forces creating a distinctively tumultuous, raucous, crazy, disruptive, experimental, awakening, and vibrant time.

Those of us who lived through the sixties found it to be a powerfully resonant time. People who were born then have this Uranus-Pluto pattern in their charts and embody these qualities. They *are* the sixties. As this generation comes into its full stride around the turn of the millennium, they begin to contribute their Uranus-Pluto gift of transformative originality to the collective. No matter how conventional or straight they appear on the surface, underneath everything, they are seething with intense perceptions.

This generation entered traditional educational structures that were completely unprepared for them, later giving rise to the misdiagnosis of what sociologists and educators call attention deficit disorder. This is the culture's misunderstanding of an evolutionary nervous system—a new form of pattern recognition that our culture does not yet understand—that begins to enter our culture through people born in the sixties. Often, kids labeled hyperactive or diagnosed with ADD are intuitive and psychic.

The Uranus-Pluto conjunction of the 1960s would describe that generation as having fewer filters, thus receiving more information

per minute, or per square inch of space, than is the "norm." The amount of information they are processing is initially overwhelming, until they get the hang of it.

Having sixties consciousness is like being a shortwave radio set, stepping out the door, and receiving radio waves from Mars, continually deluged with snippets of information, insight, ideas, psychic feelings, and nuances. Mainstream culture had no way of understanding, let alone educating, those subject to this torrent of perception.

Until now. This sixties generation is astrologically described as being in the process of transforming the mainstream culture that had misunderstood it. An astrological pattern lives in a whole generation, yet is fully expressed by relatively few, just as many seeds are released, but only a few bloom. But by speaking to these latent parts of our psyche through this astrological language, we aspire to increase the ratio.

The twentieth century's second powerful outer-planet conjunction extends throughout the 1990s. During this decade, Uranus, the same god of revolution, disruption, freedom, intuition, and awakening who presided over the sixties, dances with a new partner, Neptune, the god of mythology, dreams, vision, and yearning.

Neptune and Uranus conjoin every 171 years, describing a time when the old visions, lacking in vitality and having degraded into belief, no longer have the capacity to inspire. They send forth a call to reignite the culture with fresh mythology and the social action, art, and theater to bring that mythology alive.

This is the first time in human history that we have known about the conjunction of Neptune and Uranus, because up to and during the last conjunction, in the 1820s, Neptune had not yet been discovered. The metaphorical implication is that this is the first time in human history that we are being invited to co-create myth consciously. Our instructions from here to eternity are to wed vision (Neptune) to social activism (Uranus) and create a society based on Visionary Activism.

Although sixties culture gave lip service to spirituality, the world of social change and spiritual practice were not really wedded then—they just lived together, like everybody else. The sixties "revolutionary," having not done the inner work necessary to resolve authority issues with Daddy, was still prone to what Swami Beyondananda calls "Tantrum Yoga," preferring to be "right" than to be effective. Our challenge in the nineties is to transform that latent revolutionary into an artist of social change.

The social change artist forms an experimental collaboration between the gods within and the gods without. Examples of successful, spiritually driven social change abound. Through prayer and community organization, native peoples on the Hawaiian island of Molokai have effectively stopped all development projects since 1972. On the Big Island of Hawaii, spiritual activists sought to stop the destruction of virgin rain forest that was threatened by a governmental proposal to build a geothermal power plant. In January 1983 they invoked their presiding deity, Pele, the goddess of the volcano, and offered themselves to her as agents to protect their sacred land. Pele erupted in dramatic plumes of violet-orange outrage on the proposed site of the plant, hours before the court date to decide the matter. Pele decided the matter by convincing all parties that the site would be too dangerous. On subsequent occasions, Pele has erupted through her people in community uprisings that have included the actions of native children who have successfully stopped destructive projects. An eleven-year-old Hawaiian friend of mine was arrested at one such event near Kapoha, in which she said that the police were unnerved and softened by the cries of their neighbors—"Hey, have you forgotten you're Hawaiian?"—as well as the sincerity of the children they arrested. The words *Aina a ke akua I noho ai,* one meaning of which is "The goddess is the land," are carved near Pele's home on Kilauea Iki; it is a credo taken completely to heart by the native people who live on her land.

The Mohawk Indians in Canada were informed of a proposal to build a golf course on their ancestral burial grounds. To prevent the development, they staged a sit-in blocking the bridge to Quebec City in 1994. When the army arrived with tanks and tear gas to remove them, the Native Americans invoked their gods. Just as the soldiers lobbed the tear gas at the protesters, the wind shifted, blowing the tear gas back at the soldiers. As the soldiers fled their tanks, the Native Americans climbed into the vehicles and chased the soldiers off their sacred land.

CONCENTRATE ON THE VISION

The outer planets invite us to entertain the possibility that physical truths are metaphysical guidelines. To ensure safe passage when traversing a narrow bridge, do not look down, but only at where you are going. Thus, a crucial instruction to social change artists is: Concentrate on the vision. Neptune and Uranus say, "If you tell us what you want your life to look like, what you want it to feel like, we will be your booking agents. We will transcend apparently impossible obstacles and we will connect you at the right time, at the right moment, with everything you need to attain your goal." Focus on *what,* not on how.

We could all, no matter how disparate our viewpoints, probably agree on a vision of what we want the world to look like: cities blooming, everyone well fed, sacred stewardship of nature. It's when we get to *how* that we go to war. "How" contains the illusion of scarcity: "No, there's not enough for my city to bloom if your city blooms as well." Initially concentrating on "how" limits the imagination to the visible portion of the spectrum of possibilities, which is nearly always depressing. The Reality Police often take the form of depression masquerading as "realism." If we begin with "what," on the other hand, previously invisible pathways of limitless possibility open up and enchantment prevails.

Neptune says, "Dream, immerse yourself in reverie," while Uranus says, "Wake up." Together, they tell us to cultivate an internal state of *alert trance* as our ideal navigational mode. When we are driving on a crowded freeway, we do not want to be too alert or we would be paralyzed by the terror of the situation. Of course, neither do we want to be too spaced out. We need to be just sufficiently alert, in meditative reverie, to respond appropriately, contribute grace, and survive the modern world.

Neptune is god of the sea, governing water and dreams. Uranus is the god of revolution and constant experimentation. Pluto is the god of all hidden transformative processes. When we enter their domain, we are entering the pre–artificially lighted world, the oracular world, which is full of shadows and ambiguity. Neptunian dream reverie particularly does not like sharp, high contrast, of which television is the exemplar. Whereas film is reflected light, TV is literally shot at us as projected light, with much less capacity for visual subtlety. Studies have shown that the more we watch television, the less dream time we have at night.

We live in a world of toxic mimics. Much of the plastic used in food packaging contains toxic estrogen mimics. If we are deficient in our own estrogen, we will absorb the toxic mimic. If we are deficient in iodine (which we can absorb from eating seaweed or iodized salt), we will absorb radioactive iodine. By analogy, if we are not sufficiently full of our own Neptunian imaginative vitality, we will be vulnerable to absorbing the toxic mimics that popular culture provides. For want of a mythology, we have its toxic mimic, the soap opera of celebrity culture. A mythology invites us to be active participants. Celebrity culture is really an oxymoron, because it engenders passivity and cultivates nothing but envy and teenage yearning. Instead of participating in Uranus's real revolution, we settle for "a revolution in hair care products."

We must strive to be full of our own Pluto, to have a passion for positive intrigue, or we will be kidnapped by *faux* Pluto's petty—

and often dangerous—intrigues. Without a mission, we risk being drawn to street action (or some white-collar variation); without a clan, we risk being drawn to gangs; without a spiritual community composed of autonomous individuals, we risk being drawn to cults.

In the ensuing chapters, each Change God will offer us further strategic principles with which to navigate the wild waters of the modern world. As Choquosh, a Native American storyteller, says, "The elders have sent me to you today to tell you that *now* is like a great rushing river. And this great rushing river will be experienced in many ways. There are many who try to hold on to the shore; there is no shore. The shore is crumbling. The instructions are: Push off into the middle of the river; keep your head above water; see who else is in the river with you; and celebrate."

In this millennial time, the rushing river only picks up its pace.

PLUTO



THE POWER OF SHAPE-SHIFTING

For a peaceful meditation, we need not to go to the mountains and streams;
When thoughts are quieted down, fire itself is cool and refreshing.

ABBOTT KWAISEN
April 1582, as he was about to be burned alive by the soldiers of Oda Nobunaga[2]

Pluto burns away the conditioned voice of family and society that limits our vision of what is possible for us and for the world. We are all so hypnotized by this voice that we initially experience its absence as a void and a cause for grief. The requiem we sing, however, is for the part of ourselves that needed to be released. "My last chance at normalcy has died," the conditioned self laments. But the grace is that we did not sign up for sociological, statistical normalcy—we signed up to be fully alive. The opening line of a poem by Romanian poet Nina Cass says, "I promise to make you more alive than you've ever been." The poem's title, "Ordeal," is both a promise and a threat.

Planet: Pluto
Sign: Scorpio

Glyph: 

Key words and qualities: Death; rebirth; transformation. The alchemy of desire. All initiations of descent into the Underworld. All things that are unseen: death, sex, spirits, ancestors. All that was sacred in the ancient world and that has become taboo in the modern.

Color: Intense blue-green

Metal: Plutonium

Physical body affinity: Sexual organs

Day: Every day that the ground opens up before us as we are strolling through a field.

Way of honoring: Being brought to our knees. Saying to the invisible, "Not my will, but thine." Releasing control. Feeling comfortable with not knowing, like Zen students after twenty years of practice. Remembering that anyone who was anyone in the ancient, mythological world had to make an initiatory descent to the Underworld. Restoring to sacredness that which was sacred and has now become taboo.

Shadow, when not honored: Exploring the taboo, but forgetting to restore it to sacredness. Forgetting that mere intensity does not necessarily make something or someone interesting. Obsession.

We draw Pluto's glyph as the circle of spirit being cooked in the crucible or transformed in the grail. Once, when I was describing the nature of Pluto transits to a client who was in the midst of one, she said, "Ah, like the chickpea!" Chickpea? "Rumi's poem," she explained. A few days later it arrived in the mail.

A chickpea leaps almost over the rim of the pot where it's being boiled.

"Why are you doing this to me?"

The cook knocks him down with the ladle.

"Don't you try to jump out.
You think I'm torturing you,
I'm giving you flavor,
so you can mix with spices and rice
and be the lovely vitality of a human being.

Remember when you drank rain in the garden.
That was for this."
Grace first. Sexual pleasure,
then a boiling new life begins,
and the Friend has something good to eat.

Eventually the chickpea
will say to the cook,
"Boil me some more.
Hit me with the skimming spoon.
I can't do this by myself.

I'm like an elephant that dreams of gardens
back in Hindustan and doesn't pay attention
to his driver. You're my cook, my driver,
my way into existence. I love your cooking."

The cook says,
"I was once like you,
fresh from the ground. Then I boiled in time,
and boiled in the body, two fierce boilings.

My animal soul grew powerful.
I controlled it with practices,
And boiled some more, and boiled
Once beyond that,
and became your teacher."[3]

Pluto transits knock us back down into the pot. We feel as if we are being tortured, but in fact we are being flavored with spices to become more vital. The initial encounter with Pluto's overwhelming intensity is often suffused with erotic pleasure; the boiling begins so that God, the divine part of us, has something good to eat.

Pluto works in three phases. Phase one is disruption of the outer world, which catalyzes descent into the Underworld. Phase two is not-knowing, the state that Zen students sit twenty years to attain. Phase three is the surge of authenticity that occurs as the soul rededicates itself to its remembered mission. One's original self rises to the surface as an answer to the Zen koan, "What is your face before you were born?" Although the three phases tend to overlap, the predominant movement will be from disruption-descent to not-knowing to authentic rebirth. The more we cooperate with the process, the faster we move through the sequence.

If you are boarding a train that is pulling out of the station, you can hold on to the platform if you want, but you won't stop the train from leaving. Your experience of the journey will be greatly enhanced if you let go of the station platform, turn around in your seat, and enjoy the ride. Pluto reminds me of a time when my sister and I rented a car in Ireland and the sticker on the inside said, "To better enjoy your vacation in Ireland, please drive on the left."

THE INITIATORY DESCENT

A colleague likens the first phase of Plutonic initiation to a ramjet, the simplest of jet engines, which gathers force from what it expels. Pluto eats and destroys the familiar and the ordinary. You are nonchalantly living your life when suddenly the ceiling crashes down, the walls cave in, and the floor gives way. You are in free fall. (Remember to dive!) The ground opens up before you and a hand reaches up and tugs you down. Pluto is the ruthless Zen master part of us that says, "Whatever you think you need for a secure sense of identity, let's take it away."

A client related the following story about his own Pluto transit. Attempting to cooperate with Pluto by editing his closet—"keep this, throw this out, this is me, this is no longer me"—he was interrupted in his labors by a call about a death in the family. On his way out the door to the funeral, he decided to take all of his fall and winter clothes to the dry cleaner's: twenty-three shirts, seven pairs of pants, three sweaters, a tuxedo, and a blazer. Upon returning from the funeral he drove by the dry cleaner's and noticed that it had burned down. Pluto had apparently not found his "self-editing" sufficiently rigorous and had taken him, literally, to the cleaners.

Pluto says, "The order you are clinging to is inhibiting your life. You may think you need it, but in fact, letting go will give you more life." Are there certain habits, relationships, or material objects you've always believed to be obligatory, that you've held on to without question? Do they serve or inhibit full expression?

Pluto looks up at us mortals as we trudge along, trying to pretend everything's okay when chaos swirls around us, and says, "How poignant. Let's crank it up." People with a high pain threshold or with a particularly strong investment in a prestigious "career" or high-upkeep lifestyle do not do well with Pluto transits, because in attempting to maintain normalcy, they resist pressure. This just invites greater pressure—Pluto citing them for failure to cooperate.

In Pluto's realm, there is no safety in the fiction of a fixed identity we create out of external stage props: career, clothes, house, even mate. When these seemingly dependable resources come tumbling down around us—as at some point they invariably do—the experience can be harrowing. When the worst of it is over, the emerging psyche realizes, "I thought I needed those things, but even though I lost them, I survived. I will never again be snookered into complacency by fearing loss, because what I most feared has already happened."

Because our culture overvalues this illusion of a fixed sense of identity, it offers little useful advice on dancing with the god of disruption. From the time we reach adulthood, we're expected to have a snappy sense of self, usually based on a grown-up career: "This is what I do, therefore this is who I am." But psychic reality says that periods of bleakness, introversion, and self-doubt are crucial to growth. Saturn-Gurdjieff's theory of the levels of consciousness reminds us that often descent is a form of ascent. A creative society would reverence and honor the descent into not knowing.

The dark side of class culture says, "Everyone stays where they're born. You have a chair, you sit in it. You may not like it, but it's your chair." However, when Pluto pipes the music, we feel as if we are in a game of musical chairs and our chair has just been taken away. We're orbiting outside the system; we don't belong anymore.

In ancient Greece, when you left the confines of your safe, cozy community, there were signs posted that said, if you go beyond this sign then you are *sacer*—you are on your own, without the protection of the community. *Sacred,* which derives from the word *sacer,* subsequently came to mean autonomous journeying beyond conventional boundaries. To journey into the sacred is a solo act of defiance.

To find your own authentic path, you must leave the coziness of the "known" that Pluto has disrupted and head out beyond the *sacer* signs. Stepping out into the wilderness is terrifying—evolution is

high-stress. Pluto transits can be misdiagnosed as breakdowns. But there are others who have done this, there are maps and guidelines. Astrology is one; mythology is another.

Anyone who was anyone in the ancient mythological world had to do a tour of duty in the Underworld. Inanna is the Sumerian queen of heaven who tricked her father into giving her the Tablets of Destiny, which contained the arts of astrology and other systems of divine navigation. Out of compassion, she gave them to humanity. ("Take two tablets, and call me after the millennium.")

Some versions of her story say that, compelled by her own intrepid curiosity, she decided to descend from the sky to the Underworld. Other versions say that she was tricked by an invitation from Eriskegal, Queen of the Underworld. Either way, before leaving she tells her friends that if she does not return within sixty days, they should first mourn her, then come rescue her.

As Inanna descends, at each of the seven gates of the Underworld she is stripped of one of her attributes: her crown, her jewelry, her robes, her pride, her self-esteem—everything but her sense of humor. Finally she stands naked before Eriskegal, who fixes her with a stone-cold stare. Under this frigid gaze, all life leaves Inanna's body and she is hung as a corpse in the land of the dead.

Sixty days pass. In the above-world, all of creation goes into mourning except for Inanna's consort, Dumuzi, the god of vegetation, who really whoops it up. Her concerned friends and father descend and negotiate a hostage release with Eriskegal. They finally broker a deal in which Inanna can return to the upper world as long as she sends down a replacement. Inanna says, "Hmmmm . . . I wonder who that will be? How about my charming husband who didn't shed a tear for me?"

Dumuzi the vegetative god had become a vegetable, a party vegetable, a veritable couch potato in need of an initiatory descent. So he is sent down as her replacement. In turn, Inanna negotiates his release for half the year, during which time the desert blooms.

In a similar tale from Greek mythology, Persephone descends to the Plutonian Underworld a young girl but ascends a queen and a woman. The most well-known version of her myth has her abducted by Pluto as she wanders through a field of flowers, pausing to gaze at a narcissus. But this is a later creation. In the former tale, her descent is catalyzed not by a criminal act of kidnapping by a male god but by a conscious decision to unite with her potent Underworld self. Indeed, in even earlier versions of the myth, Persephone is known as Proserpina, Queen of the Underworld, the great snake goddess, and one of her identities *is* Pluto.

After Persephone's initial descent, Demeter, her mother, wanders the world stricken by the grief of losing her daughter to the Underworld. She disguises herself as a wet nurse and goes to live in a mortal household. Each night she takes the babe entrusted to her care and dips him into fire to make him immortal. One night the child's mother spies her doing this and flips out, whereupon Demeter reveals herself as a goddess. "You silly woman," she rails at the quaking woman before her. "One more session and your child would have been immortal!" And she leaves in a huff.

Baptism by fire is a classically Plutonic initiatory rite of purification whereby all that is temporal and conditioned is burnt away. Just as we are all the characters in our dreams, in myth we are all the players. We are the concerned mom, the baby, and the goddess. We can all recall times when the protective, rational, consensus mind part of ourselves showed up and was horrified to catch the divine part of us up to some wild shenanigans. A moment's doubt and we plummeted down to the realm where three thousand laws were limiting our creativity, causing us to balk one session shy of immortality.

When Pluto is our travel agent, our ticket to heaven includes a stopover in hell. And because the journey is arduous, we don't usually book in advance. Mark Twain reminds us that a real journey is one where, "halfway through, you wish you were home." Only by

diving into unfamiliar depths can we tap inner resources that are connected to a larger Will. We glean Pluto's wisdom from those experiences for which we would never in our right minds volunteer.

Whenever we say, "I am willing to experience anything, but not that," Pluto responds, "Thanks for the tip—you've just made my job so much easier. Here's that!"

"Okay, okay," we plead. "I'm willing to experience anything, but not more of that." To which Pluto responds, "Great, here's more of that."

"All right," we moan. "Now I am truly willing to experience anything." We acquiesce.

The Wisdom of Not-Knowing

Wherever we are resistant to life, the encounter with Pluto provides the opportunity to become more open. When truly tragic events befall us, we initially feel that we will never experience anything as strongly. One of Pluto's gifts is that the very opposite becomes true. This god tears open our hearts, and once our hearts have been broken, we actually experience *everything* more deeply. At a certain keening intensity, there is no hierarchy of pain. We are granted empathic kinship with all creatures who have suffered profound loss.

Pluto brings us to our knees, forcing us to surrender to full feeling. Jung said that we gain access to Big Mystery through the "inferior function," those areas that are not conscious or richly cultivated. In our mainstream modern culture the least cultivated area would be the feeling function. Through feeling we are all mixed up with original chaos.

We are often intimidated when we encounter people who have undergone breathtaking tragedy. This arises partly out of superstitious fear of tragic contagion, but mostly because we lack Plutonian etiquette. Once we have been to the Underworld, the pain of others no longer separates us from them. Fear is transformed into a feeling

of poignancy, which is the heart's recognition of kinship. We have earned the right to enter the sphere of another's grief. "Hi, I see that your passport is also stamped with a visa to the Underworld."

THE ART OF GRIEF

In seeking his lost Eurydice, Orpheus was granted safe passage through the Underworld because of the artful magic of his music. His devotion to his music had already stripped him of superfluous pretensions, so the Underworld had very little to munch on.

Art provides a round-trip ticket to the Underworld. A few years ago I visited an artist friend's house after the death of his baby daughter. The house was blooming with grief—altars, drawings, and paintings honoring her were everywhere. He said that only in this way could he journey in the Underworld of his grief without dying himself. I remembered my own journey nine months earlier, when I also had a baby who died. The abyss had opened up before me, and I could feel the wind between the worlds. Crazy with grief, I felt that I too would die, from reckless inattention and despair, until I began honoring that child through writing and altars.

The Japanese have a custom of honoring not only children who have died, but also those unborn children who have been aborted. The whole family gathers at a shrine to the child and offers it songs, paintings, poems, and loving prayers reverencing their acknowledged grief. "Not bringing you into the world was the most loving act we could perform now. We bless you with our art and wish you well."

The Mexican Day of the Dead is one culture's fabulous collective ritual of artfully celebrating death and the Underworld. Witty skeleton figures are crafted out of every conceivable material, and picnics are held on the graves of loved ones. The Day of the Dead falls on November 1, halfway through Pluto's sign of Scorpio. It reminds us that one of the true functions of Halloween and All

Souls' Day is to simultaneously honor the dead and gather the force to keep on living.

The Underworld has its own code of etiquette. (Don't eat anything when you're there; don't look back; don't litter or loiter.) You can go there seeking loved ones as long as you do not set up housekeeping in the land of the dead. The dead can live through us by our artful invitation for them to do so, but we are instructed not to live through them. Every transformation brings about death, and we must struggle not to become bitter. Art grants us safe passage by transforming grief into a rededication to life and a more deeply loving heart.

When I was in Cape Town, South Africa, my friend and guide, Ishmael, strongly urged me to visit Robbin Island, the prison where Nelson Mandela spent twenty-seven years. He said that even though so much suffering had taken place there, it was a place of enormous spiritual power. "You'll feel the great art of spiritual self-cultivation that allowed them to survive. They became magicians."

While I was there, I saw the tiny cell where Nelson Mandela spent those twenty-seven years, and the vine in the prison yard under which he hid the completed manuscript of his book. The manuscript was discovered and destroyed, and Mandela was punished for having "abused his study privileges" by being denied books, pen, and paper for the next two and a half years. After that time, undaunted, he secretly wrote the book again, and this time it was successfully smuggled out. The devotional art of writing (and rewriting) his book granted him safe passage through his long Underworld journey and allowed the miracle of his emergence: not bitter, but loving and tolerant.

When I returned from my tour, Ishmael queried me. "Did you feel it? I can see it in your face. What did you feel?" I replied that it would take a long time for the experience to percolate down into understanding. During the boat ride, I had tried to imagine what it

might have felt like to have journeyed to that bleak, cold, windswept island with a life sentence hanging over my head. "But you know," said Ishmael, "when Mandela was on the boat to Robbin Island with his comrades, they all sang. They sang as though it were nothing."

SHAPE-SHIFTING AND THE ART OF HAVING A MISSION

From earliest childhood, many of us feel that we have a mission. We may not always be clear as to what that mission is, but the feeling that we have one is a constant companion. The degree to which Pluto is conscious in our lives or in our charts corresponds to the strength of that force or feeling.

The mission of the Pluto god within all of us is to be used for the greater good. George Bernard Shaw writes, "This is the true joy in life. The being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. The being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap. The being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

Our mission says, "Whatever I'm doing in the world, whatever my profession, that is my cover. I'm really an undercover agent for Pluto, for transformation of my own life, the lives of other people, and of the larger social world."

The undercover self is the shape-shifting part of us that assumes whatever guises are necessary to best serve our mission. Pluto's initiation causes us to remember our assignment and the unimportant, temporal nature of identity. Outer identity is a fiction that we can shed or change when it is no longer useful. The Pluto encounter allows us to rededicate ourselves to all creation, and that rededication leads us to stage three: the ascent out of the Underworld.

ACQUIESCENCE CATALYZES THE ASCENT

> When the darkness grows denser, I would penetrate to its very core and ground, and would not rest until amid the pain

> a light appeared to me, for in "excessu affectus" Nature reverses herself. I would turn in rage against myself and with the heat of my rage I would melt my lead. I would renounce everything and engage in the lowest activities should my depression drive me to violence. I would wrestle with the dark angel until he dislocated my hip. For he is also the light and the blue sky which he withholds from me.
>
> Anyway that is what I would do. What others do is another question, which I cannot answer. But for you too there is an instinct either to back out of it or to go down to the depths. But no half-measures or halfheartedness.
>
> With Cordial Wishes,
> As Ever, C. G. Jung[4]

After disruption and not-knowing, acquiescence ushers in the third stage of Pluto's initiation, during which you begin to journey back up from the Underworld. Of course, the ascent takes much longer than the rapid plummet down. In acquiescing, we learn to say to Pluto, "Whatever best serves the divine, let it work through me."

This last stage often occurs right after the transit is technically over, when Pluto has moved off a sensitive part of the chart, when the Sturm und Drang have been calmed by surrender. Outer chaos has catalyzed inner calm. The intensity of shamanism has given birth to the compassionate detachment of Buddhism.

Only the experience of having been intensely cooked develops the wry humor, worldly perspective, and witty compassion needed to keep enjoying life's pleasures even when surrounded by incomprehensible pain. Take Beirut, for instance, where people ran five-star restaurants in the midst of ruins; or a photograph taken during World War II that depicts a couple dancing beautifully, sur-

rounded by rubble. The caption underneath says, "In spite of everything—Yes!"

The Plutonian near-death experience kills our ambivalence to life. Pluto says, "If you want to get out, leave now. If you stay, admit that you love life with no halfheartedness." We have to abandon the luxury of nonchalance expressed in the bored teenage bravado, "I don't care whether I live or die." Pluto says, "Care now, or forever rest in peace."

Pluto both bestows and teaches the power of shape-shifting. Energy takes and discards forms as the cycles of death and rebirth play out. Buddhists call what is underneath this roiling phantasmagoria *sunyata,* emptiness. Pluto resides in the creative void, the fountain of antimatter, the black hole. Matter is so compressed in a black hole that it becomes unpredictable, no longer following the laws of physics that govern the rest of the universe. Indeed, science itself seems to be undergoing a Pluto transit, no longer leading us to reassuring certainty, but back to mystery.

Hindus have venerated this mysterious force in the form of the black goddess Kali-Ma, the great mother, lover, and devourer. She consumes all the foibles of the egotistical, small-willed self: pride, selfishness, and any sense of being "important" or "special." Self-importance is a trick of the Reality Police to render ineffective, isolated, and possibly harmful those who are on the brink of giving a useful gift to the world. People so afflicted separate themselves from the team, rather than contributing to the general good.

Pluto/Kali has an affinity for both the intensity of shamanism and the detachment of Buddhism, the void and the whole big show. Shape-shifting is the Pluto/Kali dancer's art—stepping in and out of form.

The question Pluto perpetually poses within us is, "Out of all of life's shimmering possibilities, why have I chosen to be this particular way?" If you deem some manifestation—your private self or

your public self—to be less than wonderful, throw it back into Pluto's cauldron and try out another.

When the inappropriate forms with which the soul was previously identified are annihilated, a tremendous amount of energy is made available that we can then use to consciously choose our next, more creative manifestation. We throw the old identity back into Pluto's crucible, then enlist the genius of Uranus/Neptune—the infinitely rich inventive imagination—to give it fresh incarnational garb.

For instance, "perkiness" is a portable prison supplied by the Reality Police, usually to women, who insist on affirming that "Everything is just great," when in fact it is not. After perkiness has been consumed (the bad marriage has collapsed; you've been downsized from the job you secretly hated), there is a surge of energy. Honest misery is far more energizing than perky dishonesty born of defending something that wants to die.

In any powerful encounter with a Change God, forget about protesting that "everything is just great, nothing needs changing." Whenever I hear people say, "I've completely dealt with my shadow now," my impulse is to quote Groucho Marx's song, "Hello, I must be going," because I know that the ground is about to open and a hand reach up and snatch them into the yawning chasm.

EATEN BY SHADOW: REDEFINING POWER

Pluto's function is to destroy small will, allowing us to align with larger Will. When we state our intentions and desires, we must always accompany them with the prayerful proviso, "Whatever is best for all creatures in all realms—*thy* Will be done." This is the only form of magic acceptable to Pluto. Lesser magic, black magic, is always "my will" juju. It takes forms such as "I want this boy." Salesman–Wall Street–Hinayana honky magic says, "I want it, I get it." In addition, degraded shamanism's petty turf wars have no con-

sideration for the larger good. Pluto annihilates small intrigue to free up our energy for the larger Intrigue of Conscious Evolution.

Because Pluto's teaching requires that we willingly give up control, it is a challenging transit for powerful people. The descent is always about the disruption of dominance and the redefinition of power. "Pay proper reverence to the gods and the Buddha," said the Zen sage Shingen. "When your thoughts are in accord with the Buddha's, you will gain more power. If your domination over others issues from your evil thoughts, you will be exposed, you are doomed."[5]

When we enter the Underworld through a Pluto transit, any tendency we have to abuse power is simmered away, distilling an entirely new definition of power. Power no longer means "power over" but rather "power to transform." Perceiving the latter grants us an expanded understanding of both power's source and its availability: power does not flow from us, but through us. "Relax, the *ch'i* is unlimited," says the *ch'i gong* master.

When we are frightened and do not know what is going on, the ego's strategy is often to say, "The only way I'll feel secure is if I'm running things." Fear justifies itself by pretending that no one else is competent. The Pluto encounter forcefully reminds us to let go, that there is a larger control zone in the universe. We have no choice but to trust that it exists.

Scientists were experimenting with monkeys, as is their habit. *The New York Times* reported that their subjects were an alpha male–dominant breed. When the scientists introduced new dominant males into the tribe, the monkeys jockeyed for hierarchical dominance until, at a critical juncture, half of the monkeys basically became Jamaican. "Hey mon, who cares? We're outta this. We're gonna go over here and have a life." The other half of the monkeys (who insisted on still being aggressive and vying with each other for the dominant role) died. They either succumbed to autoimmune diseases and cancer or they killed each other.

Dominance is an evolutionary dead end. It will kill us. We must die to it if we are not to die *of* it. Pluto transits are about giving up dominance. In contrast to the unhappy monkeys above, the bonobo, a cousin of the chimpanzee, has recently been shown to have developed co-dominance between the sexes, even on matters of food and sexuality. In *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape,* Dr. Frans deWaal notes that humans are as closely related to bonobos as to chimpanzees. As an inspiration to all of us, deWaal writes, "The chimpanzee resolves sexual issues with power; the bonobo resolves power issues with sex."[6] The bonobos defuse a tense situation by everyone making love—girls with boys, boys with boys, girls with girls—then they all settle down to a peaceful meal.

Strictly Plutonic Relationships

Pluto energy is too powerful for private concerns, just as plutonium is too hot to cook dinner with. Pluto's intensity is too much for an ordinary relationship container to hold. Two people in a relationship must be devoted to something larger than themselves, larger even than the relationship, so that intense energy has a large enough venue in which to express itself.

Pluto governs all taboo and intense emotions like compulsion and obsession (and the resulting cheap perfumes named after them; note to marketers—"Tabu" and "Obsession" are taken, but "Compulsion" is still available). The myth of Psyche and Amor reminds us that intimacy and Eros are gateways into obsession, and that the portal of relationships is also an entrance to the Underworld.

Psyche is the most beautiful young girl, lovely of form as well as of spirit. When everyone begins to worship her, Venus grows very jealous. "How dare humans worship a mere mortal?" she seethes, then commands the community to sacrifice Psyche by binding her to a rock where a monster will come and devour her. In accordance with the wrathful goddess's edict, yet with great mourning, Psyche is left on the sacrificial rock.

Venus tells her son, Amor (also known as Eros or Cupid), to kill Psyche. He flies overhead, but when he sees her lying unconscious he immediately falls in love with her (how typical). He snatches her up and takes her to his pleasure palace, where each night he comes to her in the dark and they feast and make love. "Ah, Psyche, my beloved," he says, "here are my terms: we can continue like this—you will live as a queen during the day, and at night I will come to you and we will have great passion and feasting—so long as you never, ever look at me."

Psyche is happy with this for a time, but then begs to be allowed to tell her family that she is not dead, in order to free them from their grief. Amor relents and says, "All right. But I warn you, this will disrupt our happy life." Psyche journeys back and tells her sisters, "Not only am I not dead, but I live in a palace, come see!" They visit and are consumed with envy at the riches with which Psyche lives. They plant a dark thought in her heart: "The reason he doesn't want you to look at him at night is that he's probably a monster and is planning to kill you. You must hide a knife. One night after you've made love, light a lamp, take the knife, and plunge it into his heart."

Psyche believes them. They're her sisters, after all.

Late that night after lovemaking, she brings out the lamp and lights it. She sees that her lover is Amor, the god of love, the most handsome man she has ever seen, and she is ashamed of her dark thoughts. Just then she is betrayed by a drop of oil that sputters from the lamp, burning Amor and awakening him. Enraged at the violation of his edict, he roars, "You have disobeyed me! Now I must leave you." And he leaves.

The myth of Psyche and Amor is the story of unconscious obsessive love transformed into conscious partnership and marriage. The Psyche part of each of us, regardless of our sex, has got to turn on the light, and Psyche's sisters are always urging us to do so. Although their motives are funky, their role is nonetheless necessary. Through their jealous whispers, the suspicion they instill in us ("Maybe it's a monster I'm actually in bed with, and not my beloved!") is the nec-

essary catalyst to turning on the light. Loss ensues, but it is loss of the pretense of intimacy. Erotic obsession is a great way to meet people, but a terrible way to get to know someone.

In the next part of the myth, Psyche is transformed from an obsessed, shallow, pretty girl, showing off her boyfriend and her wealth, into a powerful woman. After Amor leaves, she undergoes many ordeals and accomplishes seemingly impossible initiation tasks (set by Venus, who in this myth is in her raging, devouring mother manifestation), often aided and encouraged by animals.

Her final, most arduous task is to descend into the Underworld, obtain a gift of beauty ointment from Persephone, and bring it back for Venus. Psyche successfully obtains the ointment from Persephone, who gives her the emphatic instruction, "Do not open the jar!" as Psyche begins her ascent. When Psyche is only two steps away from the world of the living, she thinks to herself, "Why shouldn't I adorn myself with this beauty ointment and be even more irresistible to Amor? In that way I will surely win back his love." So she opens the jar and falls into a deep, deathlike swoon. Just at that moment, Amor is flying overhead. He sees Psyche faint. Disobeying his mother, he sweeps her up, brings her to heaven, and proclaims his love. They are truly married and are made immortal by the assembled gods.

This mythic journey transforms the erotic encounter of unconscious love (lights off), or private and isolating obsession, to conscious union. The true wedding is between the matured soul (Psyche after her solo journey) and the matured loving heart (Amor having defied his mother).

Becoming Extremophiles

A newspaper headline of April 6, 1997, read EXTREMOPHILES TRANSFORMING SCIENCE. Extremophiles, meaning "lovers of extremes," are microbial life-forms found in environments so arduous it was previously thought that no life could survive there. Extremophiles

thrive above boiling hot vents on the deep sea floor and thousands of feet below polar ice. They swim in acid, eat sulfur, and draw energy from rock.

The word "extremophile" charmingly implies the Plutonian teaching of deriving sustenance from seemingly inhospitable environments literal or emotional. We aspire, with the aid of our actualized Plutos, to become "extremophiles."

In Tantric Buddhism, the Dakinis are fierce, witty, sexy, defiant extremophile goddesses who enjoy intensity. Their experience teaches us how to dance with Pluto. "The wrathful Dakinis laugh and dance as they feast on the painful raw negativity that the unenlightened take to be demons."[7]

"If something's a problem, make it bigger," Visionary Activist Pluto says. Obsessed? Get more obsessed—but ritualistically. This is best exemplified by the obsessive-redemptive story of a wonderful ritualistic friend of mine.

She was madly in love with a man and he with her, but there were others involved. He left her to return to the old girlfriend, and my friend was bereft. Understanding the astrological language of the psyche, she recognized the resulting agony of obsessive torture to be Plutonian. She was also well aware of Visionary Activist Principle Number Six: "We only possess the power of an insight when we give it expression." There is a world of difference between having a fascinating insight about one's father or one's lover, and building an altar to that insight. Knowledge is converted to power through artful, ritualistic expression.

So my friend decided to dive fully into her obsessive feelings within a ritualized container. She prepared her room and lit a candle. While that candle burned she resolved to surrender completely to all of her tragic, romantic, obsessive-compulsive feelings by playing old music and reading old love letters. She then symbolically addressed her beloved: "If you do not care for me as I care for you and if we are not meant to be together, then nothing will happen.

But if you do care for me as I care for you and we are meant to be together, then you will think about me night and day." The purity of the intention is crucial to its not backfiring.

As the candle burned down, she rolled around, thrashed crazily, wept, and moaned. By the time the candle had burned out, she was free. She felt lighthearted and complete. She still loved this person, but she was no longer in the grip of the obsessive feeling.

Two weeks later, the man she loved came to her store and said, "Whatever I do, whether I'm waking or sleeping, I cannot get you out of my mind." Just as Inanna had sent Dimuzi to the Underworld in her stead, my friend had transferred her obsession.

At this point, as she tells it, she knew she had to be completely clean, because Pluto's magic has to be used for the good of everyone involved, not for "power over" or manipulation. So she said to him, "You now know what it's like without me. Go back into your other relationship and fully imagine what it would be like without her. And when you're clear, let me know."

When he returned to my friend the next time, he was capable of commitment. They have been happily married, with the usual hard work, for twelve years.

This story contains important Pluto principles. There is no guaranteed result except burning through the obsession itself. You do not necessarily get the guy, but you do get yourself back. As another friend says, "Kiss the bride, for you are she, re-wedded to your destiny."

Always use Pluto to free yourself of Pluto. You can only kill the dragon with a knife made from the dragon; you can only cure obsession with obsession.

TRY THIS AT HOME

If you are having difficulty in any relationship, and there need to be conversations that seem to be impossible to conduct in a grown-up fashion, Pluto says, "Try working in a deeper domain. Do a ritual."

Go to your room, light a candle, and imaginatively summon the other person's spiritual supervisor. In your mind, have the conversation you wish you could have face to face. Experiment with an open heart. Upon next encountering that person, entertain the possibility that the invisible conversation has truly happened at an absolutely authentic energetic level.

The head of a Jesuit monastery once came to me for a reading. It was a gift that someone had given to him, and he was initially most reluctant, arms folded in front of him. But after we dove in, he uncrossed his arms and was delighted. "I had no idea astrology was such an accurate, elegant, specific language of spiritual practice," he said. When I suggested this practice of summoning people's spiritual supervisors and having the energetically desirable conversation take place in the realm of the spiritual invisible, he was wildly enthusiastic. "Monasteries are places of such profound political intrigue—this is perfect! I'm going to begin this practice right away. In fact, I might end up spending most of my time in meetings of this sort." "Always happy to bring a little positive witchcraft back to the Church," I quipped.

Pluto, lord of all things beneath the surface, says, "Try the imaginative invisible, it always works." Indeed, when Pluto brings us to our knees, we have no choice but to supplicate the invisible. At this point, we certainly hope there is a larger metaphysical order, because that is all we have.

Through honoring the invisible, we gain a strategic power: we need never be daunted by the limited logic of the visible again. Whenever there is a blockage of any sort, we appeal to the invisible presiding deity. When I wanted to move into a particular building but was frustrated in my attempts by obfuscating humans, I talked to the invisible spirit, or energetic force field, of that building: "O beautiful old building, open the path so that we can be good to each other." And I left some offerings of tobacco, chocolate, flowers, and bird seed that I thought the building (or at least the rats) would like.

The next day, I received an apologetic call saying that the new manager was just starting and that, unlike the previous manager, he thought a self-employed astrologer was *exactly* the sort of tenant they were looking for.

WORKING FOR THE GOD, BEING WORKED BY THE GOD

A playful way of working with demons or negative forces is provided by alchemy. We remember that Pluto's glyph is an image of the circle of spirit being cooked in the alchemical cauldron. As the alchemist holds the vessel, it seethes, becomes violently dark and disturbed (this darkening is called the *nigredo*), and finally polarizes completely into white and black. As the vapors pour forth, they fill the world with the moral ambiguity of the dream state. The ensuing storms are so terrifying that the alchemist might drop the vessel and have to start all over again with the experiment.

The instructions in alchemy and in astrology are that the alchemist in each one of us must reach up and connect with (pick one) the Crown Chakra, the Holy Spirit, the lightning of illumination, whatever we want to imagine that is larger than ourselves. Bringing lightning down into the vessel creates gold. Only then, when we become ourselves, do we become coherent people capable of a mature culture.

We now prepare to become intimate with Pluto. We say, "Okay, Pluto, laser away any obstacle to divine will. I release my desire to be controlled by, or to control, anyone or anything. Purge me of the dominator virus. I have an experimental faith in the larger order that will step in if I'm not controlling everything."

In our own private angst, we belittle our capacity to affect our own lives, let alone the world. Pluto values hidden, small, sincere endeavor. That which is hidden has infinite influence. As the old Chinese saying goes, "The right man sitting in his house and thinking the right thought will be heard even a thousand miles away." If

Pluto is embraced, even in only one place, it affects the whole, simultaneously and everywhere. An old alchemist gave the following consolation to one of his disciples: "No matter how isolated you are and how lonely you feel, if you do your work truly and conscientiously, unknown friends will come and find you."

When we work alone, Pluto comes to visit to remind us that we are all public dreamers. When we offer ourselves to the greater good, Pluto is encouraging, for he is also the god of hidden wealth who supports us when we do his work. All precious stones and metals that lie beneath the surface are under his province. If we work for him, he works for us.

NEPTUNE



THE DREAMS THAT STUFF IS MADE OF

What is the future? What is the past? What are we? What is the magic fluid that surrounds us and conceals the things we most need to know? We live and die in the midst of marvels.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Neptune presides over the oceanic realm of dreams, imagination, vision, and myth, inspiring in us the poetry, art, and music that bring conscious kinship alive in our community. The Zulu word for sleep is *butongo,* which means "the state of being one with the star gods." When we sleep, we restore our memory of kinship with higher forces. But when we enter the illusory waking world, we forget. One way to carry the memory of kinship into the waking world is through the arts. The earliest word for "dream" (from the Old English word *drieman*) also meant to make music, which invites the notion that making music is a way of dreaming the world into being. Neptune is the part of us that sleeps, dreams, creates myths, then makes music and art to bring those myths alive.

A culture or an individual without a guiding mythology of kinship and the art to make it manifest is like a boat with no rudder

Planet: Neptune
Sign: Pisces

Glyph: ♆

Key words and qualities: Dreams; vision; imagination—which lays the tracks for the Reality Train (Saturn). Any art form that inspires yearning and reminds us of the reality of our mystical kinship with all beings. Transcendental beauty. The ocean.

Color: Magenta; all diaphanous or iridescent shades of color.

Metal: Anodized metals that gleam with iridescent teal and purple.

Physical body affinity: Feet

Day: Every day; or any day spent at the beach.

Way of honoring: A daily dose of vastness; reverie; staring out the window; being at the ocean; ecstatic self-loss.

Shadow, when not honored: Without a guiding, living vision, a culture, family, or individual gets "hooked" on Neptune's trident. Dangers include addiction to substances, or to romantic melancholy, passivity, disappointment, glamour, or bad, loud music.

being tossed upon Neptune's waves. The Neptunian realm is an infinite, diaphanous sea of dream material, constantly flowing into form and then dissolving—morphing from one incarnation into the next. In this dream world, life assumes form in response to our imagination.

The early Cabalists, in pondering how God could create the universe using nothing outside of God, mused, "How do we humans create, using no material outside ourselves?" They answered: with our imagination. We (and everything else) are made in God's image, meaning not that we look like old men with beards, but that we are dreamed in the imagination of the divine. By analogy, our imagination is the divine part of us that links us in a collaborative endeavor with God to co-create the most ingenious ongoing symbiotic evolution possible. As we are dreamed by the gods, we in turn dream reality into being.

We are constantly summoning and invoking through our imaginings, but often in an inconsistent and confused manner. Our lives, therefore, assume a corresponding design of confusion. One law of the dream world is that our personal lives are expanded or constricted by what we imagine to be possible. By analogy, our collective life is limited or expanded by the images that circulate through mass culture. Therefore, to have maximum radiating effect in our communities, we must lean into the strategic acupressure spot of public imagination.

The very fun Harlem minister Reverend Ike says, "If we can dream it up, we can dream it down," and his audiences chant this with him. Try chanting this aloud now, just for the hell of it: "If I can dream it up, I can dream it down." According to Neptune, if you don't like it, undream it and dream it again.

Neptune invites us to be public dreamers, dream artists who are willing to entertain the possibility that popular culture may be a theatrical venue for collective myth. We are invited to become Neptune's agents in the social world, ambassadors from the dream

world, stretching back imaginative boundaries, thinking of ourselves as mythmakers.

DREAM TIME

Neptune will be traveling through Aquarius from 1998 until 2012, which happens to be the end of the Mayan calendar (as well as the year Social Security is due to run out). During this time the Myth God wants to enter fully the community of humans by enlisting the aid of all those willing to change the entire climate of culture. Raise your hand if you are interested.

A Mayan vase shows the seven Lords of Time gathering on August 14, 3014 B.C., to create the world, with the promise that they'll be back at the end of time, December 23, 2012. The inscription on the vase suggests that on that date, the Lords of Time will come back to the world to host a huge party to reinvent time. Everyone's invited. Don't be late.

Neptune in Aquarius says we have a lot of dreaming to do in order to get the world-house in order for that party. We begin by asking ourselves, "Is *this* the most beautiful and loving world we can imagine and conjure?" If not, let's conjure a new shape for the world. The Neptune who lives within us constantly proffers a vision of how it could be, inspiring yearning and aspiration. Holding a vision of the desirable world allows the Neptunian protoplasm of current reality to begin to morph into that template.

Pluto moved inside Neptune's orbit in 1979, making Neptune the farthest-out planet until January 14, 1999. The farthest-out planet corresponds symbolically to the farthest-in force within our psyche. This time period makes widely available the truth that imagination presides over power. If we can dream something, we can summon the power and the means necessary to accomplish it.

While these dates mark times when Neptune's energy is especially intense, Neptune's dream world is always available to us. The

trick is, we need to step out of time to find this part of ourselves. If we pose the question, "Do we have enough time?"—to save the world, answer our mail, return our phone calls—Neptune responds that it depends on what kind of time we are invoking. If we think of Saturn time—realistic, tick-tick-tick time—then the answer is, "Of course not." But if we think of Neptune time, dream time (which in Chinese fairy tales is called "irrational time"), then the answer is, "Yes, we have all the time we need." In fairy tales, people step into magic caves or through the backs of wardrobes, have countless adventures in the fairy realm, but return to their "normal" daytime world to find that only a few minutes have elapsed.

Neptune wants us to think renaissance rather than apocalypse: "Not the end of time, but the end of the domination of time." The nineteenth-century magician Eliphas Levi said that leading a magical life requires that we not be frightened of time, but that we "conduct ourselves as though we were kings and queens with all eternity before us."

When we pause in dream time to gather our wits, we are reminded that beauty is abundantly available to the unhurried mind. Conscious reveries, trance—any portal to ecstatic self-loss, such as diving through a sun-dappled wave—are all forms of worshiping Neptune. Neptune rewards us for these acts of reverence with inspiration.

REVERIE, REFLECTION, AND REVERSAL

Neptune's realm is the unhurried, imaginative dream state, which is always available to us through the act of conscious reflection.

All cultures have their biases—preferred energetic states and qualities of mind—encouraging some, while emphatically discouraging others. Mainstream Western orthodoxy, for example, has had little tolerance for the crucial part of us that communes with the world through associative reverie.

While gazing out the window in fifth grade, gathering inspiration during a test, I remember being interrupted by the teacher's harsh voice: "Casey, what are you doing?"

"I'm thinking," I responded.

"Oh, I thought you were looking out the window," the teacher said with triumphant sarcasm.

"Some of us can do both," was my snappy rejoinder, causing me to be sent once again to the principal's office for the Neptunian crime of daydreaming.

Our culture often views going to the beach (or gazing out the window) as "escapism," while Neptune says *not* going to the beach, literally or metaphorically, is escaping from necessary reflection. Neptune presides over the realm of water. As water reflects a reverse image, so gazing at water induces a reversal of consciousness, a hypnotic state of reverie. Neptune says that the reverse of common sense is wisdom.

Dartmoor is a wonderfully spooky, mysterious, fog-enshrouded place in the southwest of England, where tradition holds that pixies and trickster spirits will lure you off the path into quicksand if you are not reverent. It is a disorienting place, reminding us that we have to get disoriented before we can get oriented. Local advice is to turn your clothes inside out before you enter the moor; this act of reversal serves as a respectful ritual obeisance to the pixies, who then treat you respectfully as well. The principle here is that reversing ideas about reality reveals truths that grant us safe passage.

In his book *The Soul's Code,* cultural agent/provocateur James Hillman reverses an orthodox psychological theory. Winston Churchill was a tremendous stutterer when he was little, and yet he grew up to be one of the most brilliant orators of his time. The great bullfighter Manolete, as a child, was a pathetic weenie, clinging to his mother's apron strings. Yet he grew up to face thousand-pound bulls in the ring. Conventional psychology would say that both

men, in working to overcome their afflictions, overcompensated, and thereby created their destinies.

Hillman posits the opposite: when we are little, some part of us knows our destiny and feels daunted by it; hence, our destinies invoke our afflictions. Some part of young Winston Churchill *knew* that he was going to grow up to address thousands of people as a great orator and was so daunted by his destiny that it made him stutter. If we are a young boy and part of our psyche *knows* that we are going to face massive horned bulls in the ring, we're likely to hold tight to our mother's skirts. It is useful to extend this "daunted by destiny" theory beyond the realm of childhood to include any time in our lives when we feel intimidated. Think of it as a temporary shrinking from the potential greatness of our mission.

We recoil before we take action. The snake coils before it strikes. Coiled reflection precedes fast, effective motion. The Zen monk reflects for six months, and then executes the masterful painting in five minutes. The invisible broods the visible. Reality gestates in the dream world.

A friend of mine had long been estranged from her son, which caused her great sadness. One day the situation was no longer tolerable. Remembering that the invisible world would like to help, but that spiritual etiquette requires that we ask, she asked for a dream that would clarify and guide her to resolve the situation. That night she had a dream in which she saw her son with an octopus wrapped around his heart. When she awoke, she recalled the dream with a shudder, and then thought, "Hmmm. What to do?"

While recalling the dream, she entered a state of active imagination in which, in her mind's eye, she shape-shifted into a porpoise who butted at the octopus until it let go of her son and swam away. The next day, in "real" life, her son called for the first time in years and they began a loving dialogue to resolve their differences.

The imaginative implications of this story are manifold and heartening. Once we translate reality into Neptune's language of meaningful dream metaphor, Neptune's magic becomes available to transform our lives. Any quandary—personal, spiritual, or political—can best be resolved once it is viewed symbolically, as though in a dream. Once we have translated it into imagery, we can work on it imaginatively, bypassing the tyranny of depressing realism.

Imagine that all of us, together, are dreaming the news: "We dreamed the Arab and Israeli parts of ourselves were causing each other violence." What part of each of us is symbolically Palestinian? Jewish? How might we reverence these parts of ourselves and bring them into accord? We supplicate Neptune to give us the healing dream that contains the answer. When we enter the dream world, we become co-creators of Mythic News rather than passive consumers of the eleven o'clock news.

Once I was in a rural pub in Ireland. The regular patrons and I talked astrology long into the night. The cast of astrological characters was wonderfully literal: the Taurus was a farmer, the Gemini was a newspaper reporter, the Scorpio was a detective, and so on. We all got on so famously that I was invited into the back room, where I was introduced to some IRA men "down from the North." We spoke of the Troubles, for which, they said, "There's no solution." "Well, if there's no solution, then the only resolution is prayer, music, and magic," I said. They raised their drinks and said, "That's exactly right." And we all toasted, "To prayers, music, and magic as the only solution to the world's ills!"

CONSCIOUS KINSHIP

Neptune says that the greatest of our illusions is separateness. The African teacher Sobonfu Somé tells us that in her village in Burkina Faso, if a man mistreats his wife, all of the women in the community show up on his doorstep to counsel him and give his wife protection until the situation is harmoniously resolved. The same

would be true if a man were mistreated by his lover; all of the men would show up to defend him and offer wise counsel. Neptune invites us to heal the illusion of isolation through such pragmatic forms of imaginative intervention.

Nathaniel Hawthorne reminds us that "man must not disclaim his brotherhood even with the guiltiest." In one of the high forms of Japanese language, every verb is prefaced by saying "played at." I "played at" going to work. I "played at" getting married. Even, with full Plutonian bravado, "I hear your father 'played at' dying." Having everyone "play at" everything reminds us that we are all on the same team.

Neptune says that even players currently in bad positions are still considered part of the team. One of the joyful teachings of the Buddha is that everyone, even the most villainous badass, eventually becomes enlightened. All are on the team of creation. The bodhisattvas are those who patiently wait for the last straggler before stepping off into the joys of complete merging. Neptune reminds us that we are both the straggler and the compassionate one who waits.

Conscious kinship applies equally to our relations with other people as it does to our relations with the natural world around us. The British philosopher Sir Herbert Read said, "Only people serving an apprenticeship to nature can be trusted with machines."

For as long as we have had poetic memory, human imagination has been tied to the sea. Just as we have poisoned the oceans, so have we poisoned our imaginations. The opposite also holds true: only the death of imagination could have allowed humans to poison the seas. Neptune would say that we have devolved because we no longer have a vital mythology of kinship. Neptune calls upon us to reverse the war on nature.

Neptune also says that whatever we wish well will reciprocate. Once I was snorkeling in Hawaii, following a serenely graceful sea turtle, when several yahoo tourists swam up and shouted to their buddies, "Hey, over here, a sea turtle! Let's mess with it." When they

began to chase and grab at it, I felt a Kali-like protective rage boiling inside me and, mustering some pretense of officialdom, yelled, "Hey, I'm from the Department of Kali, quit harassing that turtle!" They whined and complained, but went away. I continued to watch the turtle, who glided off in a different direction. Then it looked back at me to make sure I was following. I am really quite sure.

We slowly swam a labyrinthine path and emerged through an opening in the reef to find hundreds of sea turtles swooping and gliding amid towers of coral honeycombed with caves. It was as though the turtle said, "Well, you did me a favor, and now I'll take you to Sea Turtle World." Whatever we protect will guide us.

A friend spent two years of her life seeking and achieving the release of an elephant, Fanny, who had been miserably chained in a Rhode Island zoo. My friend's reward was that, upon being unshackled for the first time in thirty-three years at an animal sanctuary in Texas, Fanny was united with another elephant that had been released from similar bondage. Fanny had not seen another of her species since the age of four, when her family was killed in order to cull the babies and sell them to zoos. Yet when the two elephants first saw each other, they trumpeted, entwined their trunks, fed each other straw, then frolicked in the lake together. It's never too late to have a good time.

One might wonder about the utility of such devotion—spending two years seeking to heal the dire circumstances of one animal. But Neptune's truth is that we are all one, that we share the misery and ecstasy of all creatures. Good done lovingly for one is good for the whole team.

A Sufi story tells of a student who complains to his teacher about the cruel realities of the world. The teacher replies, "Yes, of course, but if it weren't for the hidden work of those who pray, imagine, dream, and act compassionately when the opportunity presents itself, things would be *much* worse."

Everything that we do, in private or in public, affects the whole of creation. This awareness can give us the fortitude to act on our own behalf when we would not feel justified making the effort purely on our own part. I often tell clients suffering from abuse, "Look, you owe it to the whole team of people in similar circumstances to emerge from passivity and take creative action." Our personal problems are never strictly personal, but are imbued with the nobility of having taken them on for us all.

Building an Altar to the God Who's Been Oppressing You

The *Odyssey* provides a Neptunian initiation tale. After fighting the Trojan War, Ulysses' single goal is to reach home. But because Ulysses has angered Neptune by blinding the one-eyed Cyclops, one of Neptune's children, the sea god sends disorienting winds and extravagant, weird, erotic adventures to distract Ulysses and blow him off course. Who can't relate?

Finally, Ulysses consults Tiresias, the blind Underworld prophet, a kind of Pluto figure, who says, "You have angered Neptune. Here's the ritual you must perform. Take an oar, a symbol of the sea, and walk it inland. When you get to a place where no one has ever seen the sea, there you must build a temple to the god who has been oppressing you."

So Ulysses does this, walking inland until somebody asks him if the oar is a piece of a windmill, so he knows he has found the right place. He builds a temple to Neptune, the god who has been oppressing him, and it works. In an act of reversal magic, Neptune becomes his ally and sends him sweet winds. Ulysses sails for home, where he reclaims his kingdom.

Our task is to reflect upon what it might mean to build a temple to the god who has been oppressing us. What kind of oar do we take inland? The Neptunian part of us says that to liberate our-

selves, we must carry our vision inland to where nobody has ever heard of it before, and give our gift there. It is easy to hang out in a homogeneous neighborhood; go somewhere new.

TRANSCENDING CERTAINTY

Neptune represents our alliance with mystery's capacity to perpetually garb itself in fresh incarnational metaphor. When the old myths have degraded into belief or ossified into dogma, they no longer have the vitality to catalyze our dance with the divine. In fact, doctrinal rigidity or certainty is the toxic impediment to the effective dreaming that can truly change the world. Neptune reminds us not to hitch our star to a wagon of certainty, for the Neptunian imaginative capacity thrives on ambiguity.

In tarot cards, the Emperor is shown in profile (with only one eye showing), ruling over a desolate landscape. This reminds us that any view is necessarily one-sided and incomplete, and that reason without imagination creates a barren and sterile wasteland. Neptune tells us not to settle too surely into one vision.

An alchemical aphorism states that "dissolution is the secret of the Great Work"; first Neptune dissolves certainty so that a new, larger vision can emerge. As we recall (from the Pisces section), Neptune's primary demon is addiction to anything in order to numb the pain of not having a sustaining vision. Neptune would remind us to beware the addiction to certainty.

"When someone is honestly fifty-five percent right, that's very good and there's no use wrangling. And if someone is sixty percent right, it's wonderful, it's great luck, and let him thank God. But what's to be said about seventy-five percent right? Wise people say this is suspicious. Well, and what about one hundred percent right? Whoever says he is one hundred percent right is a fanatic, a thug, and the worst kind of rascal."[8]

As prophecies and predictions rise, remember to vote for reality with your imagination. Neptune instructs us to honor dark likeli-

hoods not by ignoring them, but rather by using them as catalytic incentives to dream up something more desirable.

Neptune says, "Divine inspiration is preferable to divine intervention," and would dissolve all myths of alien saviors—or even one embodied savior. According to Kafka, by the time the Messiah shows up, we will no longer need him. Neptune warns that to yearn for the external deus ex machina is an abdication of our imaginative responsibility to dream a better world into being.

TRY THIS AT HOME: FEEDING THE GOD

To be effective agents of change in our personal and collective lives, we need to feed our Neptunes a daily dose of vastness, beauty, and reverie to balance the hyper-yang stress of modern busyness.

I am always learning from my clients. Those who do well when everyone else is having a hard, spaced-out, or stressed time tell me, "I'm spending most of my time doing Zen gardening," or, "I get up every morning and spend two hours writing down my dreams and then I can function," or, "I spend a lot of time gazing at the moon."

Malnourished Neptune gives rise to feelings of alienation. The comedian Steven Wright said, "I woke up this morning and discovered that all of my things had been replaced with exact replicas." Some mornings are like that.

Anomie is a word that sounds like what it means: "Ah, no me," or loss of self. Feed your Neptune if you experience any of the following symptoms: loss of sense of self or purpose; feelings of being awash or messed with by aliens; feeling spaced out; having no traction and no motivation; experiencing disorientation and lack of focus.

When we cannot focus, Neptune asks, What are we meant to focus on? What is trying to get our attention? Honor your feelings of disorientation by diving into them more fully, rather than suppressing them with drugs, irrelevant attempts at normalcy, or perkiness.

All of us probably know the experience of coming into a room and forgetting what we came in for. Neptune's diagnosis of this experience would not be premature senility, but rather that the part of us that needed nonguilty reverie and staring-out-the-window time was underfed. We neglected it, so it took space-out time in the midst of focused activity.

By analogy, the U.S. government has lost hundreds of pounds of plutonium, the most lethal toxin known. In a sense, the government has come into the room and said, "Gad, I completely forgot where I put the plutonium." The Neptunian diagnosis would be that this must be a mythologically illiterate culture that undervalues contemplation and reverie, or it would not have lost the plutonium.

Our challenge is to stake out time for dreaming, poetry, music, and gazing into the distance. In return, Neptune will grant crisp focus when needed.

We know Neptune is at work (or play) in our lives, when we feel "at sea." If we are relaxed, confusion and disorientation may be experienced as a sense of mystery, sent by Neptune to remind us that we are much larger than our current circumstance or self-definition.

Each of us has an important vision for the community, and a part to play in the guiding mythology of kinship. The Lakota seer Black Elk said that we all, at some point in our lives, have a great vision for the well-being of our community. But we often go to sleep to our dream, rather than awakening it through creative expression.

Many Buddhist texts end with fantastic descriptions of beautiful heavenly gardens suffused with refined, fragrant incense (not coconut) wafting everywhere. The very last section of the sutra will say in effect, "And you are there now. Can you relate?" Christian mythology says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Imaginative reverie melts the world's illusory realism, so that the garden shimmers around us all once more.

URANUS



BECOMING THE SACRED CLOWN

"Hey, Johnny, what are you rebelling against?"
"What do you got?"

MARLON BRANDO
The Wild One

In the Koran, Gabriel tells Mohammed, "You know, we could have had no evil in the world if we'd made you all alike. But God would have none of it and insisted that each creature be unique." And so the greater experiment is to come into cooperative accord from uniqueness rather than similarity. Uranus is the god of uniqueness, intuition, innovation, ingenuity, rebellion, and rascalry. We all have a maverick within.

In his essay "Uranus as Prometheus," Rick Tarnas writes that Uranus is the one planet that was mythologically misnamed, because its themes are more aptly associated with Prometheus. Prometheus stole fire from the humorless gods of the old order and gave it to humans. His punishment was to be chained to a rock where, each day in perpetuity, an eagle would come and pluck out his liver—a gloomy prognosis for the defiant trickster part of ourselves. However, if we dig more deeply into the Greek texts, we learn that Prometheus could see the future in which Hercules would set him free.

Planet: Uranus

Sign: Aquarius

Glyph: 

Key words and qualities: Nature's raw, experimental drive; intuition: an accurate sense of potential inherent in a person or situation; awakening; lightning that strikes the circle of habit and turns it into a spiral. Freedom through loss of the nonessential (of course, Uranus often has a different idea from ours of what's essential).

Color: Electric blue

Metal: Uranium

Physical body affinities: Our winged ankles, because Uranus is designated the "higher octave" of Mercury. And our body's electrical energy, also called the etheric body or aura.

Day: Every day

Way of honoring: Experiment, experiment, experiment. Don't worry about success or failure; Uranus feels that life is in the attempt. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Failure is the first step toward success." Festivals are a social form of honoring Uranus.

Shadow, when not honored: Uranus unrelated to Saturn (responsibility to self and others) tends toward erratic rebellion and procrastination—angst without outcome. But Uranus wedded to Saturn produces the desirable effect of disciplined wildness. When Uranus is not wedded to Neptune (devotional compassion), "spiritual" techniques blast us open but leave us with an anxious buzz. Inventiveness produces technological brilliance without heart.

This provides more encouragement for the rascal-rebel part of us that defies the stodgy gods of convention. We are not sentenced to eternal punishment and retribution, but in fact are rescued by Hercules, a heroic Mars animation of our own strength and determination. Cultivating a strong alliance with Mars is an important key if we aspire to being successful social change artists. The strength of our alliance with Mars determines how much time we spend chained to the rock.

If we cultivate Mars by being physical—dancing, doing martial arts, spending time with animals, gardening, walking in the woods, we thus tap into the erotic vitality of life, and therefore can have a grand time being Uranus.

In Amerindian myth, the trickster god Coyote steals fire from the gods. Among the Maori of New Zealand, their trickster hero Maui also steals fire. The Dogon people of Mali are grateful to their hermaphrodite god, Nommo, who stole a piece of the Sun to provide fire for the Dogon blacksmiths. Inanna not only stole the Tablets of Heaven, but sailed to an island kingdom, got the king drunk, and stole culture, which included the capacity to articulate thought, and gave it to humanity. This part of us, as we will see, steals thunder as well as fire. When the Uranus-Prometheus-Coyote-Maui-Nommo-Inanna part of us steals fiery creativity (always a threat to the old, tired regime), it gives it to all of humanity, on out to all of creation. Acts of fiery creativity are good for the whole team.

Uranus has an affinity for Aquarius, which comprises the whole community of creation. Intuition connects us to the larger dance of creation and, through the agency of synchronicity, keeps us all in touch with each other. Uranus is that electrical current we experience when, just as we are thinking of somebody, the phone rings and that very person is on the line; or when we are in need of a sign and open a book to a passage that provides just the guidance we seek. Through the intervention of meaningful Uranian coincidence, we are the words with which the universe talks to itself.

Inspired plans come with the capacity to attract the connections and means whereby to realize them. Taking a stand on an issue is an act of telepathy, sending a clear signal radiating out into the cosmos. Action polishes our emanations so that we more efficiently connect with and attract those people, creatures, and situations with which we have shared affinity.

In this world, all creatures in all realms are our teammates, our allies, all equal; therefore the appropriate manner of address is respectful, reverent, and direct. People can be richer, poorer, wiser, less wise, older, younger, whatever, but the only effective form of communication is neither down nor up, but addressing each creature straight across as an equal.

A friend told me a charming, fierce story. Trekking in the wilderness for many days, he noticed that a mountain lion was stalking him, getting closer each night. To ward off the cat, my friend had to keep the fire going all night. He was getting run down and exhausted. Finally, in extremity, he pitched his sleeping bag right on the edge of a cliff; he could see the mountain lion's eyes gleaming at him across the firelight. He telepathed directly to the mountain lion, "Okay, baby. If you come for me, we're both going over the edge." The mountain lion looked at him, got the message, went away, and never came back.

There are certain times in our lives when we really have to "mean it," and when we really mean it, we engage the respect of the other. We telepath straight across, man to mountain lion, and are understood as an equal. Authentic calm clarity, catalyzed by extremity and often emerging from desperation, has the power to command respect and achieve peaceful resolution.

ONLY CONNECT

As the story of my friend's encounter with the mountain lion reminds us, taking a stance is an act of telepathy, sending a clear signal radiating out into the cosmos.

When we find ourselves inveigled by negative group dynamics, it is always great to catch someone's eye and know that they are with you, an ally in a glance. Having a conscious teammate helps a lot in gathering the force to leave a bad situation or to change its dynamics. Two people connecting in this way more than doubles the current for truthful change. Once two connect, the entire dynamic begins to shift. The whole group starts to wake up.

Sociologists have hypothesized that there are only six people separating any two people in the world—six degrees of separation. You know someone who knows someone who knows someone, so that only six people lie between you and a Haitian refugee—or between you and the President. As a friend of mine said, "Well, if it's not true, then it's a challenge. Let's make it so." As Uranus said, in the voice of E. M. Forster, "Only connect."

On March 9, 1959, Jung wrote a letter to a depressed woman who was incredibly lonely: "I am sorry you are so miserable. Depression means literally 'being forced downwards.' . . . If I had to live in a foreign country, I would seek out one or two people who seemed amiable and would make myself useful to them, so that libido came to me from outside, even though in a somewhat primitive form, say of a dog wagging its tail. I would raise animals and plants and find joy in their thriving. I would surround myself with beauty—no matter how primitive and artless—objects, colors, sounds. I would eat and drink well."[9]

Jung gives voice to Uranus's exhortation to connect to the community of creation in whatever form it is available—animals, plants, color, beauty. Uranus's passionate pantheism advises treating everyone and everything as an equal.

Rebel as Community Builder

Uranus encourages us to kick our addiction to following a leader. A strong leader can weaken a community; a wise leader can strengthen it. Gandhi said, "If I can lead people out of the forest,

someone else can lead them back in." In the winter of 1997, community was at last effectively achieved on the streets of Belgrade without there being any one strong charismatic leader. When the lawyers joined the general strike, one was quoted on National Public Radio as saying, "The energy on the streets is very high. Everyone is ready for radical economic change, and everyone is like a small stone or brick for the new road we are building."

Uranus is the most individualistic, intrinsically disruptive of forces. Yet it is described, through its "rulership" of Aquarius, as the most community-oriented energy. One of Uranus's teachings is that when everyone is truly honest, consensus is possible. Community is real if everyone reverences the uniqueness of each member. Uranian truth-telling and experimentation are needed so that we can grow social forms that serve rather than suppress individuality.

Uranus entered its own sign of Aquarius in January of 1996 and will preside over our passage into the twenty-first century. "Let the experiment in real democracy begin," proclaims this god, strengthened by being in his own domain. This astrological pattern instructs us that now is the time to connect with our team. Without a community of our own, we can have no respect for the communities of others, be they villages, hives, or pods.

As it has entered Aquarius, Uranus invites us to lob liberating esoterica into the mainstream. Let lobbing supplant lobbying. Uranus says, "Experiment with ways to let people cultivate the capacity for true community. Experiment with life and with cooperative endeavor."

The Saturn shadow might sneer, "That's not realistic. You'll look foolish to others." Or the Saturn shadow might even utter the old curse, "If you are different, they will kill you." But Uranus proffers the antidote: coyote trickster medicine, guaranteed to cure self-conscious inhibitions and paralytic dread. Other parts of our psyche care very much what others think of us, but Uranus's originality is unconstrained by anticipatory fear of other people's opinions.

SOOTHSAYING

We feel the electric hum of Uranus when the inner and outer are not in accord, a sure sign that the situation is not honest. Uranus's disruptive intelligence dwells in any crevice of discrepancy between appearance and the invisible energetic reality. The resulting tension catalyzes the energy necessary for change.

We sense this discrepancy when we go to seminars about "energetic aliveness," yet the energy in the room is dead. Or to a *feng shui* lecture given in a Hyatt, and no one speaks out. Uranus would speak out or leave, unable to stay in an energetically dishonest environment. "Disrupt droning" is a Uranian imperative. The advanced Uranus initiate would do this without any unkindly exclusion of the droner from the ensuing festivities.

A person possessed by this god can easily get into trouble. She or he is a truth-sayer, traditionally known as a "soothsayer." The truth-sayer's difficult task is to address discrepancy with sensitivity. The sensitivity ideally extends both to motivation (*why* one is saying something) and to timing (*when* one is saying it).

According to Uranus, the truth always has to be said, but not necessarily to another human. Sometimes you have to run under a railway bridge and yell your insight at the train trestle just to restore the energetic balance of the universe.

Once, when Uranus was transiting my ascendant, I had been invited to a small group of "leading-edge thinkers" to discuss radical health-care reform. For hours, people had been droning on in a thinly veiled elitist manner, saying things like, "*We* are intelligent people, but *most* people . . ." or "Is health care a right or a privilege?"

It's going to take a long time for this conversation to become interesting, I thought, resignedly. After what seemed an interminable time during which men pontificated and women chimed in deferentially, someone insisted I share my perspective. Well, I (or the Uranus in me) told them *exactly* what I thought. I said that we

were talking about innovative ideas in a really tired old way, that the form was suppressing rather than serving the content.

At that, a famous left-wing Jesuit icon shrieked, "I *hate* criticism. Get out! Either you leave the room or I will!" Mustering the lesson from a recent aikido class, I let his fury pass through me. Meanwhile, he hurtled himself out of the room (or was hurtled), only to slink back in twenty minutes later. You don't face off with Uranus.

Knowing that I had been neither tactful nor enlightened in my delivery, I said to the group, "Let's think of this as a demonic outburst on my part. But since we are all part of each other in one large dream, perhaps I'm expressing a point of view shared by others here." This failed to move the authority figure. However, others later whispered to me that, yes, they'd agreed.

When Uranus is emphasized, whether by birth chart or transit, you feel that if you don't express yourself you'll shatter or explode. The truth leaps out of your mouth, often in ungracious ways. In Sufism, the Malamazi order of Dervishes follows the "Path of Blame." Members teach others by being disruptive and attracting blame. However, it is considered such a difficult path that you are allowed to resign periodically. After my Uranus transit was over, I formally declared in my own psyche, "I'm taking a break from the Malamazi order of Dervishes. I no longer wish to follow the path of blame, of teaching by having the truth leap out of my mouth, of catching flak, being the recipient of terrified resentment, and disrupting things in ways that are not graceful. I temporarily resign from the hard work of unmasking tyrants disguised as sages by having them shriek at me."

The goal for adepts is to be a clean conduit for Uranus's lightning bolt of enlivening, awakening energy. Saying the thing that everyone is thinking generates a wonderfully scary electrical current that brings the room alive. Whether welcome or unwelcome, this voicing is a service to the community, a risky relief to everyone.

Cultivating the Uranus part of us feeds the sacred clown—the part of ourselves that defies the authorities internally and externally.

As a liberating inspiration to others, it does so with great wit, elan, confidence, and aplomb. And a pie in the face.

In his introduction to Idries Shah's invaluable book *The Sufis,* Robert Graves writes,

> The court fool of the Spanish kings with his bladder stick, his motley clothes, cock crest, jingling bells, simple wisdom and utter disrespect for authority is a Sufi figure. His jokes were accepted by the sovereigns as having a deeper wisdom than the most solemn advice of eldest councilors. When Philip II of Spain was accentuating his persecution of Jews, he decided that every Spaniard with Jewish blood must wear a hat of a certain shape. Foreseeing trouble, the fool appeared the same evening with three such hats. "For whom are these, fool?" asked Philip. "One for me, nuncle, one for thee, and one for the Grand Inquisitor." And since it was true that numerous medieval Spanish aristocrats had married into rich Jewish families, Philip thereupon abandoned his plan.[10]

Saying the truth is a challenge, but the greater challenge is to say the truth in a clean, inclusive way, like Philip's fool. This requires training, experimentation, practice, and sometimes plant allies.

A friend of mine returned from visiting a Brazilian tribe that is organized around the *ayahuasca* plant, which is a sacramental herb of kinship. She reported that babies are given a teaspoon at their baptism. It is ceremonially used to provide unifying visions for the tribe. Whenever a sudden, difficult tumult erupts, everyone drinks the ceremonial tea and they perceive the truth of the situation through collective dialogue that leads to shared vision.

Consensus is cultivated in spiritual politics that encourages (as opposed to suppresses) individuality. A word to the wise to be wary: unfortunately this wonderful sacrament, *ayahuasca,* is being exported by, among others, the Brazilian Daime church, a bull pri-

mate organization peddling suppressive orthodoxy in the guise of enlightenment. This is definitely a case of form suppressing content.

Keeping our Uranian sensibilities toned allows us to discriminate between authentic community building and suppressive bullies in exotic dress. Pretense is the toxic mimic of the real. Uranus never falls for image, and eats duplicity and pretense for lunch.

URANUS'S SHADOW: REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

Uranus defies the authorities. So far, so good. However, its shadow is procrastination. Under the Saturnian pressure of having to do things, the psyche goes to the movies. Somebody who is very strongly Uranian—independent and rebellious—learned in early childhood how to evade compliance in order to protect his or her unique wildness. As we get older, we find that the old Uranus pattern of evasion has outlived its usefulness. The rebel no longer has a cause, but continues to sneer, "I don't have to do that." One is now rebelling against oneself. The strategy that had fostered freedom has now become an impediment to liberation.

Our challenge is to have a summit conference of all the parts of our psyche in which the other planets address the rogue: "Listen, Uranus, all of us in here have decided that we really want to do this. No external authority is saying that we have to; we've made up our own mind as a community. We are no longer defining freedom as rebelling against. Now we define freedom as self-chosen accomplishment. Now we want to create."

Once freedom has been redefined, Uranus relaxes and cooperates, realizing that there is no longer any external authority to rebel against. The previously conscious rebellion against routine had become a routine. Uranus is the part of us that resists external direction, but all in the service of freedom.

Constantly renewing and clarifying our terms and definitions is a radical act. Once we have realized that rebelling against something

places us just as much in its thrall as conforming to it, Uranus forms a partnership with Saturn. Together, they encourage us to be disciplined wild people, a necessary aspiration if we want to serve the full vitality of possibilities.

GETTING ZAPPED

We can have an intense Plutonian encounter and no one else might know. But when Uranus crosses our path, everyone knows. Either we trumpet "Eureka!" or we attract the world's attention through wild and creative behavior. Whereas Pluto's disruption catalyzes the inward descent to his domain of the Underworld, Uranus strikes with a bolt from the blue catalyzing outward experimentation.

While Uranus transits occur at different times for different people, because Uranus makes a complete orbit every eighty-four years, around the age of forty-two Uranus opposes everyone's natal position. This period has been boringly labeled the "midlife crisis." What's really going on here is that the wild, authentic part of us has completed half of its orbit and is checking in with itself. It is a time of self-assessment, when the Uranus side of us queries the community of the psyche regarding how truly we are living our unique wildness.

What follows is that those areas of life in which we are cultivating and expressing our unique gifts experience rapid acceleration, while those areas that have been more dormant become the arena for wild, experimental disruption. By the time I was forty-two, astrology had been my vocation for almost twenty-five years. Yet I knew that no matter how much I studied, there would always be more to know, so I continued to seek new modes of expression. Uranus was pleased with this, and my work rocketed along, increasingly connected to the larger social world. It was my love life that Uranus deemed could use some experimental, disruptive enlivening.

Freud, who hated astrology, nonetheless was subject to it. According to Freud, on July 24, 1895, "the secret of the power of

dreams" was revealed to him. He wrote to his friend Fleis, with characteristic modesty, "There should be a monument erected that says, 'On this day the secret of the power of dreams was revealed to Sigmund Freud.'" Unbeknownst to him, on that day Uranus in the sky was stationary, exactly opposing his Sun and natal Uranus.

Wherever Uranus lands in a chart natally or by transit, it assigns us the task of being disruptive, transcending the status quo, and heading out beyond known limitations; of learning more, discovering more, and becoming more inventive. Uranus's force is a lightning bolt, casting illumination wherever it travels. When lightning actually strikes, it is attracted by a simultaneous welcoming surge of electricity from the ground. Similarly, a surge of inner restlessness rises from within our ground to greet this Change God.

To grow shiitake mushrooms, one plants the spores in a stick and lets it sit for a year. Then you must strenuously pound the stick to awaken the dormant life within. For the same reason, during midlife and Uranus transits, we get pounded. Like the spores, we are comfortably snoozing when suddenly, "What the . . . ?!" Thump! Thump! Thump!

We invoke Uranus by posing the question, "If I feel agitated, restless, on the brink of a discovery, where in my life do I want lightning to strike?" The question becomes the lightning rod, serving as an active offering of self. Freud wanted illumination and revelation in the domain of dreams, a Neptunian realm. Where would we like breakthrough? In Venus's realm of creativity and love? In Mars' domain of awakened instinct and confident action? Do we want to overthrow the internal and external tyrants (negative Saturn) in our lives? Our sense of agitation gives us the clue. Consciously sitting with uncertainty attracts the lightning strike of revelatory Aha!

The goddess Oya, in the Santería pantheon, would be a feminine aspect of Uranus, whirling her horsetail whip. When she summons the winds of change, hoisting our sails signals our willingness to play.

Without even knowing your chart, you can feel when Uranus/Oya is dancing through your life, because this god's calling card is restlessness, agitation, angst, and readiness to change. Sometimes Uranus approaches you—the hairs on your neck go up—and then backs off. In the ensuing—often confusing—calm, we wonder what happened. To which Uranus says, "I'll be back. Use this time between our initial encounter and my return for the luxury/necessity of self-clarification." This is the privileged time between the lightning and the thunder. In this interval, it is our job to ask ourselves, "What do I want illumined in myself and the world? What do I want changed in myself and in the world? What fire do I want to come alive?" Life will both be and provide the answers to these questions.

Uranus always heralds the most radically enlivening change that could possibly happen to us. We cannot presume to know for ourselves, let alone anyone else, what such a change might be. Therefore, Uranus's influence in a chart and Uranus transits are amusingly unpredictable. When Uranus hits a really tight life in which there has been little prior self-reflective experience, that person might suddenly buy a red car and head west. By contrast, someone who is far too loose might get super-organized and motivated. I have seen both these things happen in a lightning flash under Uranus transits.

But most of us are not cartoons of simplicity. Understanding the complexity of our natures allows us to relinquish our insistence upon certainty. We pay tribute to this god by sacrificing certainty and welcoming the unexpected.

In the late twentieth century, Uranus has more opportunity to express itself through us than ever before. Uranus extends an invitation to the eccentric, individualistic, creative part of all of us: "Welcome to the age of mavericks. Exile is over. Ally-ally in come free!" Astrologically, at present Uranus enjoys a heightened imaginative expression in our lives thanks to its wedding to Neptune. And socially we have comparatively few physical or societal constrictions. Most of us have the historically extraordinary luxury of con-

sidering previously unimaginable options. "What shall we eat?" is now the question, rather than whether we will survive the winter. It is a great luxury to be able to ask "What shall we do?" "Where shall we live?" "Whom shall we love?" Uranus blasts through prior limitations, encouraging us to explore and expand the options we have for original self-expression.

Uranus zaps all traditions open, saying, "Do not do anything (get married, get a job) simply because it is expected until you have found a meaningful reason to do so." Find the authentic impulse and let it grow its own form. No more form suppressing content. No more tame books about how we should be wild.

A WORD ABOUT SUDDENNESS

In pop astrology, one of Uranus's attributes is "suddenness." Uranus would say that sudden events take a long time to develop. An earthquake releases tension *suddenly,* but the tension has been building over a long period of time. When circumstances are out of alignment, the resulting drama is an earthquake that resolves the tension of being false, compromised, or not true to one's self. Suddenly a relationship bursts apart, a deal blows up, plans fall through.

Of course, while the drama is a visible release, it really is not a sudden development. Emotions lurking beneath the surface, or hidden events, brew for a long time. If we were intuitively connected to the invisible, to the energetic truth of the situation, we would not be taken so much by surprise. When people do not heed subtle messages to change, then the messages become more emphatic. An Aries friend hated her job of writing her company's annual report, but rather than quit, she broke her writing arm in an "accident": while practicing the discipline of tantrum yoga, she slammed her arm into the windshield of her car. She no longer had to write the report.

I once told a client that the nature of her work was about to be enlivened by Uranus on a particular day, and she called up, very angry, because on that day she got fired. In a sense, she hired Uranus

to fire her. Uranus said to her, "Will you get out of here already, or must I actually arrange for you to get fired!" Now she runs her own business, which is wildly successful.

Uranus is dedicated to liberation, by whatever means necessary. Something dramatic happens, something is lost, but freedom is gained. We might measure our evolution by our capacity to learn to skip the unpleasant melodrama and go more gracefully to the liberating outcome. Just quit the job.

Like Pluto, Uranus plays hardball. Uranus is least subtle where the tension and the discrepancy between artifice and authenticity is acute. Truth bursts through any impediment. Uranus has no tolerance for people who are unhappy about their relationships but not talking about or working on the emotional truth. Avoidance—conscious or unconscious—is a setup for real trouble.

Uranus says there is no enlivening of a life, a relationship, or a work without risk. Affairs are not real risk, but an evasion of real risk. As the novelist Vladimir Nabokov observes, "An affair is the most conventional of unconventionalities." It's up to us whether we want to be consciously or unconsciously propelled out into life with melodramatic force. Uranus catapults us often as a last, exasperated resort.

Uranus also represents nature's raw, experimental evolutionary drive. This dauntless aspect of nature does not fret over whether it looks foolish to put giant ears on a small mammal. She says, "Let's try it! What the hell, see if the little critter survives several hundred thousand years or not." This part of the psyche is not concerned with the category of failure or success, but only with vital authentic attempt. We worship this god through sincere experimentation.

Uranus would say, "At least if you're failing, you know you're alive; you're participating, engaged, learning, and therefore contributing to evolution." The Japanese have a phrase for this—they call it "the nobility of failure," implying, "Look at all the great things at which this person failed. She was really alive."

The word *illusion* comes, in Latin, from *in ludo,* which means "in the game." Uranus says that it is better to be in the game, even the illusion of the game, the illusion of life, than "deluded," which is *de ludo,* meaning "out of the game." Identifying with Uranus connects us to the collective current of evolutionary experimental change. Hold on to your hat.

TRY THIS AT HOME

Right now (if you wish, of course), progressively contract and release every muscle in your body, starting with your feet. Tense and release all your toe and foot muscles. Then tense and release your legs, groin area, stomach, chest, hands, forearms, shoulders, back, and neck. Squinch all your face muscles, feeling a tingle right up into your scalp. Finally, tighten everything all at once—tight, tight, tight—and then release. Aaaah . . .

Now let us welcome Uranus and invoke Oya, the Santería goddess who summons the winds of change by whirling her horsetail whip. By extending the following invitation to Oya out loud, we will experience her winds as warm and tropical rather than as hurricanes: "Let the winds of change blow through my life, bringing the most radically enlivening thing that could possibly happen. I am hoisting my sails. Parasail me into the place where I can connect with my allies, and together we can do the most good." We are hurtling into the unknown, yet experiencing intense pleasure rather than dread. Uranus is about being energetically alive, offering little resistance to the electricity of this Change God. We are pummeled and buffeted into flexibility.

In the tarot, Uranus has an affinity for the Tower, which depicts lightning shattering a tower from which tumble two little Adam and Eve figures. These represent the conscious and subconscious minds being forced to dive from their comfortable prison of isolation. Uranus always plucks us from what is not our life in order to cast us

into what really is our life. The shock transforms the circle of habit into a spiral of growth.

We know it only takes one person to start dancing at a party to give everyone else permission to start. When we are authentic, it liberates others, and radiates out. We rise out of our seats for the whole team of creation.

Planet: Jupiter

Signs: Sagittarius; Pisces

Glyph: ♃

Key words and qualities: Passionate curiosity. "The intelligence of desirous quest." Jupiter is associated with philosophy, principles, laws, and storytelling as primary ways that we, as humans, make meaning out of information.

Color: Violet **Metal:** Tin

Physical body affinities: The circulatory system; the liver (in its assimilative function, making meaning out of nutrient information)

Day of the week: Thursday ("Thor's Day"—the Norse Jupiter)

Festival: Any journey viewed as a pilgrimage is Jupiter's movable feast, especially in the Sagittarian season of Advent (from late November to the winter solstice, around December 21). Also during the inward-journeying time of Pisces, from late February to the vernal equinox (around March 21). This is a time (from Mardi Gras, through Lent, to spring) for stories and theater. This is also the traditional time for cleansing the circulatory system and liver with fasting and bitter herbs.

Way of honoring: Questing; learning; teaching; traveling; feasting. Jupiter is the expansive guardian of the crossroads. We supplicate Jupiter through generous offerings, and by praying, "Open my path before me, and grant me the opportunity to be of maximum good in the world."

Shadow, when not honored: Excess; the "gorge" theory of pleasure ("If something's a problem, make me bigger"); inflation. "My will is God's will."

JUPITER

24

THE WORLD BELONGS TO THE STORYTELLERS

A story is told in my family about my Irish grandfather, who inadvertently put a twenty-dollar gold piece in the collection plate at mass. After a moment of regret, mixed with pained indecision, he said, "Well, I gave it to God—and to hell with it."

Inadvertently or not, we are constantly giving and receiving. Through Jupiter's lens, life is viewed as a high-spirited, playful journey of generosity. From the moment we are born, we are on a caravan of infinite, unfolding opportunities for constantly expanding our horizon. Jupiter always says, "Take those opportunities."

Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system. It magnanimously generates more radiation than it receives from the Sun. Thus Jupiter is associated with all gods of generosity, and abundance.

Jupiter forms a miniature solar system, with itself at the center of sixteen moons. By analogy, Jupiter governs all systems—laws, codes, philosophy, computers, and storytelling—as primary ways we make meaning out of life.

To make meaning, we must first cast out our net and gather information. The Jupiter part of us is the Universal Investigator whose task is to approach all aspects of life with reverent curiosity, allowing everything to tell its story. A passionate eclectic, Jupiter

thrives on variety—different kinds of people, food, movies, cultures, disciplines, time periods—and above all on stories. The hunger for stories as a primary life-food is akin to the equally strong desire for understanding and meaning.

Jupiter's craving is to constantly expand the parameters of life beyond the familiar. To that end, Jupiter loves travel and comes alive when we land in ultra-foreign situations, rising to the challenge of discerning exotic underlying operating systems—philosophy, customs, mores, and etiquette. To honor Jupiter, we engage in the complete cycle: we cast our net of curiosity, gather it back in, sort the catch, and feed the village with it.

The second step is to sift and edit the catch. Here one discerns, for example, that we may feel an affinity for a particular teaching, but not its hierarchical structure. Keep the teaching, toss the structure. Keep the sacrament, toss the church.

The third step is to syncretize what remains. When our research has been sufficiently broad and expansive, patterns begin to emerge. We then perceive organizing principles from what had previously appeared to be wildly disparate observations. Jupiter invites us to be collage artists with life, building bridges from one culture to another and from one time period to another, to create avenues of mutual influence. (I call my own Jupiterian style of decorating and dress "Middle Eastern–Southwestern.")

Jupiter actually tells us that the nature of learning is erotic. Everything wants to tell us its story, if we treat it reverently, with offerings and time and receptivity. When I was studying at a half-baked esoteric school in England, we were nonetheless assigned an intriguing exercise. If something caught our fancy or piqued our curiosity—an animal, a tree, even a particularly strange or interesting rock formation—we were taught how to invite it to tell us its story. To accomplish this, we were to spend time with the subject and give it energy, give it offerings. We were to be very actively yang, thrusting. We might go sit by that rock and make a rhythmic con-

tract with it. We might say, "All right, rock. I really want to know about you. I want you to tell me your story. So I will come three days in a row at this particular time and each time I will bring you a gift. I will give you energy, time, and a courtship offering: a little bit of tobacco, fruit, flowers, or tickets to the opera. Then I will come for three following days and you will give me your story. I will be passive yin and you will thrust into me."

Check it out. If you want to know about something, give to this thing and be active and yang. Then go to it and be receptive and yin. Then it can tell you its secrets. Part of the contract is that you will then tell its story for it to the human world. Jupiter restores us to a world of narrative where all humans once lived, when everyone understood that everything has a story to tell.

In this way knowledge is made available to the less curious. Hence, Jupiter is said to "rule" publishing and all forms of teaching as the culmination of this cycle of research. This god's favorite forms of teaching, however, are storytelling, games, ritual, and theater.

The Invocative Power of Storytelling

Often, in fairy tales, when people lose their way in the Enchanted Forest (a situation we all find ourselves in periodically), after weeping, gnashing their teeth, and rolling around on the forest floor, they finally sit down and tell themselves the story of how they came to be lost in the forest. Something about telling yourself your own story invokes the resolution of the adventure. The magic horse arrives, the stairs descend from the heavens, and the next chapter of the journey begins to unfold.

Just such resolution takes place in the teaching story of Mushkil Gusha, a Sufi analogue to the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesh. Lost in the forest, the protagonist tells himself his own story, which invokes the redemptive magic. If one tells the story of Mushkil Gusha or gives a gift to someone who will help the needy on a

Thursday night, we are told that "the people who are in real need will always find their way."

In the story, a woodcutter was miraculously catapulted from dire circumstances to fabulous wealth by Mushkil Gusha, the remover of all difficulties. The god gave him but one proviso, which was that he must tell the story of his good fortune every Thursday night. After a time he forgot to share his tale with others and lost everything. One day he overheard someone saying that it was Thursday—the night of Mushkil Gusha—and remembered that he had forgotten to honor him. As soon as this thought came into his head, a kind fellow passing by threw him a small coin. The woodcutter called out, "Kind friend, you have given me money, which is of no use to me. However, if you would buy some dates and share them with me, I would be infinitely grateful." The other man went and bought a few dates, which he shared with the woodcutter. When they had finished their dates, the woodcutter told the kindly man the story of Mushkil Gusha, an invisible, expansive deity who had beneficently transformed his life. The woodcutter's difficulties were then immediately resolved, "and everyone lived happily ever after."

As the story ends, we are told that the tale of Mushkil Gusha never really ends but assumes many ongoing forms. We are invited to further the work of this path-opening god of infinite possibility by telling heartening stories (especially on Thursday nights) of arduous circumstance transformed into delightful resolution. We join in circulating Jupiter's blessing: When things seem most dire and lean, may the gods offer you a sumptuous feast of heartening opportunity.[11]

Every aspect of this story is important to understanding what Jupiter represents. "You have given me money, which is of no use to me." Jupiter is the god of wealth in the sense of limitless opportunities, which has little to do with money. Money is a by-product of true wealth, but not its source. True wealth lies in telling the right story at the right time. We honor Jupiter, and he incarnates through

us, when we, in the words of Isaiah, "speak to the weary a word that will rouse them."

Jupiter says to each of us, "I will make you wealthy, by your own definition. What is your definition of wealth?" What is a wealthy life, what is a wealthy culture? Simply asking the big questions initiates a journey of discovering their answers.

Jupiter says that if you write down the answer to these questions, wealth will be yours. But don't forget to tell the story of how you got it . . .

THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF THEATER

A French statistician named Michel Gauquelin started off to disprove astrology. To his initial dismay, and then his delight, he discovered many curious statistically significant correlations between planetary position and likelihood of profession. In 1966 he published further research about Jupiter in his *L'Astrologie Devant la Science.* When Jupiter was horizontal or vertical in someone's chart (rising due east, directly overhead, setting in the west, or directly below), that person was likely to be involved in theater, team sports, or politics. This discovery continues to make rational skeptics mad.

Jupiter presides over the dramatic arts (which, according to Jupiter, seem to include politics). Theater can be both personal, which we call ritual, and collective, which we call ceremony. Theater is one of Jupiter's gifts whereby we acknowledge kinship with the universe.

For catharsis and redemption to be successful outcomes of a theatrical experience, the drama, like any ritual, must follow a certain form. A playwright friend of mine, Julia Steiny, explains that the problem with contemporary theater—and, indeed, society in general—is that we are ignorant of the five-act form. We are left with what she calls "pathegedy" instead of tragedy or comedy.

Steiny suggests we think of act one as an introduction to "the Personality of that which is about to undergo the adventure." Act

two is "Away, the Journey." Act three is "Oops." Act four is the "Encounter with Evil," where the blocking characters appear to win. And act five is "The Wedding," the kiss, redemption. In tragedy, the kiss is the kiss of death.

In both comedy and tragedy, the fifth act is the transcendent resolution, the prayer that turns the drama over to a higher power: "Please God, let it go this way." The drama is not over until the new Moon, the *coniunctio,* the Tantric wedding, the union, takes place. Shakespeare ended all of his comedies with at least two weddings. In Greek tragedy, the hero is united with God, as in *Oedipus at Colonus,* where Oedipus rises in a cloud.

Most twentieth-century drama seems to stop at the fourth act, merely mirroring grimy, oppressive realism back in your face. Hollywood often skips the fourth act altogether and just tacks on a happy ending. This is cheating, because redemption has not been earned through the encounter with evil. We must cry to the author, "You come back here and write (or rewrite) the fifth act, the redemptive vision of how it could be."

In the Catholic mass, the fifth act is the sending forth "to love and serve God and the community." Jupiter presents to all of us the imaginative exercise to write our fifth acts and tell ourselves the story of how it could all turn out okay. The true wedding of the previously disparate parts of ourselves produces celebration, laughter, and enjoyment—or at least realization that we have lived a life that points to a better future.

When you are in a gloomy funk, the Jupiterian assignment is to tell yourself your own story of now, as viewed from a year from now, in a way that makes "now" funny. Or, if you cannot be funny, you can at least be witty—if only in a curmudgeonly Saturn way.

We might say that where we stand culturally, in millennial time, is in the fourth act of human history, where evil and greed appear to be victorious on a vast scale. Never before has so much been at stake, including the unprecedented global destruction of the envi-

ronment. Will the curtain go down on act four with the ignoble failure of a noble experiment of humans on this beautiful planet? Or will we all conspire to tell the redemptive story of how it turns out okay? Telling the story attracts the molecules of its manifestation.

Chiron is another expression of Jupiter's impulse to heal through theater. Chiron, discovered in 1977, is a comet whose orbit lies between Saturn and Uranus. In Greek mythology, Chiron is the wounded healer centaur god (like the Sagittarian centaur, over which Jupiter presides) who mentored all the important Greek heroes. One of his most well-known students was Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. In the ancient Greek world, the *aesclepions* were the temples of healing and theater in Pergamon and Kos. Healing and theater were one in the ancient world, but they have been sundered in the modern world into hospitals and cinemas. To the ancient mind, which still lives within our psyches, it is inconceivable to have healing without theater, or theater without healing. An operating theater is not the same thing.

Jupiter stirs within us the willingness to be agents of healing theater reentering the world. At the freshwater springs of the aesclepions, people would come to incubate a healing dream, a better story for themselves and their community. They would leave reinvigorated by the vision of the journey ahead of them and the power of the ancestors behind them. And so are we, when we journey imaginatively to the healing springs of the aesclepion to ask for a larger healing story for ourselves, and our community.

The Teaching Power of Games

A Native American friend once told me that "cat's cradle," the string game, was used by elders to teach their children how "to enter the dream world." When I was in New Zealand, a Maori healer told me the exact same thing. Jupiter has always been associated with games and play—but I had never put it together that games are one of the primary ways a society teaches its philosophy to the next generation.

A discipline is growing in the field of education called the "resilient child movement." There are so many depressing statistics on kids who drown in adversity; for example, one out of three children of alcoholics becomes an alcoholic. Professionals interested in resiliency examine the other two. Who are the exceptional kids who triumph over limiting circumstances? How do their experiences differ from those of kids who don't? Studies showed that the triumphant, resilient kids had a mentor—a grandmother, an uncle, a neighbor—who taught them a game: chess, baseball, anything. By learning a game they learned important skills that contributed to their capacity to journey beyond their limiting circumstance. They learned strategy and how to deal with winning and losing. Of course, what was most important was that behind the game was a reliable person telling them, "I like you."

If you can't find a mentor, find a tin can. A client showed me a wonderful film she had made for *National Geographic* on animals at play. We know from watching kittens and puppies at play that they are practicing and learning skills once necessary for their survival. In this film, animals of all kinds were joyfully romping. The highlight was one particular monkey, who was the lowest, most picked-upon of his group, the most disrespected, and always the last to eat—until he found a tin can. The film captured him learning how to play with the tin can. Soon he could beat out a joyfully crazy rhythm on it while rolling it in front of him, even up and down hills. At first the other monkeys just stared in amazement—and then they made him their leader. Play was the means of accomplishing a complete revolution in values and a transcendence of hierarchy.

PARTICIPATING IN THE GENEROUS CIRCULATION OF LIFE'S ABUNDANCE

Much of ritual magic is about giving gifts. We give in order to participate in the generous circulation of life's abundance. Whatever we give comes back to us, maybe from some other source. We give food

to animals. We give offerings to spirits. We pour honey into the river as a gift to the river goddess Oshun (Venus in the Santería pantheon), the goddess of love and sweet water, so that she will, in turn, sweeten our life.

Native American friends have taught me that even when they eat in restaurants, they put a little portion of their food off to one side for the spirits. In making a meal, you might offer some to the crows outside your window. Or you might put a little outside for the invisible spirits.

Jupiter says that abundance invokes abundance. Gratitude to life invokes gratitude. Rumi says, "Your depression is caused by your inability to praise. A man who is depressed is a thief and steals from God every moment." Praise, gratitude, and enthusiasm invoke abundance as the antidote to depression.

Native American culture has a very Jupiterian orientation toward the concept of gifts and giving. The Native Americans are very aware that everything is alive and wants to travel. After you give somebody something, the gift might want to stay with them for a while, but then it might want to move on.

When the colonists arrived, there was initial medium-good feeling. The Native Americans would bring wonderful gifts—beautiful carved pipes, beaded moccasins, animal skins, and so on. Later the Native Americans would show up again, saying, "You remember that wonderful pipe that we left with you a year ago? It wants to travel on now." The colonists, outraged, coined the term "Indian giver" in response. There was a complete philosophical misunderstanding about the nature of gifts and property.

In many traditions, Thursdays, sacred to Jupiter, are days of offering and kinship rituals. Thanksgiving, for instance, is always celebrated on Thursday, and in Native American tradition, turkey medicine is associated with generosity.

To honor Jupiter on Thursday, make a Jupiter glyph with some cornmeal on the threshold of your home. Jupiter's glyph is the cres-

cent moon on top of the cross of matter, reminding us that the generosity of nourishing (the Moon) supersedes all illusory obstacles (the cross) when this god is supplicated. One way to supplicate Jupiter is to cup some cornmeal in your hands, step out the door, and blow, scattering the offering, accompanied by this prayer: "Open my path before me and grant me the opportunity to be of maximum good in the world."

RETROACTIVE REDEMPTION

Fatima had worked for many years with her father, spinning thread into exotic colors. One day her father said to her, "Fatima, you have worked so hard. Now we're going on a long journey to sell our wares. Perhaps, in the course of this journey, we will find you a handsome and appropriate young man to marry." So they set off full of hope. Just off the coast of Crete, a terrible storm arose, and the ship was dashed on the rocks. All were drowned except Fatima, who was washed ashore near Alexandria. She was taken in by a family of cloth makers, who taught her their craft. Within a few years, she had made a happy life for herself. But one day, when she was on the seashore, a band of slave traders kidnapped her, and took her to Istanbul. For the second time, she lost everything. A kindly man, a mast maker, took pity and bought her, thinking that perhaps her fortunes would be better if he, rather than someone else, did so. But when they returned to his home, they found his business in shambles. So he, his wife, and Fatima dedicated themselves to the hard work of making ships' masts. Fatima worked so hard that she was granted her freedom. Once again she settled into a new life.

One day the mast maker said, "Fatima, take these ships' masts to Java, as my agent, and sell them at a good price." She set forth, but the ship was wrecked by a terrible typhoon off the coast of China. She cursed and bewailed her fate that no matter how hard she tried, nothing was working out. "Why am I so jinxed?"

But what Fatima did not know was that in China there was a legend that one day an extraordinary woman would appear on the shore and be able to build a marvelous building that no one had ever seen before, called a tent. So, periodically, the Emperor of China would send scouts along the shore looking for this extraordinary woman. And one scout happened to be onshore as Fatima emerged from the sea, shaking her fist at God. And the scout said, "Well, you must come with me to the Emperor's Court." "Very well," she said. When she arrived at the palace, the Emperor said to her, "Can you build this marvelous building we've heard so much about, called a tent?" And Fatima, having seen so many tents in her journeys, said, "Well, of course." "Then do so," said the Emperor. "Well, first I'll need some stout cloth," said Fatima. "Ah, we don't have such as you need." So Fatima remembered her time with the kindly Alexandrian weavers, and she wove stout cloth. Then she said, "Bring me strong rope." "Ah, we don't have such as you need," said the Emperor. And she remembered her time with her father as a spinner, and she spun colorful stout rope. "All I need," she said, "are long poles for the tent." "Oh, we don't have those," said the Emperor. And she remembered her time making masts, and made long poles.

From the sum of her observations of tents in all of her journeys, Fatima made the most marvelous tent that anyone had ever even imagined could be. And the Emperor said, "You have done this great thing. Name your reward." She married a handsome prince, and "remained in happiness, surrounded by her children to the end of her days." She reconciled herself ecstatically to her life, realizing that each apparently catastrophic chapter had taught her some crucial talent for "the making of her ultimate happiness."[12]

And so it is with us. The tale of "Fatima, the Spinner and the Tent" lasts about twelve years, which is the length of time it takes Jupiter to complete its orbit around the Sun. There are moments in our life when we shake our fist at the gods and curse, "Every time I

get it together, some catastrophe strikes." Jupiter in us says that unbeknownst to us at the moment, we are building in some talent for the making of our ultimate happiness. A true Jupiter project will draw upon every part of us that we have cultivated in the journey of the last twelve years. This is true wealth: to have one's life retroactively revealed to have been a perfect curriculum, culminating in the ability to give one's gift that could be given by no other.

The deal that Jupiter offers us is that we get to write the theater of our own lives if we can meet three conditions.

First, Jupiter says that whatever you wanted to do twelve years ago, you were not ready. Now you are. Tell yourself your story of the last twelve years, like Fatima's journey. Simply prime the pump of associative reverie. Where was I twelve years ago? How did I get here from there? (What important books did I read? What great conversations did I have? Remember the heartbreaks, and the shipwrecks. List the changes of job and circumstance. Who taught me something of value?) Recall the literal journeys as well as the journeys of the mind. The meaning will emerge later, as will the sense of the previous twelve years having been a perfect preparation for the opportunities before you now. This makes gratitude easier, even for the crummy, hard parts.

Since Jupiter will make everything bigger, the second step is to take this opportunity to banish from your life what you do not want made bigger. We might ruminate and write down what we no longer want to take on the journey. "Hmmm. I think I've gotten all the good out of paralyzing depression. How about hopeless, untrustworthy relationships? Yep, I've gotten all the good out of that. Being undervalued? I think I don't really need to take that on the journey anymore." This process may take a while.

Undesirable aspects of life have a stealthy way of becoming so intrinsic as to become invisible background assumptions of how things are. The useful question to be asked is, "What do I no longer

wish to take with me on my journey?" not "What do I think it is possible for me to be rid of?" With Jupiter we must concentrate on expansion rather than constriction.

Jupiter tells us not to trouble our pretty little heads about how we are to be rid of our burdens. When we ritually place these things on the curb of our psyche, so to speak, Jupiter's Removal Service will take it away. We do not have to worry about the removal process. We just have to imagine putting it in bags so that Jupiter can pick it up and take it away for twelve-year recycling.

Ritual Starter Kit

Anything physical we do that we imbue with invisible intention is a ritual. Here is an effective ritual starter kit, a complete elemental workout to include Earth, Air, Fire, and Water.

To Earth an intention, write down what you are willing to release. "I am willing to release the following things . . ." (anticipatory dread, for instance).

Then Air it by saying, muttering, shouting, or singing your intention.

Fire's observance calls you to burn the piece of paper.

Take the ashes to the living Water of a stream, river, lake, pond, or ocean, and toss them in.

Believe nothing, entertain possibilities. We connect to something larger than ourselves when we perform a ritual. Think of it as a Spirit Fax.

In the third step we invite the future to come get us. Because very often we do not know what we want, Jupiter says, "Tell yourself *what you want to feel like* by the beginning of the next season." Expansive? On track? Simultaneously safe and exhilarated, adored and independent? Jupiter is the travel agent who will figure out the situations that will produce these feelings.

Now use this Earth, Air, Fire, and Water ritual for invoking rather than banishing. Write it, say it, burn it, toss it in the water.

Through rituals we rekindle our enthusiasm for life. Remember that *enthusiasm* is a wonderful Jupiter word that comes from the Greek *en theos,* meaning "the god within." When we are enthused, the god within dances.

HERE COMES MORE LIFE

By telling stories, we become re-enthused by the abundant profusion of life. The myriad forms that life takes remind us that so much intricate variety is necessary. Jupiter is the god of ever-expanding knowledge, which necessitates that stories be constantly revised to include ever more possibilities.

I once attended an astronomical lecture on Jupiter, given by a professor who was jovial, large, theatrical, and wildly enthusiastic. It was as though Jupiter were lecturing on Jupiter. He said that many scientists associate evolution on Earth with huge bursts of electromagnetic radiation from Jupiter. The headline in this god's newspaper constantly reads, "Extra, Extra, Read All About It! Life and Possibilities of Life Found Everywhere."

When Jupiter and Uranus (the god of revelation) align, they signal a time of dramatic discovery, blowing apart all previous small certainties and scientific paradigms. Their most recent conjunction, in 1997, heralded a time of unprecedented story expansion. We see farther out in space, and farther back in time. Front-page headlines of mundane mayhem were temporarily eclipsed by revelations of ancient, near-eternal news.

What follows is a sampling of headlines from the spring of 1997, when these two gods last collaborated to humble and re-enthuse scientific inquiry.

"Extremophiles Transforming Science."

"Signs of Ocean Found on Jupiter's Moon Europa."

"Putting a New Face on Prehistory—Skeletons Suggest Caucasoid Early Americans."

"Find May Rewrite America's Prehistory, Artifacts in Chile Challenge Theory."

"Discovery May Reshape Concept of Early Man, 400,000-Year-Old Spears . . ."

"Artifacts May Push Back Human Residency in Siberia by 300,000 Years."

"Ancient Graves of Armed Women Hint at Amazons."

"Scientists Find Antimatter Fountain Gushing from Center of Milky Way."

"Cosmic Snowballs Detected Pelting Earth's Atmosphere."

All of these discoveries radically transformed the way science told its own story to itself, and were often vindications of mavericks who had been dismissed as cranks. Heartening for all of us cranks and mavericks.

CAUTIONARY TALES: EATEN BY SHADOW

Professions, as well as people, must periodically go on a vision quest to rediscover, clarify, and give new and vital expression to their original impulses. The word *doctor* originally meant "teacher," and yet the modern practice of medicine has very little to do with teaching.

The original Jupiterian impulse that gave birth to legal systems is the same impulse that gives rise to the passionate philosophical drive to be a wise community elder, adviser, counselor, philosopher, storyteller. This drive has very little, possibly nothing, to do with the predominant modern practice of law. Yet, Jupiter would say that it still lives in some dusty corner of the psyche of anyone attracted to the legal profession.

A wonderfully titled book, *The Death and Resurrection Show,* by Rogin P. Taylor, describes theater as intrinsically shamanistic, always intended to catalyze and uplift the participants. Modern theater has

forgotten its purpose, yet the purpose lives on mythologically in the hearts of actors. This is why actors who settle for being celebrities or "stars" are usually depressed.

Lawyers want to be wise, storytelling philosopher-guides. Doctors want to be teachers of wise living. Theatrical people want to be magicians and consciousness artists.

The admonition "Be careful what you wish for, for you will surely get it," reminds us that Jupiter can be tricky if we wish for conventional images of success. Jupiter says, "I will give you an abundance of opportunities. Half of them will be really good ideas and half will be illusory seductions, tailor-made to fool you." Our job is to tell which is which, using some of the forms of intelligence that we have previously honored. Our intuition will distinguish between other people's images of success and our own feeling or definition of success. Jupiter's navigational pole star is always enthusiasm, which is neither subtle nor ambiguous. Its magnetism carries its own plucky confidence. When the right path opens there is no hesitation. You are enthused and experience an absolute abundance of YES!

This "god within" thrives on bigness—big dreams, large endeavor. Reverend Ike says, "You can go to the ocean with a thimble or a bucket. But the ocean thinks you are silly if you say, 'Please, ocean, may I have a thimbleful of water?'" Be careful not to ask for too little. Certain capacities are only engaged when we overreach. The Virgo part of ourselves might think that even though we have a big dream ambition, we should start small, with little warm-up exercises. When we do that, the large, theatrical, passionate Jupiter part of ourselves is not engaged. Without the kindling of enthusiasm, we might not do well on the little projects. The self-critical Reality Police aspect of ourselves then sneers, "See, you couldn't even do this little piddling stuff, how dare you presume to dream big?" ("How dare you?" is always a Reality Police phrase.) The irony is that, starting with a project that is daunting, you have a greater

chance of success than if you begin with something that does not have the support of your heart's exuberance.

Overfeeding the God

As with all planetary parts of ourselves, there are both virtues and demons associated with Jupiter, and they are closely related. Because Jupiter is expansion and largeness and joviality, its shadow is excess. Unchecked, Jupiter is the gorge theory of pleasure: eat the whole cake over the sink. If some is good, more must be better. Positive Jupiter is pleasure; negative Jupiter is furtive or guilty compensation for lack of pleasure. Jupiter says that the path of hedonism, following pleasure, is a wise and disciplined path. The first piece of chocolate cake gives more pleasure than the subsequent four. We actually live in a culture that has very little understanding of pleasure. Hedonism simply means, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* "the doctrine or theory of ethics in which pleasure is regarded as the chief good, or the proper end of action." A truly hedonistic culture would be happier and wiser and would savor each piece of cake—and transform the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory into the D. H. Lawrence Laboratory.

Lack of pleasure leads to gluttony. Whatever is suppressed and not invited to the mainstream party becomes an obnoxious big fatso.

Go Forth and Do Thou Likewise

When we journey outwardly, we often meet astrological Jupiter in modern drag. While waiting in a baggage-check line at San Francisco Airport, I observed a large party with innumerable massive, unwieldy bags, making rude and elaborate demands of the skycap. When they finally left, fully accommodated, they did so without leaving a tip. As my eyes engaged the skycap with an attitude of commiseration, he twinkled back with wise equanimity and tolerance. He proceeded to tell me that his guide and mentor, who had

started being a skycap in 1940, always told him, when he lost his humor, to take a walk, or take a smoke break. My jovial skycap then said, "Some people can't tip. It's an expensive city. Some can and won't. But if you keep your humor, it all balances out by the end of the day—and you'll have seen it all."

Jupiter's vast, long-term Hindu perspective (where the shortest, darkest age, the Kali Yuga, is a mere 432,000 human years) gives a fundamental optimism derived from its expansiveness. Looking with wonder up at the sky, gazing at the innumerable universes implied by the stars, we join with author Doris Lessing's father, who "used to sit, hour after hour, night after night, outside his house in Africa, watching the stars. 'Well,' he would say, 'if we blow ourselves up, there's plenty more where we came from!' "

If Saturn's construct for reinventing reality was, "I used to . . . But now I . . ." Jupiter's counterpart is the art form of the blessing or borderline blarney. "When this . . . Then may that . . ." Celtic poet John O'Donohue speaks of the Celtic art form of the blessing: "When the ghost of loss stands behind you, as you gaze out the window, then may the ancestors place an invisible cloak upon your shoulders that will mend your life." And "When your boat is sinking in rough waters, may the moon spin a silver pathway upon which you may safely tread to shore," and so on. O'Donohue says that one of the greatest blessings we can bestow upon a friend in distress is to imagine for them the pastures of peace that will be once the searing pain is past.

TRY THIS AT HOME

Jupiter teaches that ritual is the means whereby we bring a story alive. If myth is breath, then ritual is the act of breathing.

Where Saturn's mudras or body postures are often with closed fists, Jupiter's are with open hands. While seated, rest your open hands palms up, on your knees, completely open and expansive to life. Breathe in a deep shade of royal violet, and exhale all constric-

tion. If Jupiter were music, it would be trumpet fanfares. Listen for them while continuing to inhale rich violet, and exhaling constraint, until you, and the sphere in which you travel, are completely saturated. To the soundtrack of triumphant music, your sphere ascends, traveling toward the Continental Divide, and a vast outer geography opens before you. When the music subsides, come back down gently and step out into expanded life with renewed enthusiasm. Nothing can stop you now.

THE INNER PLANETS



THE PERSONAL GODS

We now move into the realm of the faster-moving personal planetary gods: Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Moon, and the Sun. While Pluto's orbit takes 250 years to complete its journey through all of the signs, Mars takes a mere 2.5 years. Venus's orbit takes 243 days; Mercury's, 88 days; the Moon's, 28 days. As viewed from the Earth, the Sun's complete journey through the zodiac, of course, defines our year of approximately 365 days.

This means that people born in the same year, but a couple of months apart, probably have their outer planets in the same signs, while their inner planets are more customized. Because these inner planetary bodies move more quickly than the outer ones, what they represent in us is less generational and has more to do with the individual style of our unique gift to the world.

In order to contribute to the world, the Zeitgeist of which is delineated by the rhythmic patterns of the outer planets, we must cultivate and befriend what the inner planets represent in us.

Saturn and Jupiter, the gods of limitation and expansion, respectively, are paired in the middle of this astrological language. Saturn, the god of three-dimensional reality, defines the rules of the game so that we can learn how to break them consciously. We are abetted in this task by our ongoing relationship to the forces represented by

the outer planets—the Change Gods. The appropriate Saturnian demeanor with which to meet these powerful outer-planet relations would be self-possessed, focused, and cool, yet witty. After all, Pluto, Uranus, and Neptune preside over serious and intense stuff: death, birth, disruption, awakening, and freedom gained from loss, illusion, and redemptive vision.

Jupiter, on the other hand, encourages us to approach the inner planetary gods with a jovial demeanor. Saturn's inner prompting, designed to keep us on track, is, "Uh-oh, *almost* lost my sense of humor." Jupiter guides us to the appropriate attitude with which to engage the inner planets with the internal query, "Are we having the most fun possible?"

Just as Chiron, the centaur god, prepared all the Greek heroes for their adventures, Jupiter similarly prepares us by igniting our enthusiasm for the joyful quest of self-knowledge. Self-cultivation of what the inner planets represent lies at the heart of Eastern philosophy. You come to peace with yourself, so that then your house becomes peaceful. If your house is peaceful, it contributes to your street being peaceful, then your neighborhood, and on out to the world, infinitely radiating as ripples of goodwill to all of creation.

The next four chapters—Mars, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon—lead us in to the Sun, the literal and symbolic center, so that we can find out who we are. Jupiter asks, "How can you play the game if you don't know who the player is?" Each of us has specific individual assignments and adventures. We come to peaceful hearts often through stormy journeys and bumpy rides, like the knights of the Round Table. But the adventures on which we embark are undertaken with an attitude of joyful bravado for serious fun.

Mars will invite us to consider and cultivate the unique ways we each act, desire, make love—the manner in which we are to be noble and heroic. Venus will charm us into knowing the unique ways in which she seeks to incarnate through us, in order to enter the world through our creative self-expression. In the Mercury and Moon

chapters, you will be able to identify the forces that seek expression through you, and cultivate your individual way of thinking, expressing, invoking, and feeling. Because these two gods are the fastest moving, and change signs most frequently, we will be exploring them in all of their zodiacal manifestations.

Mars will initiate our journey. Let's go!

Planet: Mars

Signs: Aries; Scorpio

Glyph: ♂

Key words and qualities: Desire; energy; eros. The path of desire, which says, "All desires are pure, if we distill them back to their original intention." The gods did not place desires in our psyche for them to be thwarted or disappointed, but rather as an incentive to growth. Desires are our instructional blueprints of the possible.

Color: Red

Metal: Iron

Physical body affinity: Sexual organs

Day of the week: Tuesday (from Tiw, the northern European name for Mars; *Mardi* in French)

Festivals: Vernal equinox, Halloween (autumn's version of May Day)

Way of honoring: By honoring desire. We honor Mars by answering the question, "What do we desire?" By working with desire, we begin to understand the interrelatedness of all things. We cannot pluck a strand of creation without causing the whole to resonate. All desire must take into account the well-being of the whole.

Shadow, when not honored: Anger; violence; heartless sex; war. Jung said, "Fanaticism is always shouted-down doubt." This reminds us that if we violently suppress our desires or doubts (which are merely counterdesires), we will become externally violent. Thus we mistakenly fling ourselves out of accord with the erotic pulse of life, missing the whole point and all the fun. But it's never too late to find the beat.

MARS



THE POWER OF FIERCE COMPASSION

The rule of no realm is mine, but all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care. And for my part, I shall not wholly fail in my task if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair or bear fruit and flower again in days to come. For I too am a steward.

J. R. R. Tolkien

Mars is the god of desire: eros, feistiness, aggression, heat, and action. We draw upon Mars for courage, dynamism, passion, and kinship with life. Conscious kinship is made manifest through active participation in heroic endeavor. When adventure calls, Mars says, "Yo!" or "Woof!" Mars reminds us that spiritual life is not some passive, safe, wimpy, trust-fund tour; it is a bold, active, heroic, and completely engaged adventure. Arousal is necessary if we are to be able to take appropriate action. As with all of the planets, we must fully possess our Mars, or else others will kidnap Mars' desire and harness it to the lumbering oxen of war and violence.

It is important to remember the Eternal Tabloid Headline: "Mars Never Killed Anyone." Actually, the god of war *almost* never

killed anyone; he did kill one person, the rapist of his daughter, for which he was acquitted by the Athenian court (so he doesn't have a rap sheet).

When we dance with Mars, we enter the realm of fire, where qualities of bravado, boldness, courage, and forthrightness are forged. Fire is generous; it is "no more depleted by sharing its radiance than a candle by lighting many lamps."[13] In spring, Mars' fiery spirit quickens and emerges from the frozen earth. Mars' time is the vernal equinox, which is the beginning of Aries.

Saint Patrick's Day, March 17, is within days of the vernal equinox, identifying him as a Mars hero. One day at the beginning of spring, Saint Patrick was invited to a wine-tasting dinner (actually a wine-testing dinner), where he was given a cup of poisoned wine. He raised it to the light, and the poison rose to the top. St. Patrick blew the poison off as though it were froth, quaffed the drink, and toasted everyone in good cheer—whereupon the presiding Druid elders acknowledged him as a true Mars initiate.

Every spring, this story takes place in each of us when the winter poisons rise. We must blow them off by holding our glasses to the light. A really self-possessed Mars toasts his would-be poisoners with swashbuckling bravado and good cheer. (Freud once muttered in exasperation that the Irish were the only people who could not be helped by psychoanalysis. But, hey, if you can blow poison off your drink, what do you need with a psychoanalyst?)

Mars thrives on adventure, action, hot peppers, and spice. Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock could have been speaking of newborn Mars when he said of one of his characters, "He jumped on his horse and rode madly off in all directions."

Mars has stamina, a word derived from the Latin *stamen,* which means the thread of life woven and then cut by the fates. Stamina implies that we do not have to accept our allotment. We can lengthen and thicken our life's thread through training and frisky endeavor. The word *stamen* also refers to the masculine sexual

organ of flowers. Indeed, we access Mars' raw vitality through the instinct of erotic attraction, our desire to participate in the creation of life. In springtime, Mars energy wafts through the air as pollen. According to Louise Hay's studies of the metaphors of malaise, many people's allergic reactions to this form of Mars originate in their belief that the world is hostile and they do not have the necessary power with which to survive. By cultivating our heroic Mars, we should be able to toast our adversaries, redeem the world, and clear our sinuses.

THE INITIATION OF INVITATION

Mars needs heroic assignments. Without an inspirational goal, Mars gets frustrated, angry, and attracted to trouble like a bored teenager.

Mars continually surges through us in the form of hormones of instinctive desire, but especially when we are adolescents. At this time we seek erotic expression, need a heroic quest, and particularly need the invitation of wise elders to join them in some heroic endeavor. Most preindustrial cultures understood and honored these needs—not through rules and prohibitions, but through codes of honor; not through exclusion, but through invitation. "Please come join us in this endeavor," wise elders would have said to the young people of the village. "The community needs your vitality so that we can have enough to eat (or build a school, protect the village, create Stonehenge)."

Modern society is bereft of rituals of invitation to Mars, so strong in young people and in those who have identified with this god by serving in the military. The predominant message we give to young people and veterans today is "Get lost, we don't need you"—a counterinvitation to exile, exclusion, and, by default, crime, homelessness, malls, and video games. But in fact we do need them; we need everybody. There is much heroic work to be done: bridges to be rebuilt, forests to be replanted, cities to be revitalized, children to be cared for.

Instead, conventional life is so devoid of the heroic, leaving many grown-ups with so little enthusiasm for what they do, that they can't, with a straight face, invite their children to join their life. ("Come, join us in the office! Wear a suit and tie! Shuffle paper! The bottom line is the god we serve! Yay!")

Years ago I worked with delinquents as part of a team comprising an art therapist, a dancer, a drummer, and a storyteller. I was smuggled into this state-sponsored program as "the symbolist." My job was to say, "Okay, you guys are bad. But there's an honorable way of being bad, called the Path of the Warrior." At first my teammates and I thought that this was an idealistic but futile exercise. But the kids proved us wrong.

After initial, appropriate cynicism on their part, they responded with hunger, enthusiasm, and creativity. They had been mythologically starved, yet soon proved themselves mythologically gifted. They found their power animals and spiritual allies through guided reverie. They concocted their own heroic tales, painted them on shields, then danced their dreams. One kid, the baddest of the bad, said that his power animal, a serpent, lived one hundred miles beneath the surface of the Earth. This was an eerily apt image for someone so wary. "One day the snake saw an eagle soaring high above," he told us, "and knew that they had once been one thing and that they had to get back together for the sake of all creation." We were all blown away—this kid had not been reading Jung, and yet the eagle-serpent archetype, a key feature in the mythologies of many cultures, was alive and well in his inner-city self.

We taught these kids how to make prayer sticks: first find a stick and two feathers, then bind the feathers to the top of the stick with colored yarn. While winding the yarn around the stick, imbue the stick with prayers. Always start off with green for grandmother growth, then use red for the energy of Mars, yellow for the communication skills of Mercury, black or indigo for Saturn's self-possession, purple for Jupiter's opportunities, iridescent streamers

for Neptunian vision, mad bits of whimsy—tinsel, shells, beads for Uranian sudden change and insight, blue-green for Plutonian transformation, and so on.

The kids made fabulous art pieces of their prayer sticks. We then took them to the woods, where the kids planted their sticks in the ground. The feathers gave their prayers wings. Sometimes their prayers were simple—they wanted to get on better with their mothers or pass a test. When their prayers were realized, they understood that they had power to determine the outcome of their lives that had nothing to do with money or economics. This power came from their own heroic spirits wedded to the invisible realm of spiritual allies.

MARS AS HEROIC PROTECTOR

Mars is the heroic, questing impulse to protect self and others. Out of this desire to protect grew the ancient warrior cult, which was so widespread that it is impossible to list all of its manifestations. At the very least, it included Celtic, Greek, Slavic, Roman, Teutonic, and Nordic people, as well as most of the populations of India, Persia, and China. They all worshiped Mars as their predominant deity between 1800 B.C. and A.D. 1000.

The Amazons worshiped Mars as well as Artemis, his female counterpart. Recently, skeletons of women who were bowlegged from riding horseback were discovered in Kazakhistan. Each was buried with an iron dagger on her right side, a quiver with forty arrows tipped with bronze on the left, as well as swords and bronze talismans. (Iron and bronze are sacred to Mars.) Evidence of their nonviolent deaths indicates that these women were trained and armed not necessarily for the sake of battle, but to protect their herds and grazing lands. Evolved Mars is a protector more than an aggressor.

What are we willing to fight for, to preserve and protect? When Mars protects the community, it is positive, but when Mars serves the ego, it is destructive.

The positive warrior cult of the Celts was embodied in the hero-king who only made war in the service of protecting the community. The exemplar of this philosophy is King Arthur. The mission of the fellowship of his Round Table was nothing less than the salvation of the world through the diminution of violence.

There is a rumor that King Arthur did not die, but went to the Vale of Avalon, the domain of the feminine. There he rests, waiting to be summoned by us, hence his title "Once and Future King." Perhaps he will bring with him the ancient Mars to dance with the reemerging Venus, for in the ancient world, Aries-Mars was a defender of women. When we throw out the dominator scripts and give up our desire to be controlled by or to control others, wild playfulness emerges—a kind of Mars, puppy quality.

True Mars energy is nonviolent strength. It is compassion delivered on the arrow of craft, with tyranny as its target. Mars vanquishes not through destruction but through transformation, bringing its transformed opponent back to life. A young hero in the movie *The Never-Ending Story* is tricked by an evil empress into using all but the last one of his magic wishes. He says to the evil empress, who intends to destroy the whole world, "I wish for you to have a heart!" This delivers both the empress and the world from her small, evil desires. We honor our Mars so that we, too, may have the wisdom to wish that our enemies have a heart.

In response to displays of insensitivity to something that deserves protection—a child, a psychotic person, an animal, a tree, a beautiful old building—Mars rises up and roars like a force of nature, even in very mild people. In the language of the gods, this is a healthy response—the Mars part of us is not meant to be entirely polite.

Every unworked aspect of our nature invites the shadow warrior—the person who can really get one's goat, the perfect antagonist. Shadow warriors always want to seduce us into fighting over what they want, thereby distracting us from the true focus of our

rage, not to mention sapping us of energy needed to pursue other goals and desires. Mars says, "Do not surrender the terms of combat to others."

Act Your Rage

Most of us tend to express anger inappropriately because we were brought up in a culture that is not on friendly terms with this god. Rather than saying "Act your age," Mars says "Act your rage." Freedom lies not in suppressing fierce emotions, but in guiding their acceleration. If you are irritable, make it bigger—get angry. If you are angry, get enraged. If you are enraged, get outraged.

We cook rage into outrage not to intimidate but to inspire. Outrage is inclusive: "Aren't we all outraged at this?" It can unify us and contribute positive focus to the community. We say to angry Mars, "It would be unwarranted for you to explode at the rude bank teller. Find the real target of your rage." (Bertolt Brecht, in *The Threepenny Opera,* has one of his characters ask, "What is the robbing of a bank compared to the founding of a bank?")

If our outrage is directed at an entire system, we can tap the Neptune-Uranus energy currently available to us and consciously create a new myth. Ursula K. LeGuin, in a *New York Times* book review of Marina Warner's *Six Myths of Our Time,* said that we must work to eliminate the primitive warrior myths that dominate television, games, and much of popular fiction. "Slaying monsters, controlling women, still offers a model for the emerging hero's character. This feeds the warrior definition of him as a man. Fantasies, today, offer a quick compensatory power, but they pass on no survival skills, either for working or family life." She invites us instead to speak of the tales "about poor boys and little foxes, who weaponless, through intelligence and high spirits, outwit the monsters and bullies." Such narratives would "offer the imagination an alternative, a world where the determinist ethic of 'might

makes right' gives way to a vision of variety, subtlety, possibility and change." True survival skills would reflect ancient Mars' foxy, crafty nobility.

THE LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN MARS AND VENUS

The key to acting our rage in a positive way is always through Venus, through art. In all mythologies, Mars and Venus have a secret love affair. The universe is a Mars-Venus dance. In the tarot deck, the Emperor is Aries. He is shown presiding over a landscape that is barren without Venus. If he remains alone, he holds to his self-destructive course.

Chango, the Santerían Mars warrior-king, gets away with all kinds of shenanigans; but never with the Venusian Oshun, over whom he cannot presume to have rights. Whenever he is in the grip of pompous bravado, she enters the room. He cannot help but bow to her, and his crown tumbles off his head. Chango/Mars and Oshun/Venus remind us that there is a play and counterforce to every energy.

In a wonderfully complex novel, *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five,* Doris Lessing delineates the necessity of the Venus and Mars relationship. The Empress of Zone Three is very Venusian. In her realm, everything is lovely and harmonious—vegetarian, precious, and tasteful—with New Age music wafting everywhere. She receives word from the guardians of the universe that she must descend to Zone Four and marry the Klingon-like, meat-eating, crude, vulgar Emperor, who is unadulterated Mars. The encounter is profoundly and usefully disturbing to both the character and the reader because it is just like dating. The novel expresses the view that relationships are not necessarily for mere ego happiness. Actually their function is to contribute something necessary to the evolution of the universe. Good relationships are good for the world, and are therefore an arena in which antagonisms are worked out.

In Lessing's fable, the Mars zone had become too crude and primitive. Divorced from Venus, with no ideals and nothing to protect, Mars had simply degraded into belching and brawling. Similarly, the Venus zone had become effete and too cute, pretty, lacking the fierceness of beauty. Both realms had become undynamic. They had to meet in an appropriate dance of antagonism so that the universe could evolve.

On a trip to Cuba, I saw fantastically passionate congo dances in which the dancer takes her rage and the rage of the community and expresses it ritualistically, making the rage beautiful. This transforms her own frustration and that of the community into energy available for positive re-creation. Fire, fueled by passions, needs a container, so we need to give our Mars ritualistic expression. The relationship of Venus and Mars is crucial, giving birth to the art form of desire.

The Art Form of Desire

The Qabalistic tradition, called the Path of Desire, teaches us to honor our desire as a blueprint of what we are meant to do, to be, and to have, as well as how we can fulfill our desires. The gods did not place desire in our hearts and in our psyches in order for those desires to be thwarted. Martian desire often needs to be cooked in Pluto's cauldron to distill its true nature. Then desire leads us to destiny. Mars insists we honor desire. Mars would say that pornography is a distorted expression of a perfectly pure desire for eros and exoticism. Let's cook it back and give it fresh expression. Whenever we confront anything negative in our personal lives or the larger social world, we ask, "What did this want to be before it became toxic due to being suppressed?"

The single most important question Mars wants us each to ask ourselves is "What do I want?" The answer is the energetic rudder that guides our life's course. All too many of us are rudderless, thus passive and vulnerable, for want of asking ourselves this question.

We can learn how to get what we want through visualization, through feeling our way into it, through following desire as a path of self-education. Innumerable disciplines teach us how. Simply concentrating on an image of a desirable reality for several minutes a day invokes its manifestation. Also, enveloping ourselves in the feeling of successful outcome magnetizes us to its realization.

This is actually not a path of selfishness, because as we get what we want, our desires become increasingly informed by the Venusian truth of the interrelatedness of all things. Rather than wish for the humiliation or demotion of a shadow opponent (say, a miserable boss), we wish them well so they may be whisked away to circumstances that make them so happy they no longer need to be tyrants. Once our desires mature, they encompass the well-being of the whole of creation, and become less and less selfish. (Attention, doubters: please call your Venus on the white courtesy phone.)

ANIMAL ALLIES

Mars instinct is like a wild pony to which we must sometimes give free rein. "Now the Gods, ascending, knew not the way to the heavenly world, but the horse knew it," says the Satapatha Brahmana.

In a marvelous Celtic tale, the hero-prince Conn-Eda is given a "shaggy little horse" who guides him on his heroic quests as long as he lets the reins fall loose on his pony's neck. The All-Knowledgeable Bird tells him, "Cast a ball of iron before you, which your horse will follow and he will also tell you everything else you need to know."

They follow the ball through innumerable harrowing adventures, overcoming giant serpents and leaping over flaming mountains. After each death-defying ordeal, Conn-Eda describes himself as still being "half-alive." The little horse encourages Conn-Eda by saying, "If you are alive *at all,* I feel assured that you are a young man destined to meet supernatural success and benisons."

Conn-Eda owes everything to his loyal, brave little horse, who

has not only carried him, but has been his wise guide and companion, as well. To ensure Conn-Eda's survival of the final harrowing trial, his wonderful horse ally says, "Now you must kill me and skin me and wear my hide into the fairy realm for protection. But shoo the carrion birds away from my carcass. And later, return and pour the magic salve All-Heal on my remains."

"I could never kill you," protests the prince.

"Well, then, son of the great western monarch, if you refuse to follow my advice on this occasion, I tell you that both you and I shall perish and shall never meet again," replies the horse. "But, if you act as I have instructed you, matters will assume a happier and more pleasing aspect than you can imagine."

So Conn-Eda kills his loyal pony. He has never felt greater pain than at the loss of his animal friend. Weeping, but following instructions, he shoos away the carrion birds, and pours the All-Heal on the corpse. The remains come to life, assuming the form of the handsomest and most noble young man. This young man, released from a terrible spell, is the heir to the fairy realm. We are told that "the two embraced in an ecstasy of delight."[14]

This tale contains many Mars motifs. The iron ball—a symbol of Mars, and therefore of desire—follows gravity and rolls to the center of all things, leading Conn-Eda and his horse to the fairy realm. Since everything revolves around the center of gravity, the fairy realm contains the secrets of planetary orbits, the ordered dance of the spheres. Thus, desire brings us into sync with the rhythm of the cosmos and makes us its heroic agents.

Conn-Eda survives and emerges victorious by accepting instinctive guidance at all times from the shaggy horse, the bird, and the iron ball. The successful hero heeds all advice—from animals and wise men, as well as women. Paracelsus concurs: "From time to time, you must consult old women, gypsies, magicians, wayfarers and all manner of peasant folk . . . for these have more knowledge about [wise conduct] than all the high colleges."

Just as the pony says to Conn-Eda, "If you are alive *at all,* I feel assured that you are a young man destined to meet supernatural success and benisons," the sweetness of our own instinctive Mars reassures us at the darkest moments of fatigue that if we are "alive at all," things will work out. Mars' enthusiasm for life has a heartening confidence that our minds often lack.

Until the moment when he must kill his loyal pony, this prince has never done anything cruel or unjust. He has been a paragon of virtue and is therefore, in the Martian ethos, not ready to rule his kingdom. Mars teaches that we are vulnerable in the outer world to anything we do not know in ourselves. Mars says that we can only truly fight evil in the outer world once we have transcended our own innocence.

But the pony does not really die—he is released from a spell. There is no death, but only transformation.

We have bestowed upon animals the role of our Mars, our necessary, wise animal instincts. They are guides who lead us through all kinds of difficulties. When they die, they are no longer there to comfort us in our hour of need. Perhaps this is why the deaths of our animal companions feel so infinitely sad in a way that those who have not formed any animal alliances miscomprehend as "sentimentality."

I had two wonderful cats who traveled with me for over eighteen years, encompassing many difficult transitions. They had witnessed it all, offering comfort and presence. When the Burmese cat died, his lifelong Siamese companion merely sniffed at the corpse with little interest and no apparent distress. A friend of mine said, "Ah, that's because she knows that death is an illusion." And yet later this cat did grieve, sitting on the grave of her companion and falling into a deep depression. She did not grieve over death, but over loss. I promised her, when she was in deep decline, that if she would stay with me for a few more years I would write this book. She rallied for several more years of joyful life, surrounded by surrogate kittens

who treated her like a revered granny, until she was more sure than I was that I could fulfill my promise. Here's to you, Miss Kitty.

We access the best aspects of our Mars through our alliance with our animal friends. In a pact of mutual evolution, they help us to reclaim our innate Mars enthusiasm and curiosity about the natural world. In turn, we give them our love. Naturalist Henry Beston said, "Gifted with extensions we have lost or never attained, living by voices we may never hear . . . animals are not underlings, they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time."

Energetic Reciprocity

Just as Conn-Eda needed guidance from his magical horse, in turn the horse required assistance that only Conn-Eda could provide. Both characters had a daunting destiny that could only be fulfilled with help from the other. The gods need us as much as we need them; we work for and alongside each other.

A quirky story about the energetic reciprocity between the human and divine realms comes to us from Mesoamerica. The Huichol Indians tell a marvelously strange story about the journey of the souls of the deceased. The soul must trudge along to the garden of the dead, carrying with it a bag filled with the genitals of everyone it had ever made love with during life. Periodically tiring, the soul attempts to hide its burdensome bag on the side of the road, prompting a divine voice to chastise, "You wanted to enjoy yourself in that other life, now you must carry all of that on your back to arrive here."

Upon finally arriving at the dancing ground of the dead, the soul is welcomed by a cheering crowd of ancestors gathered around a central fig tree bursting with ripe fruit just out of reach. The soul must then reach into its bag of genitals and toss each at the tree, knocking down the fruit. A festive feast ensues.

"This inspired little story conceals a profound belief that human (for lack of a better term) 'energy' is needed by the divine world as much as divine energy is needed by the human."[15]

This story has intriguing twists and ambiguities. At first we might think it is telling us the soul is being scolded by Irish priests for past pleasures. But rather it is saying that after a hard journey, past pleasure creates a feast for the spirit world. Apparently, the dead depend upon the erotic life of the living. One implication is that all liaisons—all energetic, erotic encounters—are eternal. Although the extremely promiscuous may not make it to the garden for quite a while, there is no moral judgment implied by the story, but simply a practical question of how large a bag we can haul.

CAUTIONARY TALES: EATEN BY LACK OF SHADOW

Mars not only has an affinity for Aries and springtime, when we feistily emerge into light, but also for the autumnal introspection of the Scorpio season. Scorpionic Mars loves the dark. Without darkness for balance, Mars' expression is limited to hyper-yang Aries' adolescent belligerence.

A study done at the National Institute of Mental Health in the mid-1990s looked at why women's hormones fluctuate in response to seasonal change while men's do not. To examine this anomaly further, the researchers re-created preindustrial lighting conditions—not using *real* lava lamps, but by creating an environment in which subjects would only be exposed to as much light as the sun naturally gives. Under these conditions, the men began to respond hormonally to the shifting light mimicking seasonal change. The study concluded that men are completely thrown out of whack hormonally by artificial lighting. Women, by contrast, not only track with the Moon (the twenty-eight-days of the menstrual cycle), but also with the shifting light of the sun, even through artificial lighting.

Mars invites us to view science as metaphor. Artificial lighting eliminates the necessary darkness, literally and symbolically. François Fourier, an early nineteenth-century Utopian, said that in any ideal community we must acknowledge and accommodate the

passion for the dark, for intrigue. This is good spiritual advice, especially for men. If we have eliminated the dark, men can only express their Mars in an Aries manner, which by itself is unchecked adolescent militarism, patriarchy duking it out with itself. We must bring back the dark Mars-Scorpio who thrives on intrigue and introspection. In practical terms, the implication is that men should spend less time under fluorescent lights, in the shadowless, unnatural environment of work and competition, where power is erroneously considered to be self-generated.

The Scorpio Mars understands that power comes *through* one rather than *from* one. The Arthurian knight Balin refuses to return the fairy sword that holds power beyond his control. The sword gives him superhuman strength, but each heroic act he performs with it is coupled with disaster. Balin's willful belief that he is the source of the power inevitably leads him to kill "the man he most loves in the world." He destroys his brother, himself, and the world, and thus creates a wasteland. The hero who mistakes heroic powers for his own is doomed to wander alone in the void. This is the shadow of the cowboy and his ethos of rugged individualism and "progress," the unrelated male who creates a literal wasteland of gum wrappers, overgrazing, annihilated indigenous peoples, and heartbroken women in the wake of his linear drive westward. A healing antithesis is to be found in the South African word *muti,* which simultaneously means "power" and "medicine."

TRY THIS AT HOME: HEALING THE WASTELAND

An astro-mythological colleague, Wendy Ashley, tells the story of a man who was a bitter Vietnam vet. He could not find a way to heal his Mars. He went to men's groups, but quit, saying, "Nah, they're just circle jerks." Finally he decided to return to Vietnam with other vets to restore the wasteland by rebuilding the temples that they had bombed.

Neptune is called the higher octave, or more selfless expression, of Venus. Just as Mars' dance with Venus channels aggression into art, so Mars' dance with Neptune channels aggression into healing. Neptune reflects a reversed mythology, transforming Mars from destroyer to creator. In Chinese martial arts, the identical pressure points in the body can be used for killing or healing; intention determines the effect.

The Vietnam veteran's journey reminds us of Ulysses building a temple to the god who had been oppressing him. Here the hero rebuilds the temple he has destroyed. To heal our Mars, how would we rebuild something that we have destroyed?

Anger without action is merely "tantrum yoga." Mars says to initiate. Get fired up. Breathe fiery red color into your whole body and the sphere around you. Summon your fierce energy by saying, "I am willing to take on the next stage of my heroic quest, whatever it may be." Make something good happen. Go find the Grail.

VENUS

THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF BEAUTY

We have no art. We simply do everything as beautifully as we can.

BALINESE SAYING

When Venus walks into the room, everyone becomes wittier. Whereas Mars takes action, Venus attracts and elicits response. Following Mars, Venus is the second planet in the realm of the personal gods. She reminds us to honor our individual affinities—those people, colors, tastes, animals, art forms, and interests to which we are drawn. Venus doesn't have hobbies, she has passions. Our attractions are our primary clues as to how we can make a unique contribution to the world.

Venus is the invisible force of attraction, love, kinship, art, and relationship. Venus strings these ideas together to suggest that the artist is the truly *related* person. Venus's meditation on relationship has two aspects. One is contemplative: observing patterns of relationship, not just between people, but in nature as well—watching how, when a leaf falls into the water, the ensuing ripples radiate out forever. The other is dynamic: bringing things into relationship—"Here, meet this person, read this book"; "Paintbrush, meet this

Planet: Venus

Signs: Taurus; Libra

Glyph: ♀

Key words or qualities: What we love; the manner in which we love. How we love the world by creating art and beauty. Our affinities reveal to us that for which we are an ambassador in the court of the human world.

Color: Emerald green

Metal: Copper

Physical body affinities: Kidneys, and all fleshy, curvy, luscious parts of the body

Day of the week: Friday ("Freya's Day"—the Norse Venus)

Festivals: Beltane (May 1, "May Day"), the cross-quarter holiday in which love and our sensual kinship with the physical world of nature are honored and expressed. Autumnal equinox, which marks the beginning of Libra, and the world of more complex social relationships that arises in the fall.

Way of honoring: Making things beautiful. Remembering that the opposite of "aesthetic" is "anesthetic." There is no solution to anything unless Venus is involved—unless beauty and love are present.

Shadow, when not honored: Vanity and indolence. Indolence does not mean not being busy—in fact, being busy can be the perfect cover for procrastinating about doing the one loving thing that we need to do for ourselves. Like its metal, copper (which conducts electricity), Venus can work to conduct social electricity—or it can gossip, quoting others in an unloving way. Like copper, which will bend until suddenly it snaps, Venus will accommodate, overaccommodate, then abruptly become toxic.

paper." Part of Venus's artistry is that often the vivid palette from which she paints is made up of colorful people.

Venus is the ruler of both Taurus and Libra. As the ruler of Taurus, she governs the sensual realm of the rich earth: agriculture and flowers. In her rulership of Libra, she presides over the festive social world. Venus wants to create a setting where creative interaction can take place. The invisible rides on Venus's visible props: flowers, perfume, art, wit, and conviviality. All that makes the world more lovely is Venusian, as is all that acknowledges the marvelous symmetry of intricate interrelatedness.

Mathew Arnold said that "to be cultured is to be acquainted with the highest possibilities of the human spirit throughout time." The first definition of *culture* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "worship; reverential homage." Then it lists soil, husbandry, tilled land, plants, crops, and bacteria. Only at the end, and only by analogy, do we come to human culture: what we choose to cultivate in ourselves and in the community. Venus asks, "Do we live in an economy or in a culture?" Venus finds an economy a distasteful and tawdry abode. So Venus continues, "If we live in a culture, what will we cultivate together?"

Venus's affinity for both Taurus and Libra indicates that human community depends upon an intimate relationship to the natural world. The garden is the primary metaphorical guide for the appropriate way that we are meant to relate to creation. Jung wrote to a friend of his who had finally acquired land, "Ah, how wonderful for you. The chthonic earth spirits love nothing more than to be wedded to human ingenuity." The wedding of human creativity and nature continues a grand love affair.

In her affinity for Taurus, Venus asks, "To what part of nature are you lovingly drawn? Is it the birds, the land, the water, these kinds of rocks, this kind of animal?" We are the ambassadors of whatever we love in the human world: they have sent us here.

A man named John Seed (destiny in a name), who works to save the rain forests, was asked why he did not feel completely depressed

at the apparent futility of his work. He replied that if he thought he was just John Seed, he would be completely depressed. But he thinks of himself as that part of the rain forest that has evolved into being human. By thinking of himself as the rain forest's Visionary Activist agent, he forms a connection through which its power flows to him, making more possible than if he were laboring alone.

Love forms an electrical arc between us and our beloved (in this case the rain forest), opening up a current that flows both ways. We know that when someone is possessed by Venus—in love with another or in love with their own expressive art—they glow, suffused with the energetic delight of feeling connected.

Venus presides over the whole realm of art, and therefore reminds us that the opposite of *aesthetic* is *anesthetic.* Either we have a cultivated sense of beauty, or we are asleep. Being thus anesthetized has infinite implications. If we are asleep, we cannot have democracy, because political participation requires active, alert players. Democracy therefore depends on beauty (no wonder Jesse Helms hates the National Endowment for the Arts). Because Venus has been effectively exiled from our inner cities, we are anesthetized and made callous in their environs. Remember, when Venus is not present, Mars runs rampant. Venus would therefore say there is no solution to crime in the inner city until there are gardens there. (Venus would also say, "Hey, who stole my tomato?")

No problem has a solution that is not in some way beautiful. To recover from the dark sleep of anesthesia, the aesthetics of love, beauty, art, and gardens must move to the center of our lives and our culture. Venus wants to make necessities out of those arts that have erroneously been dubbed luxuries.

THE STORY OF DAME RAGNALL

An Arthurian legend that embodies many of Venus's teachings is the tale of Dame Ragnall.

One day while hunting in a thicket, King Arthur wounds a deer.

In order to follow it into more dense brush, he takes off his sword. When he comes to a clearing, who should be waiting there for him but an old enemy who threatens to kill him. Appealing to his opponent's chivalry, Arthur points out that he is unarmed and that any attack would be tremendously unfair. His enemy proposes to give Arthur a question that Arthur must answer in one year's time or forfeit his life. Arthur has no choice but to accept. His enemy responds with a smirk, "What is it that a woman most desires in all the world?"

Dismayed and daunted at the seeming impossibility of the task, Arthur scours the land for the next year, asking everyone he meets, "What do *women* want, what do women *want?*" But no one knows. The answers he receives, though often madcap, outrageous, or whimsical, are clearly insufficient.

Arthur is in deep despair as the fateful day draws closer, when the most hideous hag he has ever seen rides into court. Her name is Dame Ragnall. She is described as having huge yellow tusks and smelling like the sea at low tide. She rides up to Arthur and says, "I know what the question is, and I have the answer."

"Oh, that's wonderful, Dame Ragnall, how very kind of you," Arthur says.

"Not so fast, King. If I give you the correct answer that spares your life, then I will marry your nephew, Sir Gawain, the handsomest man in court."

"Oh no," Arthur sputters. "I couldn't possibly agree to those terms." But Gawain says, "Of course. Of course I would do this to save your life, Uncle. And who knows—perhaps we can find the answer from another source before the time is up." So the agreement is struck.

The big day arrives. Arthur tries all of his other answers. "Nay, nay, Sir King, thou art but a dead man," says the king's shadow opponent, sharpening his blade. Finally, Arthur uses the answer that Dame Ragnall has given him: "Above all things, women desire sovereignty, for that is their liking and that is their most desire." His

grouchy yet civil enemy pauses and mutters, "And she that told thee now, Sir Arthur, I pray to God I may see her burn in a fire, for that was my sister, Dame Ragnall. Now have a good day."

Guinevere, of course, thinks that a small wedding would be nice, but Dame Ragnall will hear none of it. She wants a huge wedding and a banquet feast. At the banquet, she devours entire boars and rips at them with her tusks and is generally foul and terrifying and funky. Everyone present laments, "Oh, poor Gawain!"

Late that night the wedding couple retires to their chamber. "Gawain, how about a little kiss?" Dame Ragnall says to the back of her husband. Summoning all of his chivalry and all of his kindness, he says, "Nay, I will do more than kiss." As he turns to her, his eyes are greeted by the most beautiful woman he has ever seen.

"Ah, Sir Gawain, your chivalry and kindness have but half released me," cries Dame Ragnall. "Here's what remains of the spell under which I am bound: I can be beautiful, as you see me, for only half the day—either alone with you at night or in the court by day. Which would you prefer?" Gawain sputters, "Oh, my goodness, I—On the one hand—but on the other hand . . ." Finally he spits out, "I couldn't possibly decide for you. You choose."

To which Dame Ragnall laughs, "Ah, you have entirely released me. Now I shall be beautiful all the time." And they made love for days, joy out of mind, without emerging from their bower. The rest of the court was extremely puzzled.

This story gives us a key to love, which is seen as inextricable from sovereignty and self-possession. Some say that Dame Ragnall is the land (the Taurean natural world) and that the king or the court (the Libran social world) must always wed the land, as evidenced in the word *husbandry.* The Celtic name for Ireland is *Eire,* from the goddess Eiru, implying that the land is the body of the goddess. But as part of the prenuptial agreement, Venus wants her sovereignty back. With Venus we cooperate with and adore, rather than dominate, the land.

Nature can be funky. Sometimes she does indeed smell like the beach at low tide, drip with seaweed, have tusks, and act raw and fierce. Sappho said, "If you are squeamish, do not prod the rubble on the beach." Venus adds, "Nor be intimate with women and their kinship to the raw processes of creation." There must always be a Venusian love affair between us (personally and collectively) and nature, even her most bad-breathed, foul, intense, and lively elements.

Venus in Libra is the social wedding aspect, in which each person grants the other his or her sovereignty. This art form of cooperative alliance is sealed by a kiss. A Jungian analyst friend's take on the story of Dame Ragnall is that "men need to learn to kiss the hag." In any relationship, there is an aspect of a woman who nags, "You're not really going to wear that, are you?" (Read: "That tie is an anesthetic affront to Venus.") My friend adds, "You have to go ahead and kiss her anyway."

WHAT DO WE WANT? SOVEREIGNTY! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!

THE ASTRONOMICAL CYCLE OF VENUS

In most preindustrial civilizations, Venus was intently watched and her cycle was intimately known. In many cultures, Venus's cycle played a crucial part in determining the social and ritual calendar.

Venus rises ahead of the Sun as the morning star for roughly 260 days (an approximate human gestational cycle), then disappears for around fifty days. She emerges for close to 260 days, visible just after sunset as the evening star, and then disappears (to the Underworld, it is said) for nearly seven days. When she "goes to the Underworld," Venus is retrograde, or appears to be moving backward. Because of the almost perfectly circular symmetry of her orbit, five of her 584-day orbital cycles occur in exactly eight Earth years. Venus will revisit any chosen point in the sky or in our charts in eight years. Five cycles charted onto an abstract horoscope creates

a pentagram, which is why all five-leafed plants and all five-petaled flowers have traditionally been sacred to Venus. Every eight years the Sun and Venus will duplicate their original relationship, which means at the ages of eight, sweet sixteen, twenty-four, thirty-two, forty, and so on, Venus is thematically strongest in our charts. At those times our original issues around love, creativity, and relationship will be most emphatically dramatized. Those born when Venus was the morning star give expression to her in her guise as the youthful, impetuous war goddess; while those born when Venus was the evening star express her nature as the civilized love goddess.

In Babylonian, Sumerian, Mesoamerican, Native American, and subcontinental Indian culture, Venus's return from the Underworld (called the heliacal rise, when Venus first appears ahead of the Sun) is considered to be the time when she (or he, in Mesoamerica) assumes the garb of her next incarnation. This heliacal rise is the emerging image of the Goddess in her new expression, which will describe the way she wants to be honored, and the kind of art and relationships that will be most appropriate during this cycle. Venus's sojourn in the Underworld commonly signaled a time when the elder women would gather to determine the course of culture upon her reemergence.

For the Mesoamericans, emergences (the heliacal rises) and disappearances of Venus, like birth and death, were considered so dangerous, powerful, and tricky as to require human sacrifice. The cycle of Venus was used by the Mayans—for whom Venus represented Quetzalcoatl, the Redeemer—to determine the timing of ritual warfare and blood offerings.

The mythologically literate look to the heliacal rises of Venus for the next imprint of the Goddess, who determines the role of art in culture. My astrological colleague Daniel Giamarrio has added up the number of Venus's heliacal rises, by sign, from 1930 to 2018. He has discovered that they are predominately in the signs of Scorpio, Aries, and Gemini.

Scorpio, Aries, and Gemini are not traditional Venus images. Venus's frequent occurrence in these signs suggests that our culture right now requires a very different, emerging image of the feminine. Venus's presence in both of Mars' signs, as well as in the androgynous and dual sign of Gemini, reminds us that the feminine does not just live in women, nor does the masculine live solely in men. This is another reason why members of the astrological orthodoxy, rarely comfortable with ambiguity, consider these Venus placements nontraditional and suspect.

VENUS IN SCORPIO

In old-fogey astrology, Venus in Scorpio (in Pluto's and Mars' shared sign) was called "afflicted" or "in its fall"—think "fall from grace" or "fall from the garden of Eden"—because of its powerful eroticism and its association with the Underworld. In medieval texts, Venus in Scorpio was called "the nun" or "the whore," as these were the only two roles available to women who wanted to be sexually self-possessed. But this is actually Venus in her snaky, transformative power. Venus in Scorpio presides over the shamanic practice of mediating with the invisible. Because art is the visible evidence of one's invisible growth—"Art is the tracks, not the animal," according to a Japanese saying—Venus encourages us to create magically potent art.

Venus in Scorpio reminds us of the belief that fuels the art of transformation: that which is hidden is often more powerful than that which is visible. I remember walking into a shrine room at a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center and experiencing a tangible, audible pulsation *(wong-wong-wong)* of vibrational energy. I kept leaning outside the threshold, where there was only silence, then leaning back into the room where—yes, absolutely—*wong-wong-wong* was definitely radiating out from a statue of the Buddha. An attendant watched me with a bemused expression, and finally said that yes, the resident lama really knew what he was doing when he sculpted

that Buddha. She went on to explain that ninety percent of Tibetan religious art is invisible. What we see is but the outer form, under which are layers of art imbued with magical intention and prayers. We feel the art, but only see a tiny fraction of the work. I have felt a similar pulse at remote sites of standing stones in Ireland.

Attempts to re-create ancient monuments such as Stonehenge and the Pyramids of Egypt using technology available to the ancients have thus far failed. The engineers who have made such attempts have been left asking themselves, "What did these builders and artists have that is unavailable to modern efforts?" The answer is that they had a community of shared invisible intention with which they imbued their constructions.

When Venus is in Scorpio, allied with the passion of Pluto-Mars, she is imbued with beauty and elegance. But, Venus reminds us, beautiful is not pretty. Pretty has a pastel vulnerability. Instead, this Venus says, "Beauty is fierce."

VENUS IN ARIES

Venus in Aries represents her alliance with the springtime Mars. Venus in Aries insists on gender redefinition to allow both sexes much more room and many more options. Thanks to the conscious work of women and men, Venus in Aries is now available to each of us in the art of dynamic, provocative, effective leadership. Like the mountain lion, who in Native American tradition leads without creating followers, real leadership inspires rather than commands.

Venus in Aries—also Mars' domain of dynamic self-assertion—says art wants once again to assume a heroic leadership function in the world.

VENUS IN GEMINI

This Venus is goddess with a mouth. Venus in Gemini (Mercury's sign of multimedia expression) says the Goddess wants a say in

mass consciousness. She is the voice that shouts, "I've been quiet for 3,600 years, and look where that has got us. Now I have some things to say. Woof!"

THE RETURN OF THE SNAKE GODDESSES

An astrologer from India says that in Calcutta, which is the home of Kali, Venus's descent to the Underworld is always celebrated by the Kali Puja, the festival of the Goddess of Darkness. She said, however, that Venus devotees had been waiting 3,600 years for November of 1994 because it signaled a profound turning point and a reemergence. At that time, Venus was in the Underworld conjunct a solar eclipse and Jupiter, all in Scorpio. (A genuine, one-hundred-percent certified astronomer confirmed that this pattern really was that rare.)

The mythological implication of this powerful pattern is that whatever was exiled from human culture 3,600 years ago, as represented by Venus in Scorpio, wants to reemerge through us and make us its ambassadors. The snaky Underworld goddesses of creative compassion, exiled for 3,600 years, now begin their triumphant world tour. We are invited to join with Pele, Durga, Kali, La Diosa de las Serpientes, and the rest of the gang to conspire to change the entire climate of culture.

Clues to what was exiled and wants to return are available to the historically literate. The fall of Crete occurred 3,600 years ago. That civilization thrived from 6000 B.C. to 1600 B.C. with no evidence of a military, or a dominant sex or class. (A common misperception is that it is human nature to be violent. Acquainting oneself with a peaceful culture that existed for far longer than our current society is the remedy for such limited thinking.) Instead they had high art, architecture, prosperity, and really sexy clothes. The copper trade, sacred to Venus, flourished, as did trade in a highly effective herbal birth control.

Nicholas Platon, an archaeologist who studied Crete for fifty years, said, "The fear of death was almost obliterated by the ubiquitous joy of living. The whole of life was pervaded by an ardent faith in the goddess nature, the source of all creation and harmony. This led to a love of peace, a horror of tyranny, and a respect for the law." According to Riane Eisler, "In Crete, for the last time in recorded history, a spirit of harmony between women and men as joyful and equal participants in life appears to pervade all of culture."[16]

Perhaps the Golden Age ended 3,600 years ago with the fall of Crete and the exile of Venus. The cooperative trade network fell apart. And the Kali Yuga Hindu age of darkness began when the snake goddess of Crete was driven out by the invading Acheans.

The association of the serpent goddess with Venus is pandemic in the ancient world. Anyone who was anyone in the ancient world was a snake. Everywhere you look, you find one. In southern Borneo, there is the story of Firewoman, wherein eating the snake brings a great deluge and drowns all but one woman. (Why doesn't *she* have a comic book?) Lack of respect for serpents followed by floods is an ancient theme.

In Mesoamerica, Xochiquetzal is associated with Venus and the sensual eroticism symbolically associated with the serpent. "Especially was she honored by women who lived as they pleased, for they say it was Xochiquetzal who taught the goodness of woman's sensuality and that when a woman felt the pleasures of her body, it brought special joy to Xochiquetzal." And the prayers say, "From Xochiquetzal's mouth came words like sweet flowers, from Xochiquetzal's mouth came words as sharp as the blade of a knife."[17] In this incarnation, sweet, sexy, sharp, insulting Venus is very like the wrathful extremophile Dakinis we met in Pluto.

In Egypt there is Isis; in Greece, Gaia; in Nigeria, Ala; and in Ireland, Brigid—all are goddesses associated with Venus and serpents in the waters. All teach loving compassion and respect for every element of creation. Astarte, like the Babylonian Ishtar, is called the

Queen of Heaven, Serpent Lady, and the mother of Semitic people. Throughout the Semitic world she is pictured with the sacred serpent wrapped around her body and emerging from her forehead. She is also associated with the great flood.

Shakti is the serpent of kundalini in India. The Sumerian serpent goddess of wisdom is Numi. In Egypt, Hathor was celebrated in her ancient form as the great serpent. In Japan, Izanami is the ancient serpent mother goddess.

Gaia's shrines exist across ancient Greece and Crete. Priestesses of Venus were known as sibyls and pythias. The major shrine beneath the Temple of Delphi is associated with the sacred serpent known as the Delphina. The Greek Demeter is pictured with snakes. The earlier name for her daughter Persephone is Proserpina, meaning "first serpent." The name Eve comes from the Hebrew word *chava,* which not only means "Mother of All Living Things," but also "serpent."

Ancient creation myths everywhere, especially in the Mediterranean, describe trees of life and knowledge, a serpent, a fall, and a flood. Sumerian writings documenting these stories from 2000 B.C. preceded the Bible by a thousand years. Originally there were three characters in the garden story: God, Man, and a serpent deity. How those characters were combined in the mythological narrative determined a culture's outlook. In narratives predating the Old Testament, the snake was a sacred ally who promised women ease in childbirth. In later mythology, by contrast, Yahweh cursed the woman with pain in childbirth and said that henceforth she and the serpent would be enemies.

With that, the serpent was overthrown as a threat to future Western civilization. Allegiance to one male god of linear progress superseded cyclical regeneration. Wisdom would no longer be gleaned from the Venusian kinship rituals occurring to the rhythm of the solstices and the equinoxes. For the first time in mythological history, men believed in a god who created without a sexual partner. Previously it was understood that both a Venus and a Mars were required.

Now, 3,600 years later, the astrological language says Venus and Mars want once again to create a culture where all are invited to celebrate the divine without mediation. They want to co-create (through us) a new culture that resonates with the best aspects of ancient Crete.

Venus in Scorpio defines the task of the millennial artist, as poking holes in realism so that serpentine magic can once more reenter the world through these portals. We can be inspired by the ancient statues in which snakes whisper the secrets of the Underworld into Demeter's ears (the most famous of which is "The Head of Demeter" in the Terme Museum in Rome). The snaky goddesses invite us all to be possessed by the new-ancient vital Venusian imagery.

EATEN BY SHADOW: ROMANCE ADDICTION

Signing up for any path means one will also experience its opposite. To be devoted to following Venus's path of relatedness means we will experience feeling "not related," or lonely. Loneliness makes us vulnerable to romance addiction, our culture's toxic mimic of love. Love unites us with the community, whereas romance addiction isolates us; we seek total fulfillment through another and, consumed in small dramas, neglect to give our gift to the community.

Cartoonist Flying Fish, of Inglewood, California, has a woman saying, "Oh my God, I think I'm becoming the man I always wanted to marry!" It would be intriguing for guys to say, "Oh my God, I think I'm becoming the woman I always wanted to marry." We escape from the narrow confines of gender and the shuck-and-jive of romance only when each claims his or her opposite polarity internally rather than seeking it externally.

Venus is associated with copper, which is a beautiful metal that conducts electricity. Venus is electrically social and connecting. But if you bend copper wire repeatedly, it will bend and bend, then suddenly it will snap. Venus's shadow can be one of overaccommodat-

ing the needs and demands of others. "Here, snookums, do you want me to do this for you?" Who wouldn't accept the ministrations of Venus, who says, "Here, I will make your life beautiful." The love object puts his or her feet up on the table while the flowers, candlelit meals, bright fabrics, and potions flow all around. But at some point there comes the snap. No more Ms. Nice Venus—the sex goddess is replaced by raging Kali. The challenge is to invoke Saturnian boundaries to prevent overgiving. Otherwise the dark aspect of the goddess is involuntarily invoked, laying waste to the living room and the relationship.

Banishing Obstacles to Love

Venus likes for us to banish the past before invoking the future. Right now, close your eyes and rapidly summarize in your mind all of the miserable, wretched love affairs you have ever had. But do not spend too long on it. In your mind's eye, put them all in a silver ball. Now move the silver ball way out into the horizon in front of you, until it completely disappears. Next, imagine a copper ball on the far horizon where the silver ball disappeared. It is the earned gift of appropriate equal love. The copper ball comes toward you and surrounds you with its warm light, which settles at the base of your spine. There it forms a beautiful copper serpent that curls and swirls up your spine and hovers over your head.

Try This at Home

If we were creatively suspicious, we might wonder why Friday the thirteenth has been deemed "unlucky" in the modern world. Friday is Venus's day, sacred to Freya, the Norse Venus. The number thirteen is sacred to the goddess, because there are thirteen lunar months in a year. The pre-Christian tradition was that on Friday the thirteenth, a powerful convergence of goddess imagery, you were supposed to honor Venus by making love all day. Once the Reality Police noticed this holy day, they thought, "Good heavens, this will

ruin the five-day work week. This will forestall industrialism. We can't have this! Let's make sensuality unlucky." Thus, this fun holiday celebrating the art of sensuality was kept under superstitious wraps. But feel free to take the wraps off and liberate your Venus, celebrating as you and she deem fit.

Venus says that eroticism is what binds all creation together. She naturally does not mean the modern world's literalized physical Eros that limits the imagination. Venus says that eroticism is scattered throughout the universe and is the language with which the universe talks to itself. The universe is a flirt, says Venus in Gemini, and we should be, too.

Kierkegaard says, "Presume love in the other." As a working experiment, presume that the whole realm of the other—all the quirky and impossible people that we daily have to deal with—is connected by an erotic circuit.

Now we are ready for the serious trouble of summoning love. Venus wants all of us to be joyfully partnered.

Rituals can be performed either to deepen commitment or to attract love. Oshun is the Venusian deity in the Santería pantheon who presides over love, beauty, wealth, money, and a playfully flirtatious attitude toward all of life. Her affinity is with all sweet (non-salt) water. She loves to set us on fire and heal us with refreshing coolness afterward. Aromatic flowers and cooling mint are among Oshun's profusion of gifts.

The following Venus/Oshun ritual is highly effective if you want to attract someone into your life to love. (The author disavows responsibility for any unsuitable lovers who may result.) Again, believe nothing, entertain possibilities.

On a Friday, take a round piece of bread, such as a roll, make a hole in it, and put a nickel inside (the number five, represented by the nickel, is sacred to Venus). On top of the nickel, place a little piece of folded paper on which you have written the qualities you desire in your beloved. Put a little bit of honey on top of that, for

obvious symbolic reasons, then place a short yellow candle in the hole. Light the candle.

You can do anything you want while that candle is burning. Honor Venus: play beautiful music, go out to a seafood dinner, get a pedicure. Prepare yourself and your home for Venus's arrival. When the candle is completely burned down so that only melted wax remains on top of the bread, take it to sweet water. Go to a river or pond and throw the completely biodegradable bread-candle remains into the water while saying, "I am the presence bringing into my life my beloved, free and willing to be my mate and partner. I am so inspired that I find the courage to play and the wisdom to love with a cheerful heart."

All rituals are really offered to prime the pump of your own associative creativity. You can rewrite the words, or substitute a bran muffin if you want to see someone regularly. In the ensuing days, each morning repeat that phrase, or a phrase of your own preference, to the four directions until you get desirable results.

This ritual always seems to work. It has broken the droughts of a number of friends and clients who were fearing spinsterhood or involuntary monasticism. It stirs things up immediately, but it can also be tricky. You might want someone who has a lot of time for you, and they turn out to be unemployed. You might want someone who's not going to move away soon, and they turn out to be in prison. Oshun/Venus is a playful, witty goddess who will give you what she thinks you need. She will keep your petition in mind if you are willing to play. In addition to honoring the flirtatious Venus, this ritual reintroduces a sense of beauty, playfulness, and willingness to be in the relationship dance.

Many of you may have already tried *this* at home. To further honor Venus, we remember James Hillman's words: "Laziness goes with mental brilliance. Long hours of waste that accompany intellectual activity, inertia, and dullness, are necessary." The Venus part of ourselves responds, "Yes. Absolutely. Bring on the chocolates."

Leisure and waste are necessary accompaniments to creativity, essential compost for Venus's garden, and ways of honoring Venus in our lives.

Even if you're not in the market for a mate, you can still celebrate Venus on Fridays by making a cornmeal glyph on the threshold of your home to honor the Venusian part of yourself as you come and go throughout the day. Venus's glyph is a circle (reminding us of her perfectly circular orbit) on top of a cross. The circle of spirit now supersedes the cross of matter. Art raises us above the confines of realism.

To honor, feed, and further work with Venus, her mudra would be any graceful dance. As you dance, imagine filling yourself with Venus's color, which is deep emerald green. Return to the primeval garden. Eat an apple. Give a dinner party. Serve ribs!

MERCURY



THE MAGICIAN

[Working with Mercury] means that one must cultivate the art of recognizing significant communications, knowing what is truth and what is falsehood, or else the lessons of the crossroads—the point where doors open or close, where persons have to make decisions that may forever affect their lives—will be lost.

ROBERT FARRIS THOMPSON
Flash of the Spirit[18]

Astronomers consider the planet Mercury to be elusive, mysterious, and fast, moving at twenty-four miles per second through its eighty-eight-day orbital cycle. Owing to its proximity to the Sun, it is visible to us only thirty-two to forty-four of those days and can only be seen, close to the Sun, before dawn or at dusk. Dawn and dusk are transitional times; hence the mysterious and elusive god Mercury presides over all times and places of transition, all crossroads.

The temple to Ramses II at Abu Simbel in Egypt is designed in such a way that the inner sanctum is illuminated only at the equinoxes. There sit statues of three gods, fully revealed by the dawn of the equinoctial Sun, with a fourth god to the left, only partly illumined, in shadows. This is Ptah, the name-giver, one of the many

Planet: Mercury

Signs: Gemini; Virgo

Glyph: ☿

Key words and qualities: Voice; communication; what we think; how we express. The part of us that is the Messenger-Magician; the invocative power of language. Mercury is witty, quick, expressive, and clever. It asks the question, "What are you a voice for?"

Color: Yellow

Metal: Mercury; quicksilver

Physical body affinities: Lungs, arms, hands (Gemini affinities); intestines and liver (in Mercury's analytical, digestive, assimilative Virgo mode)

Day of the week: Wednesday (*Mercredi* in French)

Way of honoring: Connecting with the Mercurial element of air; taking an air bath; walking in windy places; breathing deeply. Lightening up. Feeling like a trickster. Remembering to be in love with words. Witty repartee.

Shadow, when not honored: Being superficial, glib, hyperactive, or unreflectively provocative. Believing that talking about something is the same as having done it. To the afflicted Mercury, we'd say, "Talk less, say more." Remember the dictum of the nineteenth-century magician Eliphas Levi: "To know, to dare, to will, and to keep silent." Often, when talking about an idea, we can expend the same amount of energy as would be necessary to complete it. When we really want to get something done, we introvert our Mercury. We "keep silent," letting our inner Mercury-Messenger connect us to the means necessary for the plan's realization.

aspects of the force of intelligence we call Mercury. Because the equinoxes occur at the beginning of spring and autumn, they preside over times of transition. During such times it is especially important to intimately consult this god who helps us clarify our thoughts and our voice, and discern what is truly important. We slow down to listen to the fast god.

Mercury is the god of mind, intellect, thought, voice, and language. Analogous to the planet Mercury's proximity to the Sun, the god Mercury is so close to us that he is invisible, so central that he cannot be seen closely—the "purloined letter" of the spirit world.

Our magical capacity to manifest through language, both thought and uttered, is so central that we often take it for granted and spend time and energy seeking more power. Instead, we simply need to learn to use the power with which we are already endowed, and which is constantly replenished as it flows through us in acts of attention.

Mercury has many aliases, one of which is Hermes, the Magician. Hermes presides over magic, education, culture, and the connective language of correspondences in which the world is written: "As above, so below." As mentioned in the first chapter, according to Paracelsus's doctrine of signatures, everything, but especially plants, is said to have a signature, often a visual clue that indicates its chief sphere of use. For instance, hypericum—St. John's wort, or wound wort—is an herb whose leaves have tiny wells of red oil. When crushed, they look like blood. The plant traditionally is said to heal wounds and ward off evil spirits and madness by cleansing and balancing the blood. It is now being used widely as an herbal antidepressant replacement for Prozac. Divination is the hermetic art of reading the world through associative, symbolic correspondence.

Hermes invented the alphabet and all means of communication. All alphabets were originally thought of as magically invocative. Not only words but letters were considered divine, each a simultaneous honoring and summoning of the force behind its

symbol. Sanskrit, Arabic, and Hebrew are still understood as exemplars of the magical, living divinity of all alphabets.

The Mercury part of us presides over the power of vibratory rhythms—the evocative power of chants, mantras ("mind tools" in Sanskrit), prayers, and names. The medieval philosopher Nicolas of Cusa said, "If we understood the real name of even one thing in creation—we would understand the mind of God."

Hermes is also said to have invented the musical scale, astronomy, and alchemy, and, like Ptah, governs all crafts and the secret societies associated with them, from Egyptian mystery schools to the Masons.

Anatomically, Mercury is associated with the lungs, the part of our body that processes air and makes it possible for us to express ourselves vocally. In Chinese medicine, ailments of the lungs are associated with unexpressed grief. Mercury also rules the hands—the means by which we gesticulate as well as create, the domain of craft. The language of associative thought would say that hands can be conceived of as partners in expression with the lungs, and that we can heal one by using the other. By creating and expressing with our hands, we can heal our grief.

Mercury is the magical and invocative power of the voice, language, and craft to summon actual reality. In the Yoruba tradition, this power to make manifest is called *ashé,* meaning "So be it. Let it happen. 'Make it so, Number One.'" All of the gods, or Orishas, are embodied incarnations of *ashé,* but the primary custodian of *ashé* is Elegba, another of Mercury's aliases.

Many cultures have the tradition of wearing a red mark on the forehead (or third eye). When Elegba sought the power of manifestation from God he wore a red parrot feather on his brow, signifying his understanding that the mind is the focus of creative power and the portal through which it flows.

God granted Elegba the force to make things happen through the power of the word. And Elegba did the "cool" (responsible and

generously appropriate) act and gave a feast for all of the other gods in order to honor God for the great gift of *ashé.* The Yoruba word from which we get "cool," meaning "responsible," also refers to temperature, just as in English. In Cuba, one practice is to pour cool water at the crossroads to honor and invoke the "coolness" of Elegba/Mercury, the divine mind. In the Yoruba tradition, which has traveled from its origin in Nigeria to the New World—Brazil, Cuba (where it is known as Santería), Haiti (where it is known as Voudoun), and now to America—practices are undertaken to literally cool the head. It is thought that keeping the head at a cooler vibration allows the brain far more superconductivity in picking up and transmitting information. Techniques designed to cool the head allow one to enter into hot contexts, as a transformer, from a stance of perfect laid-backness. Simply imagining one's head as cool produces an immediately interesting effect, which you might try right now.

Mercury advises us not to be "hot-headed," for such an attitude is considered not only uncouth and untutored, but also dangerously far from the divine.

THE TELEPATHIC UNIVERSE

Mercury, as the companion and messenger of each of the gods, represents the myriad ways in which we communicate. Because he is associated with wind, spirit, and air, he is associated with all birds. Crows love shiny things, revealing their Mercurial nature; it is an African-American tradition to insert tinfoil into a ritual art piece in order to attract Mercurial spirit. In alchemy, Mercury is the unicorn, which turns into the white dove, a symbol for the Holy Ghost, also a Mercury-spirit-wind totem.

Alchemists were interested in coagulating or fixing the elusive Mercury spirit. "Fixation of the volatile" is the alchemical term for the focusing of attention which would grant us the capacity to understand the language of birds and other creatures.

The word *augury* comes from the ancient Roman practice of divining from the flight of birds. Messages are being communicated back and forth between all worlds all the time. *The New York Times* recently reported on an experiment in Geneva, in which two "twin photons" were separated and sent to opposite ends of the city via optical fibers, where they were given a random choice to turn right or left; both paths were equally available. When the scientists stimulated one photon to turn right, even though there was no physical way for the two of them to communicate with each other, the other photon turned in the same direction. Mercury asks, "What is communication, and how does it occur?"

An apparently more joyful and certainly less contrived example of distant communication is the mating practice of blue whales. After considerable nuzzling and creative foreplay, the two whales will "sound," diving into the utterly dark depths of the sea and swimming away from each other. Though far apart, the two whales turn toward each other at precisely the same moment and swim at ever-increasing speed toward the surface. As they simultaneously erupt from the sea, the male's giant (around ten-foot-long) penis enters his beloved and he ejaculates. Joined above the surface of the water, they appear suspended for a moment before they crash back into the sea. Apparently it's been such a good date that they soon begin to nuzzle and do the whole thing again, often several times. That should make those poor twinned photons jealous.

Mercury says that if we have a relationship in which we are in good communication, distance should be no impediment; we don't need a phone. Our dance with each other can be as beautifully choreographed as blue whales mating or ice-skating partners at opposite ends of the rink, let alone twinned photons in different neighborhoods of Geneva.

Mercury/Elegba is said to travel in all dimensions and all directions, and to have witnessed creation, both original and perpetual. Having seen it all, he is wise and funny, and has an infinite number

of perspectives. In Africa, Elegba has 101 names, while in the New World he has twenty-one, which may imply that in the homeland, a culture where conversations about spirit and telepathy are relaxed and uninhibited, he (and we) had greater freedom and modes of expression to choose from.

The Santería tradition says that God placed a bird—the shining *ororo* bird—in our head at birth. "To the degree that we live generously and discreetly, exhibiting grace under pressure, our appearance and our acts gradually assume virtual royal power. As we become noble, fully realizing the spark of creative goodness God endowed us with—the shining *ororo* bird—we find the confidence to cope with all kinds of situations. This is *ashé.* This is character. This is mystic coolness. All one."[19]

The power of Mercury, the power of *ashé,* is a privilege of reverent living. It is diminished by any act of disrespect or inattention. Mercury invites us to hone our intellect, attentiveness, and discrimination.

MERCURY THE MAGICIAN

In the tarot, Mercury's card is the Magician, who assumes a posture in which his right hand is raised while his left points to a table in front of him. This stance reminds us that *ashé,* the power to make things manifest, comes through us, not from us. *Ashé* is thought of as originating with the Sun, the central god, with whom Mercury is in the closest orbital relationship.

On the Magician's table are the four implements of ritual magic: the wand representing will (fire); the silver cup representing the fertility and creativity of the Moon (water); the steel sword representing action (air); and the pentacle of Saturn representing manifestation (earth).

Mercury in each sign is associated with one of the implements on the Magician's table, which clarifies its task. Mercury's sign also describes what that aspect of Mercury thinks about, as well as the

element that person should visit in order to both receive and send information—its spirit fax. Mercury in Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius receives and transmits insight through fire—a campfire, a theatrical bonfire, or a Bunsen burner. Their suit is Wands, their task to ignite the fires of inspiration.

Mercury in Taurus, Virgo, or Capricorn gets its best ideas when working with earth—the garden, the archaeological site, or the wilderness survival camp. Their suit is Pentacles, which means they all must build something that results in a tangible manifestation of an idea—a boat, a book, a garden.

Mercury in Gemini, Libra, or Aquarius receives and transmits through air and space—stringed instruments, social salons, or space stations. Their suit is Swords, so their ideas must rouse and stir the world to action—getting others to connect, to beautify, to organize.

Mercury in Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces receives and sends information through water—the bathtub, the hot spring, the foggy ocean. Their suit is Cups. Through introspection they offer themselves to the creative mysteries of what needs to happen, the hidden truths or poetic insights that seek expression through them. As water casts a hypnotic spell upon us when we gaze at it, so these watery Mercurys gain access to information through trance.

In the tarot, Mercury, the Magician, the conscious mind, impregnates the High Priestess (the Moon, the subconscious), transforming her into the fecund Venusian Empress. In keeping with this, Elegba is often depicted with an erect penis.

Whatever we think about or turn our attention toward plants a seed in our subconscious garden, which then blooms. Remember: Whatever we think about, we invoke. This applies equally to whatever we say. *Orenda* is a Huron word meaning "incantation," the power of voice to express and thus invoke one's will, in contrast to being passive in the face of "fate." The phrase "I am" is considered the most powerful *orenda* of all.

Central to the art of leading a magical life is the task of weeding our garden, choosing which thoughts we want to flower. The magician reminds us that it is always crucial to intend what we say. Mercury's discriminatory function reminds us to monitor our thoughts in regard to how they make us feel. Are we happy at the prospect of this particular thought becoming manifest? Does this thought give us strength or take it away? Take, for example, the mundane and perhaps "rational" thought, "Oh no, I'm going to miss my plane." By being open to serendipitous intervention, we can rephrase it so that it becomes an energy-boosting affirmation: "I am willing to be amused by being miraculously on time."

One week, when my brother and I were both working on the Magician in our tarot studies, we were truly late for a flight to England. We both started thinking, then chanting, "The plane will be late, the plane will be late." When we finally arrived at the airport, we discovered that the plane would indeed be late—a day late, in fact. Easy does it.

As a small exercise, Mercury would prefer we substitute the word *eager* for most uses of the word *anxious,* as in "I am so *eager* to meet you." "I am *eager* to hear what you think." Another Mercurial exercise is to create whimsically useful invocative affirmations which create thought forms. One of his favorites is "I am always invisible to the authorities except when I request their assistance."

Mercury reminds us that whatever we speak to will speak back to us, and that includes the future. Whatever we think about comes to us. The future rushes toward us. The wind is supercharged with waves of collective information, live transmission of electrical spirits.

The power of our confusing times calls for a multitude of diverse voices. A colleague of mine suggests that one of the primary indicators of transitioning from the Piscean (artist as martyr to creativity) to the Aquarian (let's all create community) age is that "the genius-isolated-in-a-garret trip is done." These transitional times

require everyone to be sparking back and forth. By cultivating his or her unique voices, each of us expands the field of consciousness for the whole team.

How Mercury Learns

Mercury varies its speed, moving faster, from the Earth's perspective, on some days than on others. By looking in an ephemeris (a daily listing of planetary movements), you can check how fast Mercury was moving on the day you were born. It may have been hardly moving at all, in which case you have a deep, penetrating mind; if it was really moving fast, you have a quick wit.

Everyone has her or his own style of mind, his or her own Mercury. Mercury encourages us to broaden our definition of what we consider intelligence and be tolerant of the rich diversity of ways of thinking. IQ tests hardly suffice. Each Mercury in its sign could give any other Mercury an IQ test that it would fail.

Mercury in Taurus, for example, would ask how many names of colors, plants, and animals we know. Mercury in Gemini would answer, "Oh, I don't know, but I talk fast, think quickly, and can score well on *Jeopardy.*" There are as many different kinds of intelligence, as many different kinds of communicating, as there are people (and species, and individuals within species).

We want to grow a culture that honors children's unique ways of apprehending. A Mercury-in-Aries child will learn from risk, adventure, and the liberty to engage in defiant, smartass speech. In contrast, the Mercury-in-Cancer child will learn best around food, in environments that feel secure. A Mercury-in-Taurus child will grasp abstractions from the tangible, sensual realm of nature. Give Taurus and Cancer a garden and a kitchen, and they will learn about everything.

Mercury in Gemini will learn best in busy, conversational contexts where they must also work with their hands and correlate two disciplines. Give them a guitar and send them to Pythagorean sum-

mer camp, where they can cross-reference music and math. Mercury in Leo will learn best through performing. Give them a stage. Mercury in Virgo requires quiet in which to delve deeply into the mysteries of exact science. Give them a temple. Mercury in Libra needs a sociable, beautiful environment in which to cultivate its intrinsic aesthetic talents, and in which to be appreciated. Give them a salon. Mercury in Scorpio will best thrive in a situation that encourages deep insight, questioning of orthodoxy, and study of the magical arts of divination. Give them a mystery school. Give Mercury in Sagittarius a well-equipped research laboratory or library.

Mercury in Capricorn learns communicative, literary skills from practical things, like building a boat. Mercury in Aquarius will take off like a rocket when provided with all the possibilities of rapid electronic media. Give them a web site and a satellite, or, better yet, train them in telepathy. Give Mercury-in-Pisces children a mentor and a quiet retreat in nature, where they can build altars out of magical objects found on long walks. Let them read great books, study Latin, immerse themselves in beautiful music and poetry, and talk to spirits.

We also learn important skills from our opposite signs. Mercury in Aries learns how to be polite, like Libra; then it can be more artfully rude. Mercury in Taurus learns how to be sharp and incisive, like Scorpio; then it can be languid with a purpose. When Mercury in Gemini does the research of Sagittarius, it can talk less and say more. Mercury in Cancer learns the Capricorn quality of utility; then it can say constructive words instead of whining. When Mercury in Leo integrates with Aquarius, it then understands the impact of its words upon the community, and can afford to be even more uniquely madcap in its Leonine performance. Mercury in Virgo learns from Pisces how to space out in order to become precise. Mercury in Libra learns from Aries how to be feisty and direct in order to be polite in a nonwimpy way. Mercury in Scorpio learns from Taurus to slow down its pace in order to be even more effec-

tively sharp. Mercury in Sagittarius learns to become more colloquial, like Gemini; then its research will be more accessibly meaningful. Mercury in Capricorn learns from Cancer what is really needed; then its words are less opinionated and insular, and therefore more pertinent and helpful. Mercury in Aquarius learns flair and pizzazz from Leo; then it can be a more effective universal communicator. Finally, Mercury in Pisces becomes more productively spaced out and poetic when it learns precision from Virgo.

MERCURY THROUGH THE SIGNS

Just as Venus makes us an ambassador, Mercury makes us a voice—a messenger for something larger than ourselves. Finding our own voice is a key Mercury task. While we are born with an assigned Mercury, all modes are available to us. Indeed, because of Mercury's transiting speed, we experience all of Mercury's expressive styles in the course of a year. Wherever Mercury is in the sky will describe the kind of communication and study most effective for that time period.

An improvisational force, Mercury encourages us to "change heads," to adapt as many modes of thinking and expressing as we can conjure. The well-equipped traveler will carry an extra set of heads in her or his magical backpack.

Mercury in Aries (allied with Mars) is the fiery, dynamic mind that produces fast, sharp, aggressive innovative thinkers. Words leap out of their mouths. Mercury in Aries is the verbal warrior, the feisty *agent provocateur* who sometimes says things just to see what happens, to stir things up, to cook the situation. Direct, impulsive, adolescent, combative, argumentative, and competitive, this mind likes to flirt, challenge, and win.

Mercury in Aries embodies competitive confidence and thus enjoys the ritual domain of conflict. This quality of mind can be a hotheaded hooligan—shoot first, talk later; or insult first, introduce

later. It learns by provoking and doing, and is the self-educated maverick who lobs fresh approaches and insights into the tamer domains of more academic thinking.

This is also the mind of the heroic scout, who leaves the pioneers behind to investigate the path ahead and reports back, "Here's the path through the mountains." This Mercury thinks like Mars acts, and studies martial arts strategies for use in daily life. Cultivating a "cool head" allows Mercury in Aries to transcend bluster and contribute the power of original thinking that carries with it the impetus to make things happen. Then Mercury in Aries speaks for the force of emergent, engaged, willful originality.

Mercury in Taurus (allied with Venus) is slow, sensual, and logical, compensating for the excesses of the sign before it. Those of us with a speedier Mercury urge this Mercury on, "Yeah, yeah, just spit it out. Let's go, let's go!" Other Mercuries talk fast, but Mercury in Taurus will take its time and think everything through: "Now let me get this straight. If *A*, then *B* . . . that means *C*." Zzzzzzz.

Unimpressed by razzle-dazzle glibness, this Mercury slow-dances with Venus, savoring the texture of words with its deep, slow voice. If Mercury in Aries learns by being the *agent provocateur,* seeing what happens by just trying it, Mercury in Taurus learns by the slow poetry of holding, touching, tasting. If Mercury in Aries barks, Mercury in Taurus croons.

The sensual domain of nature is this Mercury's primary learning text, and the place where it contemplates stewardship of the land. Mercury in Taurus takes an eternity to speak for eternity. The Venusian beauty of nature speaks through this voice.

Mercury in Gemini (allied with itself—a double dose of Mercury) will be sparkling, fast, and glib, learning primarily from conversations with others. These guys are reporters of ideas. This is a very unprivate mind—people with Mercury in Gemini repeat things

they have heard, and what they say in turn gets quoted. The Hindi word *talanoa,* meaning "talk as a social adhesive," describes one of their functions. They think about thinking, they think about plans. Associated with air and the sword of action, this Mercury's challenge is to actually get something done rather than just blow hot air, trying to be cool.

Indeed, when Mercury in Gemini cools its head, the resulting clarity is dazzling. The actual planet Mercury, home base for this god, has no atmosphere. From its surface the sky always looks dark, whether the Sun is visible or not, and the stars continually blaze. This is unmediated communication; everything is connected, everything talking to itself.

Mercury in Cancer (allied with the Moon) has an unlisted phone number. This god lives in the realm of watery introversion, brooding over the emotional welfare of itself and others. This Mercury thinks about food—physical, emotional, and spiritual nutrient. Mercury in Cancer retains a childlike curiosity: How does it feel to be that animal? How does it feel to be that person? What does it feel like to be that cloud? Both the delights and injustices of childhood are a fertile swamp for perpetual rumination. The intensity of outraged innocence and original perception is continuously felt. Here the goal of language is enhanced empathy. Words are food. Language is nutrient.

This Mercury communicates with the world through introspection. Mercury in Cancer speaks fiercely for the right of all sentient creatures to feel safe and be nurtured.

Mercury in Leo (allied with the Sun) thinks about show business, hears the fanfare, is the kid who mugs for the camera, is a grown-up who has flair. Mercury in Leo will say, "It is this! It is absolutely this!" and then, "No, I thought it was this, but now, absolutely, it is this!" People who come to love Mercury in Leo just roll their eyes,

knowing that this is merely the edict for this week. This absolutism is intrinsically appropriate for Mercury in Leo, so in building our tolerant community, the rest of us need to relax and accept their pronouncements as part of the rich diversity of life.

Mercury in Leo travels through fire, holding the Magician's wand. Cooling the head helps it to take itself less seriously, thereby allowing this Mercury to be an effective voice for the passionate possibilities of life.

Mercury in Virgo (allied with itself) has the capacity as a mind and intellect to deduce the whole picture from a detail. The Mercury in Virgo part of us becomes intimate with life through the particulars. Mercury-in-Virgo children often have incredibly long, beautiful fingers. They look at things with concentration and wave their little hands around in exquisite mudras, even when they are teeny babies.

Mercury in Virgo is also consummately articulate and a wonderfully expressive writer, tuned to anecdote, the telling detail. Word choices are precise and invocative. Like all planets in Virgo, it is a perfectionist—things must be just so, or it will indulge in creative procrastination and inferiority-superiority swings ("I'm the best, I'm the worst"). Mercury in Virgo hungers for a rich variety of expression and precise shades of meaning: "Is that maroon or crimson?" Those distinctions are important to this Mercury.

Mercury rules Virgo, so in this sign it is at home for the second time. The first time was in airy Gemini; now it is in earthy, manifesting Virgo. In Virgo, Hermes/Mercury messages are unexpected: the finding of the important next clue—the turtle shell by the river—the tangible manifestation of an important symbolic message.

When we die, Hermes lays a baton on our eyes and seals our fate. This god of measurement presides over the Last Judgment, the postmortem assessment and encounter with Self found in the tales of most cultures. In Egypt the soul is weighed against a feather. If

the scales balance, the soul is led triumphant to Osiris; if not, the soul is devoured by a monster. The Mercury-in-Virgo part of us would ask, "Have we kept things in perspective, maintained a light heart in our judgments of others? And, above all, have we been of service? Have we helped and guided others?"

Mercury in Libra (allied with Venus) carries Venus's messages to the social world. Communication is an art form. It has great wit, cleverness, and curiosity. Just as directive and feisty as Mercury in the opposite sign of Aries, it veils its critique and may indulge in what the New Guineans call *sanza,* the art of disguised insult.

For Libra, connection with the other is important. It needs the other to say, "What beautiful flowers!" or to laugh at a witty insight. Mercury in Libra yearns for the other, does everything for the other, says everything for the other. When deprived of the intimate partner, this Mercury must find a connection to the larger universe. "Here, gods, did you like the way I said that?" (Yes, we did.) This Mercury mulls over the infinite complexities of relationship—human to human to animal to plant. Coolheaded, it transcends its self-conscious need for approval and is a witty voice for the intricate beauty and symmetry of life.

Mercury in Scorpio (allied with nighttime Mars and his cohort, Pluto), both of whom like to say the daring, hidden, tricky, rascally thing. Mercury in Scorpio is imbued with a love of dark humor, irony, satire, bite, and zing. Having an innately creative and suspicious mind, this Mercury is always scanning for what is beneath the surface. As messenger for Pluto and Mars, it keeps an eye out for the hidden organizing forces of conspiracy. Mercury in Scorpio is the Underworld's messenger service dressed in black on a winged bicycle, happiest when delivering a message that enhances the sense of positive conspiracy: "Take the zircon to Foppa, and tell him we move tonight!"

The challenge for Mercury in Scorpio is to be a messenger service to the Grand Intrigue rather than to become embroiled in petty intrigue. If provoked, this Mercury, allied with Mars, can certainly deliver the snappy retort.

When cool, this watery Mercury is a custodian of what the Thais call *sabsung,* the means whereby we revitalize ourselves by slaking an emotional or spiritual thirst. *Sabsung* means literally "immersing in liquid something that has become dry," and refers to any replenishing activity or restorative ritual—listening to beautiful music, reading a sustaining poem, viewing an exquisite painting, exchanging deep words with a spiritual ally—that waters the soul.

Mercury in Sagittarius (allied with Jupiter) is an enthusiastic researcher. This mind is the ticket to global exploration and Renaissance-like delving into innumerable arcane studies. It is never languid, even on vacation. Wherever this Mercury travels, it learns everything about the people, flora, fauna, history, and local lore.

Mercury in Sagittarius is another Fire sign, full of bluff and bravado, not minding (often not noticing) that it offends others. It follows its own protocol: never offend someone who would have the authority to narrow one's professional options. To others it is perfectly capable of saying, "This is the truth. If you don't accept it, you're an idiot."

Mercury-in-Sagittarius is interested in constantly expanding their opportunities by traveling to foreign lands and learning other languages so that their thoughts are not limited by the expressions available in a single language. This gives them access to concepts that seem as if they ought to have words in all languages, but surprisingly do not, such as the Russian *razbliuto,* which means, "someone who used to be your lover and you love them a lot, but seeing them makes you very uncomfortable."[20] This Mercury is not big on shopping, but it will bring home ideas and words from its travels.

Mercury in Sagittarius speaks for the rich opportunities for learning that are always available to the curious, and reminds us that we speak the world into being through our choice of language. Having a rich word palette invokes the varied life that catalyzes learning.

Mercury in Capricorn (allied with Saturn) is pragmatic, and its criterion is utility. When you pitch anything to Mercury in Capricorn (truth, beauty, aesthetics, coffee, or whatever), stress that it is useful because it is conducive to work and you will get its attention. You can earn these Mercurys' attention in two other ways, as well: by teaching them some pragmatic old-fashioned or esoteric skill and/or by implying they might get laid. (An oft-overlooked aspect of the Capricornian goat is that goats are frolicsome and randy.)

Playful flirtation is a part of this Mercury's repertoire, and yet this is not the same as enduring intimacy. Flirtatious with strangers, yet frigid with familiars, is this Mercury's pattern. But aside from the domain of intimacy, which is not one of Capricorn's strong suits, there is no more dutiful sign in regard both to doing the right thing and to being the voice for responsible action in the world. Mercury in Capricorn gives voice to its feeling that it was born to be the practical leader-administrator of the world. With a cool head, this ambition matures into aspiration wedded to reverence and good works in the service of justice. Mercury in Capricorn is the voice of rags-to-riches stamina, thrift, practicality, and self-educated urbanity.

Mercury in Aquarius (allied with Saturn and Uranus) can be reached by telepathy or on a cell phone at all times. If Mercury with Saturn is old-fashioned, writing by hand or typewriter, Aquarian Mercury is both traditional and radically modern, ingeniously madcap. This is Saturn and Uranus's broadcaster of information.

With typically Aquarian neutrality, this Mercury can equally broadcast anecdotes, advertising jingles, or ageless wisdom. One foible is that Mercury in Aquarius can fail to notice that the eyes of its conversational partner have glazed over. So it is incumbent upon the Mercury-in-Aquarius person to clarify what kind of communication is welcome and serves the community.

Because Mercury rules the hands and their capacity for crafts, Mercury in Aquarius bestows upon its natives creative design skills that bring community together. The range of creativity is wide here; this Mercury has an aptitude for both ingenious graphics and public relations, and can constellate festive occasions either intimately or electronically. Imbued with the winsome charm and the eagerness to communicate of the other Air signs (Gemini and Libra), Mercury in Aquarius can speak a universal language that does not cause offense. It therefore can smuggle ideas across borders; people hear controversial material from Mercury in Aquarius and find it accessible. This is in contrast to the Fire signs (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius), who are disappointed if they have not offended someone. Different Mercuries can say the same words, but the style of their presentation, the tone and timbre, would create very different responses. As we become increasingly conscious, we learn the effect we have on others and we can choose when to irritate and when to mediate. G. K. Chesterton said, "A gentleman is one who never causes offense inadvertently."

Franklin Roosevelt's Mercury in Aquarius exemplifies the Aquarian voice. In an address that he was to have delivered the day after he died, he wrote, "If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships, the ability of peoples of all kinds to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace."

Mercury in Pisces (allied with Neptune) is the associative mind. This is the unconscious speaking. It does not care about form,

structure, or outline, but rather gives voice to dreams, surrendering to creative possession. Often these natives grew up in circumstances where they were not heard. Rather than complain, they channel their energy into empathic service: "I will be a voice for all those that do not have a voice."

This quirky, interesting mind can ramble and seem crazy and befuddled. When told to get to the point, it responds, "The point? There is no point. This is just life talking to life. This is—I'm channeling, really." Just as Picasso (Mercury in Scorpio) had to learn how to paint before he could "unpaint," so James Joyce (Mercury in Pisces) learned how to write before he could "unwrite." This is the mind available to those watery Mercuries who delve deeply into the interior state through trance. Those who simply imitate Picasso's or Joyce's abstract work without the deep delving required to have really learned how to paint or write first lack the invisible substructure required by authenticity. Learning to write earns one the right to "unwrite." Mercury in Pisces learns the logic of poetic expression and can then "unlogic." The opposite sign, Mercury in Virgo, learns how to space out in order to become precise.

When Mercury began its journey through the zodiac in Aries, it thrived on competition and conflict. Mercury in Pisces, the last sign of the zodiac, shies away from competition and prefers contemplation.

"UH-OH, MERCURY'S IN RETROGRADE"

Because Mercury is winging it around the sun so speedily, this planet appears, from the Earth's perspective, to be moving backward in the sky three or four times a year, for about three weeks each period. When Mercury, the god who presides over all things that facilitate communication, travels backward or *retrograde,* we are meant to be reflective. Mercury says, "Go back, you missed something crucial on the first sweep."

This time period is characterized by the necessity for reflection—which, if not heeded, can lead to disaster. The astrological injunction against signing contracts when Mercury is retrograde refers to the likelihood that one or both parties might subsequently change their minds because more research was needed. I would never advise someone not to do something they wanted to do simply because Mercury or Mars was retrograde, because the inner attitude is far more important than the outer action. There are no rules. I explain the orthodox interpretation, then tell them to reflect and do what feels right.

I have occasionally defied the well-known injunctions against buying electrical equipment when Mercury is retrograde just to test if it really is a bad idea. It seems to be. Complex machinery acquired during Mercury retrograde seems to require repair and other "re" activities, such as re-turn to the store, re-negotiate the price, re-nege on your credit card, re-wire the house.

Feeding the God

Breathe in cool, light, white; breathe out hot, heavy, dark. Then, breathe in hot, heavy dark; breathe out cool, white light for everyone.

Try a moving meditation to feed Mercury. Go to a Mercury rave, in which you dance around in a circular orbit at twenty-four miles per second.

Barring that, breathe deeply in your own rhythm, and with every breath, infuse your body with brilliant yellow, the most regal yellow you can conjure. Elegba's color is golden yellow. Exhale golden yellow, bestowing the *ashé* of your blessing through your breath on whatever you want to be made manifest.

Ask for the power of words and articulation so that you may be more effectively and uniquely expressive. Ask for tolerance for the modes of expression of others. Notice more the language of everything. Inculcate a willingness to speak to everything in its own lan-

guage. Dogs and cats are not French, and will therefore not mock, but welcome your attempts to speak to them in Woof and Meow. Emerge into life positively busy, from a centered radiance. Know that you are more acute in your perceptions, your capacity to listen, and your capacity to speak to all of life. Offer yourself as a voice for those things that have no voice.

THE MOON

☽

THE POWER OF MEMORY TO CREATE THE FUTURE

All cultures have had a Moon goddess: from the Babylonians' Ishtar to the Egyptians' Isis, from the Mayans' Ixchel to the Polynesians' Hina. Rulers in Eritrea and of the Tutsi tribe were once called "Moon." The Gaelic people derive their name from *gealach,* their word for Moon. Britain used to be known as Albion, after the milk-white Moon goddess. Libya is the name of an Arab Moon goddess. In Voudoun, she answers to Madame La Lune.

Without the Moon, there would be virtually no tides (the Sun causes minor tides) or predictable seasons. The 23½-degree tilt of the Earth's axis would vary chaotically due to the gravitational pull of the Sun and Jupiter—the two most gravitationally potent bodies in our solar system. The Moon stabilizes the Earth's orbital tilt, creating the rhythm of the seasons and thus allowing for conditions that nurture life. And surfing.

The Moon also governs our inner tides of feelings and moods. She reminds us that extroversion and introversion—animation and retreat—are both necessary for a complete emotional life. The Moon goddess provides a time, or phase, for every undertaking. As the Moon waxes from new to full, we ride the tide out to initiate new projects. As the Moon wanes from full to the next new phase,

Planet: Moon
Sign: Cancer

Glyph: ☽

Key words and qualities: "Intelligence of interrelatedness." Our inner, emotional life that flows like a river or tributary into an ocean of collective memory. The water element. Moods as messengers from our tradition to ourselves. Our capacity to feel what is needed, and respond appropriately. What we nourish or cultivate. Our capacity to feel safe and protected.

Color: Silver

Metal: Silver

Physical body affinity: Stomach; breasts

Day of the week: Monday (Moon Day)

Festival: Summer solstice (around June 21)—the beginning of Cancer

Way of honoring: Moods are messengers from some deep part of ourselves. Thinking or feeling the mood does no good. The only way a mood can deliver its message is if we give it expression by writing, painting, or dancing it. When a mood arises (or hulks around), interview it and give it its voice. When we look up from that act of creative concentration, the mood is gone. Just look at what it has left behind: some crucial piece of information.

Shadow, when not honored: "Tantrum Yoga"; pouting; sulking; fuming. In the modern world we often say, "Oh, a bad mood. I will function in spite of this mood." We push it down, attributing it—whatever our sex—to hormones, and attempt to carry on "normally." The Moon wants to be expressed.

we surf back in to shore. During this time we sift, distill, and complete projects inaugurated on the outgoing tide.

Within this monthly cycle are smaller eddies and pulsing currents. The Moon changes sign every two and a half days, alternately pulsing between outreaching exuberance and introverted musings. This part of us requires reflective seclusion and will reward us for that time with inner calm. Following the prompting of the Moon, as communicated to us through feeling, provides us with the stability and rhythm of internal seasonal fluctuation necessary for creativity. The Moon is our caretaker, providing the stable, nurturing environment we need to cultivate intimacy with all of creation.

Kai, kai, kai, Yemaya a lodo
Kai, kai, kai, asesu a lodo
Kai, kai, kai, Yemaya a lodo
Kai, kai, kai, achaba o lodo.

This is a song from the Santería tradition, celebrating the Moon goddess Yemaya, which you can chant whenever you need comfort. *Kai, kai* means "how wonderful, how wonderful." The rest of the lyrics mean "Mother's house is in the ocean. My mother is an anchor in the storm." Mother, lover, and protector, Yemaya is celebrated at the summer solstice in Brazil and the Caribbean. People gather at the shore, where they sing *Kai, kai, kai,* light candles, set them on tiny boats, and send them out to sea along with their prayers to be cleansed of all sorrow and dread. In this way, throughout time, people have connected with the maternal force that provides stability during life's storms.

We navigate these storms by following our feelings and then aligning our external commitments with these internal rhythms. The Moon is concerned with even such apparently small decisions as whether or not we go to a party.

In the realm of honoring the Moon, our feelings supersede any social obligation. If we resist the prompting of our own moods, the Moon sends emphatic dreams to remind us to heed the call of our interior life. Lunar dreams are often concerned with issues of danger, safety, and domesticity.

A woman friend recalled a dream about the house in which she was then living. In the dream she looked out the window and saw her daughter playing with an alligator. She signaled frantically to her daughter, who responded by saying that the alligator was perfectly safe outside. Then the alligator charged into the house and chased the woman from room to room in a terrifying way until finally she ran out the door. Once outside, the alligator became friendly again.

My friend awoke with clarifying certainty that it was time to move. Powerful forces were friendly outside her house, but threatening to devour her inside. Only upon waking did she recall the phrase she had recently been using, that she felt "eaten alive" by her life. The dream prompted her to sell that house and move to Taos, where her life bloomed. She and the alligator are both much happier.

Her dream reminded me of the time when I lived in a dangerous neighborhood and wanted to move, but didn't seem to have the money to do so. I went to the local *botanica* to seek advice. The resident *santera* gave me potent herbs sacred to the Moon and Yemaya, and told me to burn them in a brazier starting at the rear of my home and moving toward the front door. I did so, and the smell was so sulfurous that regardless of where they were burned, you would definitely want to move. Within the week, I found an affordable, adorable little house in the woods, the safest place I've ever lived.

The Moon is the part of us that is fiercely protective of all life. She wants us all to be safe, sustained, and nourished. In turn, we work for her by caring for and about the life around us.

By asking ourselves what we can do for another person, we cultivate empathy that allows us to enter their emotional world and feel what they need. When a friend was seriously injured in a car

accident, the doctors gave little hope of his survival. While he lay in a coma in the hospital, his dearest ally and I sat on a nearby riverbank and asked his spirit what he would most like. We felt his world-weariness and said to him, "Oh, Ted, if you come back, you need never have another stupid job again." (The accident had been another driver's fault, and munificent settlement seemed likely.) The doctors reported that around this time Ted emerged from his coma and made what they termed a miraculous recovery.

THE MOON AS PROTECTOR OF LIFE

The Moon part of us says we can measure a culture's evolution by whether that society protects, nurtures, and reveres its children, its elders, the environment, and all growing things. By that measure the modern world is insane: those things that traditional cultures would have cared for are not merely ignored, but slung-shot out into vulnerability. This collective insanity is reflected in each one of our (illusorily) private emotional lives as turbulence and angst. Often, when an apparently minor incident unleashes a tide of strong emotion, it is a sign that the fiercely protective Mother goddess in us has been aroused.

To redress the modern world's priorities, this goddess invites us to follow her moonlit path to the archetypal world. To do that we require rest, nourishment, and access to information seeded deep within. Perhaps for these reasons the Moon is said to love comfort and good food—especially pomegranates, for their profusion of seeds. She likes indirect light and mist. The subtle gleam of silver, moonstones, and pearls are said to stimulate her force within us.

Through the Moon we have access to ancestral wisdom and memory, which gives us not belief, but faith. People often tell me that they know what a wonderful relationship is, yet they have not had one. They know what true community is, yet they have not experienced it. I tell them that knowledge is their memory of the future.

SLOW DOWN—FUTURE AHEAD!

In the Vedic scriptures it is written that the healing vision plant, Soma, grows and only blooms under moonlight. In Mexico, the plant *Salvia divinorum* is sacred to the Moon and the Virgin Mary. Those who approach these sacramental plants with reverence are granted an irrefutable experience of the energetic spirit body and its empathic intimacy with all creatures. Silence is required during the experience in order to hear the universe. These plants tell us that people who are too busy in the modern world have all of the work but none of the pleasure of the great visioning feminine.

The Moon is both creator and destroyer, the Great Mother and the All-Devouring Mother, giving and taking life. Aztec cosmology says that each of the five successive worlds is born and destroyed by its thematic element. The previous four worlds have been born and destroyed by the elements of earth, air, fire, and water. We now live in the fifth world, created by movement and, according to the Aztecs, destined to be destroyed by movement or motion. We could die of busyness, as well as business. The Mayans concur, and say that this world will end on December 23, 2012. But their vision is that if we can re-create the world before then, we can avoid an apocalypse.

Caring, collaborative intimacy with creation leaves the door open for conscious evolution rather than destruction. The Moon offers the antidote to busyness and "loco"-motion. Reflective calm restores our capacity to feel what is needed and respond appropriately, thus averting disaster, both personal and collective.

OUR MOON SIGN REVEALS OUR SPIRITUAL TRADITION

The Moon tells us the story of our spiritual lineage by suggesting that we each have a memory, deep within, of an ancient spiritual tradition. This lunar tradition is the custodian of our understand-

ing that everything is interrelated: people, plants, animals, family, land, and planets. This truth wants to travel back to the modern world through each one of us. The story of its journey is told by the Moon in our charts.

Each sign describes an aspect of the Moon in her myriad expressions. All expressions are available to us, as the moon changes signs (so frequently). However, we have a predominant affinity with which we are most resonant, depending upon the placement of the Moon when we were born.

The Moon in Aries says, "I belong to an ancient tradition that reaches back into the past when people really understood the interrelatedness of all of life. They were the lunar priestesses and priests, custodians of the energy of dynamic leadership. They possessed qualities of the Amazonian, autonomous hunter-gatherers and had an affinity for Native American mysticism."

The Moon in Taurus says, "I belong to the ancient spiritual lineage of those who were stewards for all of life. I possess the agrarian magic used to cultivate plants and protect the resources and wealth of the community. My affinity for the sensate world guides me to the task of making beautiful all tools and implements of daily life in order to constantly remind the community of its home in the cosmos."

The Moon in Gemini says, "I belong to the tradition of those who gave voice to the understanding of interrelatedness. Traditionally, my task was to maintain a garrulous intimacy with the mundane, as I perceive everything to be animated and speak to everything in its own language. I was the first bard, storyteller, or singer to offer the human voice as a means of expression for others."

The Moon in Cancer says, "My tradition is completely devoted to protecting all growing things—babies and the young offspring of all creatures. We founded all of the arts of domesticity, especially the culinary arts, and consider the home to be sacred."

The Moon in Leo says, "My tradition enlivens the community through dramatic and ritualistic celebrations that bring the culture's mythology to life and revitalize its connection to the cosmos. I preside over all expressive performing arts: dance, theater, and the circus."

The Moon in Virgo says, "My tradition encompasses all diagnostic and healing arts. I know all the herbs and medicinal plants in the forest. My Moon is called 'the witches' Moon,' referring to my practice of ritual magic. I create altars that serve as microcosms for the larger macrocosm, to which I am in service."

The Moon in Libra says, "My tradition not only understands the interrelatedness of all things, but also plays an active role in consciously introducing disparate elements to each other. Thus I create new art forms and constantly seek to forge new alliances with other peoples, traditions, and forces. I gave birth to the arts of diplomacy and mediation between people and species. We are the artists of the community, who seek to make everything more harmonious and beautiful."

The Moon in Scorpio says, "My tradition is responsible for mediating between the visible and invisible worlds. I speak to and for the invisible force field around all things, and am a voice for the ancestors. I am as comfortable with death as with birth. My task is to be a cultural midwife, helping others with the transitions of death, birth, and anything symbolic in between. I study and teach the ceremonies and music which facilitate change."

The Moon in Sagittarius says, "My tradition constantly seeks to expand the perimeters of knowledge. Through travel and study, I enrich my community's wealth of knowledge. I found the schools, the libraries, the centers of philosophy and research. I am the keeper of the community's stories, laws, codes, and principles. My tradition intended the legal system to be the wise application of cosmic law in the pragmatic realm of daily life. Oops."

The Moon in Capricorn says, "My tradition can downsize your tradition. We are the administrators who manage and run the community according to a larger principle. We admire, study, and implement the efficiency of nature. We are ambitious and pragmatic. We store grain. We set up commerce and trade. We plan and build empires. We know that gurus stop evolving when surrounded by sycophants rather than by colleagues who give them a playful hard time."

The Moon in Aquarius says, "I belong to a tradition that uses advanced telepathic techniques and technologies to constellate community. We relate to everything as a friend. There is no one and nothing we cannot talk to, and no one and nothing we can't organize into a creative cooperative endeavor. We build teams and community projects. We like diversity, knowing that when everyone is the same, there's no electricity. Contrast provides the spark."

The Moon in Pisces says, "I belong to an ancient tradition that understands that dreams and poetry are what keep a community healthy. We are the mystic, oracular custodians of our culture's myths and dreams. We keep the community's history alive through the oral tradition of poetry. We build altars and temples, and mentor the imaginations of children."

Yo' Mamma

The Moon is our memory, which connects us to the past and therefore to our ancestors. She represents our mother and our earliest experience of being nourished; consequently, she describes how we in turn nourish others.

The Moon in your chart describes your birth mother as a symbol of what happened to your tradition as it left mythic time and journeyed into the modern world. The squares to the Moon indicate where this tradition was suppressed or blocked, and describe the character of your mother as a microcosm of the condition of

mainstream modern culture. The trines to the Moon describe ways in which the tradition is still vitally intact in your birth family.

My own Moon in Virgo, "the witches' Moon," would say that I belong to an ancient healing tradition. What happened to that tradition as it journeyed from mythic to contemporary time, as revealed by the character of my female relatives, especially my mother?

The semi-square (45-degree angle) relationship to Saturn would say this tradition lost its authority. Instead of knowing the names of all the herbs in the forest, my mother knew the names of innumerable medicines prescribed by a plethora of doctors, which ultimately contributed to her death by weakening her liver (Virgo rules the liver in its assimilative and digestive functions). The semi-square to Uranus would say this tradition also lost its intuitive autonomy and experimental freedom. My mother's emotional life was poisoned by the bitter bile of grievance and regret at not having lived her eccentric uniqueness.

The squares or blockages also describe where a Moon sign gets slammed into its more negative shadow aspects. Instead of being Virgo—the analytical, critical, diagnostic healer—she was just critical. My mother did not feel socially powerful, and as a result she was overly controlling of her private domain.

The Moon invites us to think of our mothers with compassionate empathy by considering whether they had the emotional or physical freedom to express themselves fully even within their own minds. If my mother had had the social and/or psychic freedom to think of herself as a witch (as we, her family, ultimately did), or a wise, powerful woman, she would have been a much happier and longer-lived person.

The trines (120-degree angles) and sextiles (60-degree angles) to my Moon from Mars and Mercury describe those areas in which there is a positive tradition of strong women in my family. My mom was socially active, powerfully smart, and curious. My Irish paternal grandmother was the town herbalist, healer, and counselor.

The Moon in our charts also describes our relationships with our mothers. It says that we are their unlived potential and that we embody their spiritual vitality. It is as though our mothers say to us, not consciously, but energetically, "To my child I bequeath my moods. All that I could not resolve, I hand down to you. I also bequeath to you the task of translating back into the modern world this ancient function of being a lunar priest or priestess." My mother did not live her wildness, so it came to me to do so—to restore Saturnian respect and authority to the Uranian domains of intuitive guidance and the value of uniqueness. I'm working on it. But her unlived Uranus also meant that I was her rebellious child (and thus her rebellious self), and we certainly had our battles.

In her final years, my mother came to understand and appreciate what I was doing. When she was dying, I held her hand and said, "We've played the highly stressed roles of mother and daughter in the modern world, but behind these theatrical roles we've been great allies. We're really on the same team." She tightened her grip and opened her eyes. Then we gave each other a spirited "high five."

Moods as Spirit Mail

The history of the lunar tradition's journey is also the history of the feminine, which is reflected in our moods, whether we are men or women. Our inner emotional lives are not really private, but more like rivers or tributaries flowing into an ocean of collective memory.

Moods are "spirit mail" from some deep part of us to our conscious selves. They connect us to our spiritual tradition. A mood will come up and hulk around until we receive its message by expressing it. If we do not, it will continue to be a dark nuisance. Undelivered Moon/mood messages grow impatient, toxic, and cranky.

We work with moods by honoring them as messengers. Carl Jung wrote to a friend of his, "Your moods are messengers, but thinking about them and feeling them will do absolutely no good at

all." He went on to explain that the only way a mood can deliver its information is if it is given a voice.

Honoring the Moon by expressing our moods is very much counter to our mainstream culture, which admonishes us to suppress or overcome them. Even independent feminist women can get snookered by modern culture when they label bad moods "PMS" and say, "I will function in spite of this mood! I will overcome it by suppressing it." This is "dissing" the Moon. The Moon part of us says, "How rude! This mood is not irrelevant. It wants to tell you something important."

TRY THIS AT HOME

Next time you're in a bad mood, grant the mood its expression: write the mood, dance it, paint it, build altars to it. Express it physically—in the motion of your paintbrush on the canvas, your foot on the earth. Eventually, when you look up from that act of concentrated expression, you'll realize, "Oh. The mood's gone." Then look down at the art you created out of your mood to find that it has left you some crucial navigational instruction.

The Moon is a big proponent of Visionary Activist Principle Number Six, which states that we only possess the power of an insight when we give it expression. One of the limitations of psychotherapy is that you can have a fascinating insight about your father, but it will not move or change your life unless you express that insight in an artful manner. An extreme example can be found in the writings of the nineteenth-century novelist Samuel Butler. He said that whenever he got bogged down while writing *The Way of All Flesh,* he had simply to remember how much he hated his father, and instantly his pen was filled with renewed enthusiastic vigor.

In Vipassana meditation, all moods are considered good fuel. In one of the Vipassana techniques, when you have a mood, especially one you wish you did not have, you take note of every part of your body: "How does my jaw feel? How am I holding my arms?" And so

on, down to your toes. In this way, you ground your emotional state in your physical one. Vipassana practitioners say that once you do this, suddenly the mood becomes a giant, iridescent wave which you surf all the way to the edge of the universe, where the mood explodes into radiant energy, which is then available for creative endeavor.

THE ALCHEMY OF EMOTIONAL SELF-POSSESSION

James Hillman points out that silver (the Moon) and lead (Saturn) are found together in nature, implying that depression is crucial to creativity. Hillman also says that if we do something solely for pay—for silver—it dishonors the Moon by making money rather than creative expression the measure of worth. This leads to unredeemed depression. We make depressions useful by "mining the silver," which is Hillman's term for consciously working with depression. Our emotional inner life wants to speak to us. Going willingly to the table is always more graceful than being dragged there by Saturn and the Moon. Feelings of depression can indicate that we are being involuntarily summoned for an appointment with our Moon-self that we did not keep.

In classical alchemy, the Moon is also connected to sulfur, which is Pluto. The Moon is drawn to intense, smoky Underworld emotions that, if worked with, may be redemptive. If left unattended, they are always toxic. The Moon is a source of creativity and madness—psychic and psychotic are very close together in its dictionary. The distinction has to do with whether or not we consciously work to express our moods (recall James Joyce and his daughter).

We cross a threshold of power by becoming emotionally self-possessed, a prerequisite of which is assuming the responsibility of consciously working with our emotional inner life. If we do not, then other people must carry our moods for us. Other times, we end up carrying those of someone else. But beware: as the Moon is the ruler of Cancer, we tend to get very crabby when we have taken care of others at the expense of our own essential self-nourishment.

To discern the difference, we can interview our Moon: "Is this my mood, or am I actually carrying somebody else's mood?"

Intimate proximity leads to mood mixing. You might pick up the melancholy of someone standing next to you in line. A parent, mate, or boss might set the emotional tone of an occasion, leading everyone to fall into step. You might even pick up moods impressed upon physical objects. Psychometry is the art of reading the emotional history of an object, be it a ring, a rock, or a room.

While studying psychometry in England, I went with friends to a castle in Dorset. Though we were joking and laughing as we entered a particular room, we were soon overwhelmed by a profound melancholy that we knew, even without asking our Moons, did not belong to us. Later we read in a booklet we bought at the castle tea shop that centuries earlier the lady of the castle, in a jealous rage over a man, had entombed her sister and allowed her to starve to death in that very room.

Strong moods impress themselves on the environment, which is why the Chinese art of *feng shui* stresses the importance of knowing the history of a house before moving in. We all register the emotional history of our environment, whether we realize it or not. Becoming emotionally self-possessed means being able to distinguish our own emotional current within the larger ocean of collective feeling.

CLUES FOR SELF-NAVIGATION

Life is a scavenger hunt and sometimes we only get one clue at a time. Our emotional impulses are often the first clue: I must read this book; I must talk to this person; I must go to the phone booth at the corner of Forty-second and Broadway. The next clue will be waiting there.

More clues are available via the north and south nodes of the Moon. The north node is where the Moon crosses the ecliptic, the

Sun's path, and represents one's lifework and the direction in which growth lies. The south node, directly opposite, is what we push off from into the direction of growth. The strategic model is that if we concentrate on the north-node area of life, the south-node area will function just fine. If we concentrate on the south node, we will feel as if we are drowning.

If you have the north node in the first house, or in Aries, your life assignment is to focus on your unique identity. Your south node will be in the opposite sign of Libra, or the seventh house, which is partnership. If you attempt to gain your identity from partnership, you will feel as if you are drowning.

If you are the reverse, with your north node in the seventh house of partnership, or in Libra, your focus in life will be to be partnered. The south node in the first house, or Aries, says you have completed lonerdom. If you try to be fundamentally alone, you will feel as if you are drowning.

The north node in the second house, or Taurus, requires that you concentrate on pragmatic expressions of value—really doing the work. The south node in the eighth house, or Scorpio, says that being too involved in spooky channeling will give you a bogus feeling of *faux* spiritual authority—which would result in drowning in your own ungrammatical pretensions.

The reverse, north node in the eighth house, or Scorpio, says concentrate on magic. Do not get eaten by the tawdry aspects of commerce—materialism, condescension, and contempt for humanity—that a retail life (which would be described by the south node in Taurus) can engender.

The north node in the third house, or Gemini, says to concentrate on the numerous acts of daily communication that keep you in constant contact with the stimulation of new ideas. The south node in the ninth house, or Sagittarius, says the pretensions of academic life would be stultifying. Better to think of yourself as a student being

constantly tutored by experience. You should write clever comic books instead of nineteenth-century novels.

If your north node is in Sagittarius, or the ninth house, you *should* write nineteenth-century novels. By all means, study and teach and travel and write Dickensian tomes. Don't get drowned in third-house Gemini minutiae, the distracting details of life's episodic short stories.

The north node in the fourth house, or Cancer, says concentrate on home, roots, and invisibility. Undertake projects for love, not for public recognition. The south node in the tenth house, or Capricorn, says if you work for fame, you will never get it. Work for the joy of the invisible work.

The north node in the tenth house, or Capricorn, by contrast, says your task is to be a social phenomenon. Be visibly influentiual. Catch both flak and credit. The south node in the fourth house, or Cancer, says don't bother visiting home. The opportunities that your grown-up public life has to offer are much larger than what you were born into.

The north node in the fifth house, or Leo, says passionate, creative self-expression is the point of life. The south node in Aquarius, the eleventh house, says don't break your heart by worrying what the community thinks—you'll only drown and lose yourself. Focusing on your creative tasks will attract the right community to you.

The north node in Aquarius, or the eleventh house, says constellate the community, be a leader, be fully aware of what other people think. Your mission lies in projects that require a team. The south node in the fifth house, or Leo, warns you not to concentrate on personal self-expression or the private melodrama of innumerable affairs, or you will lose yourself.

The north node in the sixth house, or Virgo, says devote yourself to daily acts of service. The south node in the twelfth house, or Pisces, says forget going to psychics. When you feel overwhelmed, do something practical and real (like filing papers), rather than have

a psychic reading about it. Really deal with your health, rather than have your aura read.

When reversed, and the north node is in Pisces, or the twelfth house, concentrate on deep diving into psychic material, cultivating the inner life of a mystic. The south node in Virgo, or the sixth house, warns us against being eaten up by mundane concerns of daily life.

HONORING "MOON DAY"

Monday is the time staked out by our calendar for nourishing our essence, for gathering our wits. Most people are depressed on Monday because they have to go to jobs they hate. We need to change this and make Moon Day a sacred, happy day for taking care of emotional business. Feel what needs to be addressed and respond to that impetus.

On one level, of course, every day is Moon Day because we are always in emotional empathy with it. Once a month there will be a new Moon, which occurs when the Sun and the Moon are in alignment. Then the Moon waxes, growing larger until the full Moon, after which it wanes.

An eclipse is a precise new Moon, meaning the Sun and Moon are exactly aligned in the sky. We live on the only planet we know of where eclipses are possible, because our Sun and Moon are visually the same size in the sky. The implication is that our Earth experiment is one of equal solar/lunar and masculine/feminine energy.

The Moon goddesses insisted on sexual equality and were called virgin. The ancient definition of *virgin* is not "chaste," but "belonging to no man," or connected to nature. These goddesses love children but do not fancy marriage, or "wed-lock." Children born outside of wedlock were once called virgin-born.

The Moon goddesses preside over love and children, creation, fertility, and birth. The work of Dr. Eugene Jonas in the late 1960s in Czechoslovakia was based on an ancient Babylonian stone frag-

ment on which was written, "A woman is most fertile in relationship to her Moon." He intuited that this meant a woman was most biologically fertile when the Sun and Moon duplicated the angle (which they do each month) under which that woman was born, with astounding statistical results.[21]

GO FORTH AND DO THOU LIKEWISE

The Sun part of us and our culture knows what we want, but without an alliance with the Moon, solar culture is too much in a rush, too abrasive, too lit, too paranoid. In yoga, the Moon regulates our central nervous system. Kundalini yoga says that the body is comprised of solar and lunar currents. Breathing through the right (solar) nostril heats us up, while breathing through the left (lunar) nostril cools us down, grants us calm, and restores our perspective.

The Moon, in Qabalistic tradition, is called the Intelligence of Interrelatedness and is thought to have an affinity for the occipital region of the brain (the round curve of the back of your head). In esoteric metaphysics, the occipital region of the brain is said to be connected to every point in time and space. Through the Moon we are connected to the universe.

An idea to entertain (in your occipital) is that this region of the brain is the portal through which images cross from our minds out into the world, where they become real. A Qabalistic technique to use right before you go to sleep is to visualize a desire and then imagine transferring that image to the back of your head. In this way the molecules of desire journey forth while you are sleeping, ushering your intention into the realm of material reality.

Imagine receiving energetic support from above, while feeling tremendous energetic nourishment and support from below. Then feel nourishment and vitality coming to you from the east, the west, the north, and the south. Following your breath on the exhalation,

send love and blessings and support to all creatures above. You are the Moon to them. Send love and support to all creatures below. To all creatures in the east, send love and support. Bless and love all creatures in the west, all creatures in the north, and all creatures to the south. You are the Moon to them all. As you do this, you radiate love and support without depletion.

Planet: Sun

Sign: Leo

Glyph: 

Key words and qualities: Essence; radiance; expressiveness; magnanimity; confidence; fruitfulness; creativity; central self. The regenerated personality, identified with the source.

Color: Gold

Metal: Gold

Physical body affinity: Heart

Day of the week: Sunday

Festivals: Winter solstice, "the Return of the Sun"; Lammas (August 2), one of the four cross-quarter holidays—the festival of harvest.

Way of honoring: Heat or fire. Try inhaling golden energy from the six directions: above, below, east, west, north, and south. Then exhale golden light and bless all creatures in turn, in each direction, without the slightest sense of effort or depletion. Or we can honor the Sun by simply sitting and watching the sunrise and sunset.

Shadow, when not honored: Narcissism ("Enough about me, what do *you* think about me?"). The word *illusion* comes from the Latin *in ludo,* which means literally "in the game"; as opposed to *delusion* (from *de ludo*) which means "out of the game." The Sun (and Leo) reminds us that when we playfully or ritually express ourselves—in other words, create theater—we are at least in the game. The Sun says, "Create theater or live melodrama." When we are living melodrama, we are deluded, or "out of the game."

THE SUN



THE CONFLUENCE OF ALLIES

Hail to the Sun god
He is a fun god
Ra Ra Ra!

We have arrived at the central heartbeat, the energetic, animating force of all life: the Sun.

In his "Twelfth Lecture on Heat," the nineteenth-century British scientist John Tyndall inadvertently summarized the innumerable odes to the Sun found in virtually all cultures:

"Every tree, plant, and flower, grows and flourishes by the grace and bounty of the sun.

"The sun comes to us as heat; he quits us as heat; and between his entrance and departure, the multiform powers of our globe appear. They are all special forms of solar power—the moulds into which his strength is temporarily poured in passing from its source through infinitude." Scientists make great astrologers.

Through the metaphor of science, Tyndall states what human beings have been expressing since the dawn of time through art, pyramids, altars on mountaintops, fertility symbols, and the myriad depictions of the Sun associated with snakes, lions, reindeer, goats, and other animals. Everything that is, is a manifestation of the Sun.

The mudra of reassurance, the outstretched open hand found on statues of the Buddha in India, is identical to the open hand found in rock carvings in the Sahara. The hand represents the rising Sun. The fingers are the Sun's rays, which then also become antlers, reassuring us of the infinitely rich abundance of life energy. The Pattern on the Trestle Board, which is an ancient Hermetic series of affirmations about the Self, begins, "All the power that ever was or will be is here now." The vitality and creativity represented by the Sun are always present and always available, constantly assuming new forms. Creation and re-creation are the Sun's visible mysteries.

Shortly before he died, the mythologist Joseph Campbell queried, "What is the new mythology to be, the mythology of this unified earth as one harmonious being? One cannot predict the next mythology any more than one can predict tonight's dream; for a mythology is not an ideology." Yet we can participate in midwifing the emerging mythos, and co-create a culture of conscious kinship, through both a traditional and an innovative celebration of the Sun's journey.

The Sun's power is especially potent at times of seasonal transition, which all known cultures have celebrated. William Blake reminds us, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* that "Eternity is in love with the productions of time." During these seasonal festivals, the power of eternity pours into the specific moment, quickening the tide of animism. At every stop on the Sun's journey, the world is reinvented.

As the Sun passes through each sign of the zodiac, it brings that image-force alive, as well as the presiding god of that sign and season. The planets all reflect the light of the Sun, so at each important solar celebration, the Sun shines most strongly through the presiding planetary force of that time. By joining in these celebrations, we have an opportunity to participate in remaking ourselves and re-creating the world.

THE SOLAR CALENDAR'S INVITATION TO RE-CREATE THE WORLD

If we got up before dawn throughout the year, we'd be pretty tired, but we would also see that the point of sunrise is not the same every day, but gradually moves across the horizon. From the perspective of the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice is when the sunrise is the farthest to our right, in the southeast. *Sol* means "Sun," and *stice* means "stands still." At this wedding of time and geographic space, the Sun looks as if it were standing still for a day, and then it begins to journey north. Ancient standing stones found in the British Isles and Mesoamerica mark this moment, as well as the other equinoctial and solstice points. The winter solstice is the longest night of the year, signifying the beginning of winter. This night represents the height of the power of darkness, after which the light returns and the days grow longer, culminating in the summer solstice.

As the days grow longer, hopeful possibilities are rekindled. Thus the winter solstice has long been associated with the birth of the world redeemer. This is the birthday of King Arthur, Jesus, and all saviors associated with the return of the light. Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, was, according to Maccabees (the First and Second Books of Maccabees are still to be found in the Catholic Bible, but are part of the Apocrypha, which are books not included in the Protestant Bible), originally timed to coincide with the winter solstice.

The Sun enters Capricorn on the winter solstice, also called the Saturnalia, animating the presiding deity, Saturn. Traditionally, this is a night when we cast off our chains, all our constraints and fears, and gather force for the coming season. One winter solstice motto is, "When in doubt, throw out!" meaning old, outworn clothes, habits, relationships, modes of thought. At this time we invite the highest imaginative concept of Saturn—the "cool" guy, the responsible teacher—into our lives and our culture. We have an opportu-

nity to cast out the old order and allow the new to be rekindled in our hearts.

The cross-quarter holidays, which occur in midseason, are called the four gates of power. These dates are determined by the Sun's arrival at the middle of the fixed signs—15 degrees of Aquarius, Taurus, Leo, or Scorpio. Candlemas is the Christian name for the midwinter festival occurring in the middle of Aquarius, around February 2. The Celtic name for this is the Feast of Imbolg. Midwinter is the time when the Goddess lights her candle and begins her slow ascent from the Underworld. While February 2 is known to us (somewhat diminished in its imagery) as Groundhog Day, this is in keeping with an ancient tradition of animals coming out of hibernation to provide useful predictions. Midwinter has always been considered a day of omens. A traditional rhyme said:

If Candlemas Day be fair and bright,
Winter will have another flight;
If Candlemas Day be shower and rain,
Winter is gone and will not come again.

At the midpoint of Aquarius, the Sun shines through Saturn and Uranus, the dual rulers of this sign. They urge us to expand our definition of the Aquarian realm of community to include all of creation—from animals to galaxies. We participate in the initial stirrings of nature's emergence from winter's dormancy by giving innovative expression (Uranus) to the Saturnian domain of traditional structures. We align with the force of this moment by asking ourselves, "What will be our unique contribution to the community of creation?"

The Sun continues its journey from Candlemas to the next solar holiday, the vernal equinox, around March 21, the moment at which the Sun has journeyed halfway to its northernmost point. This is the time of equal night and day: *equi* means "equal"; *nox* means "night."

The vernal equinox marks the beginning of spring, when we pause to regain our equilibrium and connect with the presiding god of all emergent erotic life force, Mars, now animated by the rays of the Sun. We remember that all the gods, regardless of their names, have a masculine and feminine expression.

As with the winter solstice, behind the orthodox holidays lie hidden ones. The beginning of spring is the Persian New Year and the Christian Easter. Easter is always the first Sunday after the first full Moon after the equinox. The term "Easter" comes from the Saxon goddess Oestre or Ester (meaning "eggs"), from which we ultimately get the word *estrogen.* The Moon hare, a fertility totem sacred to the goddess, has become our "ester" bunny.

The Christian holiday of Easter is, in fact, an ancient celebration of springtime fertility: eggs, rabbits, and breeding. It is also a celebration of the annual resurrection of the life force. In Bohemia on Easter Monday, village girls sacrifice the Lord of Death by throwing him in the water. (One thing about Death—he hates wet socks!) The Jewish festival of Passover is timed to coordinate with both the equinox and the mid-spring full Moon as a celebration of the rebirth of creativity.

The Sun continues its journey from the vernal equinox to mid-spring, which falls around May 1. Called May Day, or Beltane, it is a celebration of renewed kinship with the passion of nature. The Sun now illuminates a new expression of the presiding deity, Venus. The Taurus season of Venus follows the Aries season of Mars, reminding us that it is through union with Venus that the wild force of Mars is brought to grace and happiness.

People in Celtic and northern European countries still celebrate mid-spring by dancing around a Maypole, a phallic symbol planted in the fertile earth. Often bells are tied around the dancers' ankles to awaken the earth in order to catalyze the fertility of nature. Traditionally, people would make love in their fields as an act of sympathetic magic. Beltane, a holiday about passionate courtship, alliance

with nature's emphatic sensuality, and equal sharing of nature's beauty and bounty, was celebrated with bonfires and dancing on hilltops.

These solar celebrations still live within us and insist on being expressed. Our ancestral blood remembers the intrinsic beauty and abundance available in the midst of spring's democratic generosity. But if our world is not in accord with Venus, not beautiful and fair, and we do not perform any rituals of redress, then her scales will be violently tipped in an effort to regain balance. For instance, on Beltane in Washington, D.C., we have had riots where, instead of bonfires, real fires have been set. The fiery Los Angeles riot of 1992 was also within days of Beltane. And let us not forget the Russian Revolution, which is celebrated on May 1. One of the Sun's lessons is that if we no longer have a ritual way to celebrate the heat of our passion, we end up with arson.

The next solar holiday is the summer solstice, around June 21, which is the height of the Sun's northern journey. It marks the longest day of the year and the beginning of summer; afterward, the days grow shorter. Whereas Beltane was a celebration of courtship, summer solstice is the wedding. The presiding Moon goddess takes center stage and invites us to rededicate ourselves to life by choosing what we will protect and cultivate in the garden of our personal and community lives.

Many people choose to get married in June, which is sacred to Juno, the goddess of marriage, who presides over the summer solstice and the wedding of the Sun and the Moon. The marriage of two people reflects this divine union and is meant to be an opportunity to wed those things that have been previously estranged: Heaven and Earth, and physics and metaphysics, whose offspring would be Reverent Science.

Even though it occurs at the beginning of summer, the summer solstice is referred to as Midsummer's Eve. In his play, *A Midsum-*

mer Night's Dream, Shakespeare draws upon the traditional belief that on the summer solstice, nature spirits become visible and magic is at its most potent. As the Sun pauses at the northernmost tip of its arc, we are invited to pause with it in order to find the still point from which the dance of the visible and invisible emerge.

The Sun journeys forth from the summer solstice, bringing us to the midsummer festival, August 2. In some traditions, it is the festival of the great goddess of the grain, the Sun in its feminine expression of abundance. In Celtic culture this midsummer harvest festival is called Lugnasad, celebrating the death and resurrection of Lug, the grain god. It is more commonly known as Lammas, after the old solar harvest god who is ritually sacrificed by pulling in the harvest and determining what to keep and what to throw out. We celebrate Lammas by baking loaves of bread in the shape of grains of wheat and holding bonfires in which the dross of the harvest is burned.

The Sun moves on from Lammas to the autumnal equinox, around September 21, where once again the days and nights are of equal length. This is the beginning of fall, when the nights grow longer than the days. The Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah and the festival of the goddess Durga in India are both timed to the first new Moon after the autumnal equinox. Both of these celebrations are intended to restore balance and right relationship within oneself and between oneself and the world. The book of our life is open for us to read, inspiring us to rededicate ourselves to a life of greater mercy and kinship, where every stranger is considered a messenger. This is the season when Venus takes her second incarnation, inviting us to align with the autumnal rhythm of deep descent in order to gather our vision.

In ancient Greece, the autumnal equinox marked the beginning of the annual revival of the Eleusinian mysteries, ritual reenactments of Persephone's descent to the Underworld. The founding of these mysteries is based on the story of Demeter and her daughter,

Persephone, who, in a late version of the myth, was kidnapped by Pluto, the god of the Underworld. Part of the mystery is that Pluto, meaning "Abundance," was originally another name for Demeter.

The longest-running theatrical act in history, the Eleusinian mysteries were performed for four hundred years. In addition to theater and feasting, the celebrations included rites of initiation for women, men, children, and slaves; the only people who could not be initiated were those who had so irredeemably violated kinship with others as to have murdered someone.

The Sun then continues on to the middle of Scorpio, around October 31. We call this festival Halloween, when the Sun puts on its Mars and Pluto costumes, since they are the co-rulers of this Scorpionic season. The Celts call it Samhain. Halloween allows us to enter the domain of the taboo through humor and wit, and restore it to the sacred. This is also the festival of the invisible, the Day of the Dead, and All Souls' Day, in which we are invited to have a humorously intimate relationship to death. Mars and Pluto seek incarnation through us at this time. We offer ourselves as incarnational vessels to ancestors and allies who have died, strengthening our reciprocal relationship with the invisible by leaving them offerings.

The Sun then continues on to its rendezvous with Saturn at the winter solstice, and the cycle begins anew.

Years ago, I began to anchor my astrology lectures and celebrations to the year's holy days. The question they pose to all of us, both individually and societally, is, "In what manner do we want to celebrate now?" We are allowed and encouraged to reinvent the rites of our celebrations and we need to do so. All forms of celebration are temporal. Uninformed enthusiasm for the past has created ceremonies that feel hokey. We remember Nietzsche's admonition, the gist of which was "If you want me to join your religion, you must have better music."

Solar Flair

The Sun now speaks to each aspect of our personality, awakening its loving and magical potency. The Sun calls to:

- the Mars part of us, for there is much heroic action needed that only you can do
- the Venus part of us, for there is much to be loved and created that can only be created by you
- the Mercury part of us, for there are many ideas to be exchanged
- the Moon part of us, for there is much to be protected and cared for
- the Jupiter part of us, for there are many heartening stories to be told, and new theatrical venues to be created
- the Saturn part of us, for there is much work to do in building the structure of a sustainable future
- the Uranus part of us, for there are many ingenious solutions to be invented that only you can invent
- the Neptune part of us, for there is much that only you can envision as we co-create a new culture
- the Pluto part of us, for there is much to be transformed as we become social change artists, public alchemists

The Sun sets the torch to the tinder of our work together, and we are alight. We have traveled far, awakened much. The gods want to work through us.

Ashé is thought of as coming from the Sun, the central god. Say *ashé,* and let the magic begin.

The Path of Love as an Antidote to Bitterness

As Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us at the very beginning of our journey together, "Behind the harsh appearance of the world there

is a benign power." Certainly the Sun can cast a harsh shadow. If we do not have a profusion of gods from whom to draw sustenance and to whom we are in turn devoted, then the Sun beats down upon us in harsh and simplistic certainty, searing the necessary and cooling mists of complexity and mystery.

Cruelty and bitterness are natural responses to being treated badly. The Sun challenges us to rekindle the loving heart of generosity from those who have truly earned the right to be bitter, and yet have refused the cup of poison. Like Saint Patrick, they have held the poisoned cup to the light, allowed the poison to rise to the surface, blown it off, and blessed and toasted all of creation, even those who would have poisoned them.

Creina Alcock is a white South African woman who, through a lifetime of betrayal and hardship on the African veldt, has earned the right to be bitter. Although she has teetered on the edge, feeling the temptations of cruelty and murderous revenge in her own heart, she has not succumbed.

When asked how and why she has not become bitter, she replies, "The path of love is not the path of comfort. It means going forward into the unknown, with no guarantees of safety, even though you're afraid. Trusting is dangerous, but without trust there is no hope for love, and love is all we ever have to hold against the dark. . . . Love is worth nothing until it has been tested by its own defeat."[22]

Cultivating the capacity to transcend the harsh realities of life and the natural response of bitterness requires making an offering of oneself to the benign force of the Sun, which animates our hearts. We are called upon to create a culture of conscious kinship by living a ritualistic life that brings us into right relationship with the gods, our visible and invisible allies. We are not meant to do it alone.

THE FIFTH FLOWER

In the tarot, the Sun depicts a boy and a girl who symbolize transformed and regenerated humanity. "Be ye transformed by the

renewing of your mind," says this card, which also shows five sunflowers, four in full bloom, one yet to bloom. The four are the four kingdoms of evolutionary form—mineral, vegetable, animal, and human—all of which originate from solar energy. The fifth flower is the next evolutionary step of consciously reverent humanity, which we undertake now together with the help of the gods, who work for us so that we may work for them. Let us imagine the fifth flower blooming.

We can strengthen and reverence the compassionate kindness of the Sun through a traditional exercise in which we align with the bodhisattvas, those who have a deep commitment to taking on and transforming the world's pain. First we strengthen ourselves by inhaling golden light into our hearts and exhaling the dark smoke of sorrowful bitterness, like dragons. Take a few moments to do so now.

Now, in contrast, imagine inhaling the world's darkness and exhaling golden light.

In this way we become allied with the forces of creation, including the great Wrathful Demon, Mahakala. The demons of Tibet were considered the most fearsome of all of the Sun's children, and Mahakala, the most terrifyingly destructive, until Padmasambhava journeyed to Tibet and converted them all to Buddhism. Then, out of compassion, they turned their wrathful, destructive talents to the slaying of greed and ignorance. They, too, began to inhale the world's darkness and exhale the golden fire of blessing.

In alchemy, the Great Work is called the Operation of the Sun, which is the full cultivation of the human personality as a translucent vessel through which life can shine. The living gold of which the alchemists spoke is manifest in the radiant energy of the Sun. The Sun is our guiding light, reminding us that we are incarnations of all the gods. All the planets, gods, and forces of our psyche reflect the light of the Sun. It is the same life force that animates all of creation. We invite this golden force to infuse our personalities that we may better serve the world.

MAKING THE GODS YOU

In gratitude for the work you have done, the planetary gods would like to offer you one last invocative gift so that you can keep in touch with them. In accordance with Mercury's magic, we use the powerfully invocative phrase "I am," which is a magical invocation. If you feel moved by intuitive whimsy, and you *really* want the gods to work for you, read the planetary messages aloud, followed by an enthusiastic

Pluto sizzles: "I am willing to be cooked and refined in the alchemical furnace of life. Remember that whatever I do in life, it's my cover. I am an undercover agent for transformation." *Ashé!*

Neptune sings: "Through my vivid and infinitely creative imagination, I am constantly co-creating with the divine the myriad richness of life's possibilities. I am dreaming the universe into being." *Ashé!*

Uranus invokes, "I welcome the enlivening, illuminating, lightning bolt of revelation that zaps the circle of habit, turning it into the spiral of life's experimental evolutionary drive." *Ashé!*

Saturn intones, "I am aligned with the power of focused concentration, realizing that freedom lies on the other side of responsibility. I will go to the movies *after* I finish the task before me. I aspire to mystic coolness." *Ashé!*

Jupiter encourages, "I am filled with an abundant enthusiasm for my heroic journey. Open my path before me and grant me the opportunity to be of maximum good in the world." *Ashé!*

Mars exhorts, "I am filled with spirited, bold, courageous, energetic bravado and desire, which inspire me to dance passionately with life." *Ashé!*

Venus croons, "I am attracting all the love, beauty, and creative inspiration needed for my full ecstatic bloom." *Ashé!*

Mercury proclaims, "I am the witty, clear, articulate brilliance of

life, which expresses itself through me and grants me the confidence to say the truth with a kind heart." *Ashé!*

The Moon reassures, "I am always safe enough to take the intuitively guided risks, and strong enough to care tenderly and fiercely for all of life, which deserves protection." *Ashé!*

The Sun cheers, "I am always fully radiantly myself, whether I know it or not. I embrace the divine experiment of my own uniqueness, remembering that the world needs my gift." *Ashé!*

Let us dream a more loving world into being. Vital images will save the culture. And we are the storytellers. *Ashé!*

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At the change of seasons, Caroline produces spiritual-political-lecture-ritual theater, the tapes of which are sent all over the world. An exuberant and popular keynote speaker, Caroline incites us to dream, conjure, and implement a more loving and ingenious world. For more information, visit her web site at www.spiritualintrigue.com, or call 1 (888) 741-GODS.