
SABIAN MYSTERIES

A SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO ASTROLOGY

COMMENTARY ON THE WORK OF

DR MARC EDMUND JONES

AS AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS UNDERSTANDING OF

SABIAN SYMBOLS

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FOREWORD

EDITION 2015

Wisdom unravels in shades and nuances from time to time and its revelation is more like the clearing of fog than the climbing of a ladder; it occurs in a non-linear, gentle way that is rarely celebrated by eureka moments. But it does unravel, and some of us find it appropriate and even fascinating, to study the way in which it reveals itself.

In the following text, there is a certain orderliness and the existence of a formula that underpins the disclosure of individual concentrations, which taken as a whole can be seen as a commentary on the nature of human reality. Wisdom models are used here that have been found to be reliable for centuries, even millennia. The numbers one to seven – 1 circle, 2 senses, 3 qualities, 4 elements, 5 degrees in a batch, 6 expressions, and 7 paragraphs – are employed to express numerological ideas, and to cut the whole cake into bite-size morsels that we might find whole easier to digest. Dip in by all means, and see if it suits you. It takes a lot of concentration and patience, so please take small pieces to heart rather than rush to see the whole pattern. Let it come to you, as it surely will if you would but sink into the mystery with a graceful open curiosity.

The source material is from Dr Marc Edmund Jones, and his collaborator Elsie Wheeler. To many of his colleagues and students, within astrological circles, Jones was thought of as a leading light of his age. Yes, he was an astrologer, and so he has linked his understandings to the zodiac. Really though, this is secondary; primarily he was a blessed with a sparkling intelligence and seems not only to have grasped the subtle nature of reality, but also found a way to explain it.

Each of these concentrations is aligned to one of the 360 specific degrees of the zodiac circle, so we are studying not Aries but the twelfth or thirteenth degree of Aries for example. I have added some thoughts about how these individual degrees lead from one to the next, and introduced the idea of six primary Expressions of each of the twelve zodiac signs. If in your own horoscope you have a planet in that degree, then you are likelier to access the particular mystery of that degree more readily; however each one is universally valid. And if you study astrology, you will find that the Sabian Symbols reveal your planets to you in a surprisingly different way. You may find you can explain certain established personal traits as relating to planets other than those you had thought responsible.

It would be a little disappointing if only astrologers find this text informative and inspiring, since the wisdom of this man deserves a wider level of serious attention. The open-minded layperson will find the concepts and language of astrology profound, subtle and useful – whether or not they look for causality in the stars' paths.

My deepest thanks go to my editorial advisors during the production of this work. Richard Grey offered constant support over several years, without which I may not have completed the task, and certainly would not have enjoyed doing it so much. Gillian Dearnley's contribution was crucial to the choice of Expressions and a general improvement in both the quality of writing and flow of ideas. I also acknowledge Conor Graham's insightful, creative input that smoothed out some jagged edges and added a hint of sparkle here and there.

James Burgess

Galway Bay, 2014

INTRODUCTION

This is a commentary on Sabian Symbols, which were made known by Dr. Marc Edmund Jones, once known as the 'Dean' of US astrology. He used two very different methods to expound his ideas. One depends upon numbers, has clear structure and is entirely rational; yet upon that is draped another – the most non-rational symbolism imaginable – which arose from Elsie Wheeler's psychic experiences. This is well documented elsewhere, and worth following up if you are interested in the unique process of discovery. Somehow this marriage gave rise to a flowing set of ideas that illustrates each of the degrees of the zodiac sequentially, and is put so gracefully that all of life's major lessons are placed within our reach. These ideas probably cannot be fathomed fully by the rational mind, and this is intended. The explanations are hinted at, suggested, expressed and revealed, without convincing argument. No one is proclaiming truth here; it is opinion. The reader will not find enough doctrine to satisfy any need for mental security. We are studying all and everything, and it is worth stating the esoteric understanding that each of us eventually participates in every bit of all there is – so all twelve of the signs in the full circle are there for the development of our own wisdom. As John Donne put it in a different context – *do not ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee*.

The popular belief about Astrology is that planetary positions are causal, and that the emotions, behaviours and psychology of individuals are the effect of the movements of planets. Yet really the correlation between any two phenomena could as easily be explained by the idea that a higher influence has impact upon them both. For example, the number of people wearing shorts is correlated to the number eating ice-cream, yet only a simpleton would suggest that one causes the other. They are both the probable result of sunny weather – and yet cinema-goers eat ice-cream and sportsmen wear shorts even when it is raining. There is a cyclical imperative of the cosmos, which is evidenced in how planets rotate and how people and events are. That is what we are looking at, and we need to understand that, in Astrology, we are studying a cyclical tendency and not an immutable law. It degrades Astrology to assert causality; it is an unnecessary, simplistic and counter-productive assertion, for which there is no supportive hard evidence.

There is a typical journey of life mapped onto the zodiac and this is given in the form of a circle. This is not because that is how life unfolds – it doesn't. These life lessons clear as the fog clears, bit by bit: clarity comes in different ways – as sudden bursts, or as eureka experiences, or in gentle evolutionary steps, or as onion skins dissolving, or following a shock when we wake up one morning seeing things differently. The circle is employed symbolically in astrology because planets appear to move in circles, because it is useful and intuitively pleasing, and possibly because it mystically points to the operating principle of the higher cause. The fullness of understanding is mirrored by the fullness of the sky – the dark infinite night sky, whose mysteries are unveiled as we study the lights therein. But it is all metaphor – hence the need to stimulate the non-rational part of the brain as we read.

Why do we study the mysteries? Well, those who are touched by deeper knowledge know what it does to them – it inspires, motivates, discloses, and stimulates. Yet, perhaps more compellingly, it offers answers to the questing of our curiosity. An idea, though essentially insubstantial, can have an extraordinary impact upon reality. Also we often find the testing out of ideas to be very exciting – especially indications about who we are and, more importantly, who we can become.

This material is for those who are ready to collaborate in the re-creation of wisdom, playfully bringing up to date that which has always been known and, as long as we continue to recreate, will never die. Our particular perspective is how best to embrace something so vast that it is well beyond the poverty of our human

imagination. We use 12 zodiac signs to point to the whole story, and 30 individual degrees to illustrate aspects of the essence of each sign, attempting to tune into the underlying flow of life that astrologers, as much as Sufis and other mystics, are hinting at. There are references to some Sufi ideas here but no claims are being made or implied about the supremacy of this or any other system of thought or behaviour. Sufism is one version of ancient, universal wisdom derived through the disciplined practice of mysticism. It is not a religion, it does not propagate belief; it simply serves aspirants in their quest of self-awareness as a path to realization.

It cannot be called easy-reading. It's work. If you skim through it hurriedly, then probably you will not allow your emotional body to inform your understanding. Yet, if you simply allow a feeling response – however inspiring – without thinking about the reasons, then your powers of intellect will not be stimulated. You may want to dip in casually, you will probably look at your own planetary degrees first and then your partner's and family's. Yet if you can muster the discipline to read it through from start to finish you may find the sequence unfolds clearly enough for you to get the pattern – which is explained in the next chapter. There is repetition; some of the key points are presented repeatedly, especially those which go against today's popular philosophy, in the hope that this will facilitate comprehension and tie together various parts of the whole.

Astrology has given us an awe-inspiring cosmology. The model it uses is sufficiently elegant and flexible that knowledge can be presented clearly and systematically, using a combination of both reason and direct insight. Neither the left-brain nor the right-brain approach to understanding is fully satisfactory, yet a third force arises when we try to attach intuitive feelings to systematic rationality – a creative aspect of mind that acquaints us with the power of inspired revelation. If the grace of inspiration touches us as we study, it must be seized immediately, lest it would slip away. With inspiration we can change who we are, and what we can achieve. So if, after reading this book, the reader is a little more optimistic, has a grander vision, confesses to a more audacious self-image and starts to look for better ways to express the sacredness of being – then the writing of it has been worthwhile.

In the final analysis, everything has to contribute to the greater good to be worthwhile, and the greater good is surely universal happiness. So how best can we expect this study to add to our joy? The answer to this question surely lies in the understanding that, in order to know happiness, we need to be exactly who we are, authentic and fully expressive. Sadly, for some that is a lot more difficult than it might appear.

The numerous factors that have prevented us from becoming a genuine version of ourselves include these:- parental expectations, peer group pressure, conforming to community standards, religious belief, psychological imbalances, need to get an income, need for attention, lack of maturity, sibling dominance, lack of opportunity...and more besides. Many of us were somewhat insensitively treated during our first few weeks on earth, and indeed *in utero*, and we spend the rest of our lives dealing with that. The extent of distress varies from person to person – some had loving, aware parents, others had monsters – and the extent of our difficulty ranges from inconvenient to profoundly traumatic. This has a major influence upon how we manage to embody the Sabian mystery of any planet. Someone with Sun at Taurus 16 will inevitably be tenacious – but if that Sun has a Pluto square, and if the person had a violent father, then that tenacity could be obsessional and self-defeating, rather than a helpful, spiritual statement of determination.

Principally what astrology addresses is the essential imperative – we really need to know who we are, in potential terms, before we can realize it in actual terms – astrology helps us do exactly that. As we study and compare our own horoscope, we get a clear sense of the range of qualities and attitudes that make us the unique person that we were born to be. We can get clear clues about the likely traumas, how to heal them, and what powers and qualities to expect when we do. Then what remains is for us to cause it come to pass.

THE SACREDNESS OF SELF

What is sacredness? What is self? These questions challenge the most profoundly enquiring philosophical minds. Instead of defining sacredness, we can at least describe it. It inspires us to reach towards the highest, the best, the most joyful, and the least fearful aspect of our experience. It is approached as we experience ourselves as a small but essential part of something vast and awesome – as we might when walking in a forest of giant sequoia, or struggling to stand on a Cornish cliff during a winter storm, when the sou'westerlies are blowing up a gale, ...and yet no less when we light a candle, burn incense and sing in harmony as in prayer.

The Self is an idea that is not always understood the same way – indeed throughout history and in differing cultures there are quite significant differences of approach to the concept of 'am-ness'. We probably all feel that we know what we are in a physical sense because skin of the physical body shows us where our boundaries are. Yet on a psychological level that is far from true for many people. Babies take quite a few months to identify themselves as independent of mother, and for many adults there are residual feelings of this condition.

Religious teachings often seek to prohibit us from emphasising individuality, and social pressure ensures this message is not forgotten. Some other thinkers, more controversial, like Nietzsche, Goethe, and Nelson Mandela seem to support a greater degree of self-proclamation, as indeed does the whole study and practice of person-centred horoscopic astrology. In this work, we will see that there are two equally important aspects of self-development. They are self-proclamation and self-sacrifice. Both of these together are necessary to define personal identity, because a part of us is only perceived by struggling against our community, and a part is only perceived by surrendering to it.

This book is written on the foundation principle that individuality is the key to sacredness. That is not to say that our appreciation of awe is at its greatest when we are exceedingly self-centred – in fact the opposite is probably true. Yet, until we raise ourselves, as unique beings, to the highest, most magnificent, greatest, deepest version of our unique self-expression, then we will fail to optimize our potential to glorify existence.

BODY AND SOUL

Joy is the exaltation of the relationship between knowledge and experience. We are in life – so the principal aspect of beingness is experience, yet when we add consciousness to experience, we know joy. Without bringing awareness to our personal experience, we cannot know joy. Activities which lack consciousness can have pleasure, but not real joy.

The essential life-task is to marry these twin aspects of eternal existence, so that we have constant awareness of ourselves as both the soul, which knows, and the body, which feels. Without awareness, our experiences lack meaning; without embodiment, our spirituality is dry and hollow. If we are to find true happiness, then both experience and knowledge are required to co-exist in a balanced dynamic state as we enjoy the physicality of being from the soul's spiritual perspective. Examples of this are seen in the eastern mystical traditions as Tantra, sacred dance, the Balinese Kecak (the Ramayana Monkey Chant), and the dervish practice of turning, where in each case the physical body is experienced as a receptacle through which divine inspiration occurs. A more prosaic example in the West might be the best version of a sportsman, gardener, craftsman or farmer, when they are completely absorbed in their various physical pursuits.

ASTROLOGY'S WISDOM

There are a number of points of variance between the beliefs and opinions of a true esotericist and others. In Western cultures a great deal of what is supposed comes from the core values of the teachings of Christianity. We may not consider ourselves to be Christian, yet so much of our sense of right and wrong is derived from that source. Also, our views on the very nature of reality come from the belief system called Scientific Materialism. Both of these philosophies have succeeded in converting a billion and more minds to their cause, even to the level where adherents consider those teachings to be Truth.

Astrology does not lay down its precepts quite so firmly, and leaves a lot of leeway for the astrologer to interpret. Nor does it make so many judgements about questions of morality, (as it used to do when it used phrases like 'lesser malefic' and 'greater benefic'). For all that, people are people and astrologers are people, so they do tend to spin their interpretations around their own sense of reality and morality. Let's be clear though, this is an inevitable imperfection in the astrologer, not Astrology. Such astrologers were probably raised within the thought-field of Christianity and Scientific Materialism, so it's really quite difficult for them not to be judgemental and fatalistic.

Human consciousness has evolved at a very rapid pace recently. The Renaissance was an awakening, a re-birth out of the Dark Ages, without which the technological and spiritual advances of the late 19th Century could not have occurred. Later from this there arose microchip technology and the liberal thinking of the '60s, which thrust us into the modern era. All three of these noteworthy periods demonstrate how spiritual and material advances go hand in hand. It seems another awakening is upon us. The computer age is evidence of a further widespread shift of perception, and it has given birth to a worldwide communication system that allows the exchange of information and ideas at an extraordinary speed and reach.

Studying Wikipedia and Facebook, we can see that humanity is refuting old, unchallenged, approaches to authority, specifically the authority that hands down truth and morality. It is nowadays more widely affirmed that a person has the right to be free – not only to choose their lifestyle, but also free from the tyranny of imposed belief and judgemental morality. Naturally one sympathizes with those who intuitively reject the commonly-held, restrictive views of our Western cultural beliefs, and seek a different Truth. It takes some courage to step away from the warmth of community approval into dangerous areas where our views go against the pack. So we have an emotional need to create an image of Truth, and then we fall in love with that image. The danger is that we simply recreate another bunch of laws to live by and feel judgemental about those who don't follow them. Then nothing much will have changed.

This work is a personal interpretation, so it cannot be exempt from the imperfections of personality; yet it attempts to be. The author does not believe that morality, or even justice, is absolute; it is a feature of the place and time that locates it – and it evolves. Neither is it thought that this world is determined by the law of cause and effect; we are not prisoners of a previous set of circumstances but free to reorganize things according to whatever power of will, and subtlety of wisdom, that we can access. If we lack such will, then we have to submit reluctantly to our fate. Yet the paths we tread are not cast in stone. Each of the 360 degrees has its own way to interpret the nature of reality; each one gives its own special emphasis. Then each person playing out that degree, through Sun or Moon or another planetary energy, will have their unique way to express its qualities – which way changes as they change, and as they interact with different people.

Spiritual heroes must go one step further; we need to know that Truth does not exist. There is no absolute version of the nature of reality available to us. All is subjective. This applies to morality; it applies to materiality. Nothing that is known is absolute; it is all a function of 'where' and 'when' – and it is all evolving. That gives us the freedom to create life the way we will. Free Will is the supreme gift and privilege of humanity; how sad that it is so profoundly underused! Astrology, at its highest expression, seeks to address this issue.

PLANETS

It is meaningful to allow that Aries goes together well with Mars – that Mars rules Aries. Admittedly, Mars is the king that rules the kingdom of Aries – yet the kingdom has its own qualities. We study here the kingdoms, not the kings – and this shifts our perception away from traditional planet-centred interpretations that hide, or at least relegate, the essential zodiacal qualities. Aries is not essentially about warfare at all, whereas Mars is. Let's not forget the primary place the zodiac signs themselves have in astrology before making them subservient to mere planets. Aries is about identifying the Self as part of, but separate from, the wider community. Warfare is not the only activity that supports this, reflectiveness does too – in other words, peace.

Each planet's core principle is modified very significantly by the sign it's in. The Sabian Symbol gives very specific information about exactly how this principle can best be enacted as an ideal yet in real life scenarios.

SIGNS

The meanings of the twelve are potentially derived by studying the four elements and three qualities. So, earth, air, fire and water are expressed in three ways – initiating, sustaining, and adapting – to create a division of the full circle into 12 components. It is also possible and very illuminating to tell the story, from the emergence of Aries to the surrendering of Pisces, as a sequential unfolding of the essential mystery of life. This is reasonable, obeys some rationality and is intuitively pleasing. Also it works well. So we have to remember that this skeletal structure underpins our approach. However, we could see the twelve signs as gods, as archetypes, as self-aware beings of cosmic vastness. Then we would attribute to them more subtle qualities – characteristics of their divinity. It isn't satisfactory to limit the reach of our understanding by using nothing more than intelligence; we have to get the feel of the sign, with its idiosyncratic ways of doing its job. To do so will require us to access that precise bit of ourselves – our own inner Virginess, our own Leoninity. Nothing external could ever exist in the field of our perception without an equivalent inner, personal version of it.

DEGREES

We are all self-obsessed, and that's OK, so the place to start with astrology is ourselves. We will no doubt want to find meaning in this system firstly by looking at our Sun's degree, then perhaps our Moon's or our partner's Sun, and perhaps eventually studying each planet in the horoscopes of self, lover, family and friends. Sometimes the words will jump off the page as highly relevant, even simplistic truisms, sometimes they may need coaxing, and sometimes they will simply bear no relation to our current perception. All is grist to the mill. What matters is not agreement, but contemplation. *"I'm not at all like that"* is as helpful as *"Yes, that's me"* – but only if there has been genuine self-reflection first. Denial is unhelpful.

On occasion, a person displays the very opposite behaviour to that indicated by the symbol – this shows the exact quality in its negative form and can be an expressive clue that shows how best that person can develop, by adopting the very qualities they have so far been refuting. Also, each degree is a part of the batch of degrees that make up its Expression, there being six Expressions of each sign. Fully to understand a degree, we may need to read the adjacent ones to place it into the context of its Expression – and indeed then see how that Expression fits as part of the sign's full dynamic meaning.

THE ZODIAC CIRCLE

Astrology's finest contribution to humanity's understanding is nothing to do with prediction, or deterministic statements about the client's personality; it is the excellent attempt it makes to present a window into the range of human potential. This is done using words that stretch the mind's awareness when we use them. A linguistic master, like Wittgenstein for example, understands that our thoughts and our words are interdependent, so to learn concepts we need to learn new words to discuss them. We can only consider the workings of the subconscious mind when we have in our vocabulary the word 'subconscious'. And astrologers have a basket full of such new concepts – 'Mars square Pluto in Fixed signs' speaks to an astrologer of certain qualities, and these differ completely from 'Venus Neptune conjunction in the Fifth'. A good astrologer will discuss the possibilities with the client rather than strictly assert their existence.

Astrology offers very clear suggestions about how people interact, and perceive themselves. Whether we agree with text books is secondary, the primary event is that we are thinking about the nature of personality, and reaffirming that everyone is different from everyone else and, in essence, none is better than another.

There is a flow of ideas through the zodiac – shown in the unfolding from Aries to Pisces, and on again to Aries. We look at each sign, not as an unfolding of the ruling planet's qualities but as a chapter in the story that tells the evolving journey of the soul. It is presented metaphorically, and needs to be grasped intuitively as well as rationally. Neither the scientist who shuns intuition, nor the space cadet who shuns rationality, will excel at astrology. In fact the depth of this ancient and profound system of knowledge is unavailable to either of these two categories of person. We need to avoid being closed-minded to appreciate astrology. This zodiacal journey symbolizes the personal journey that each one of us takes through life. Even Leo people must eventually learn the mystery of Virgo to become rounded persons. Indeed we each would gain hugely from an understanding of the full circle of the zodiac's wisdom.

It begins with Aries, whose job is to develop a sufficiently well-defined strong ego to cope with the important task of asserting the uniqueness of self. Taurus is powerful enough to use its personality to build a stable material foundation, upon which everything else rests. Out of this, Gemini establishes a communication network as a means to link all things with all other things, creating education, trade and human society. Cancer raises human relationship to the level of family, so that children are both safe, and faithful to the traditions that gave them their home. Emotionally secure, Leo honours everything and anything that creatively expresses uniqueness and originality. Virgo adapts any impractical visionary idea so that it is made to function properly in the material world. Libra begins the process of reflexive self-consciousness by balancing my ego with your ego. Scorpio delves deep into any hidden areas – typically taboos that show us, as a species, that of which we are in denial. Sagittarius perpetually seeks to discern meaning in life, from which social contracts may be assembled. Capricorn makes these higher principles work in practical terms as collective constructs that offer social security. Aquarius idealizes humanity, and shows how we all can aspire to the greater good. Pisces has an intuitive memory of the transcendental state that gave rise to mysticism and the religious instinct; it is the gateway to self-surrender – which is refuted by Aries as the cycle starts again.

Nothing explained above is particularly novel; in fact it is rather a traditional approach to the zodiac. Where Marc Edmund Jones takes us is into the entirely new area, which is shown by the concept of Sabian Symbols, that the unfolding takes place not sign-by-sign but degree-by-degree, in 360 not 12 stages. The text that follows is presented in layers, as we establish the zodiac sign's own particular wisdom, as well as its place in the whole circle, and also how each of the 30 degrees contributes to the mystery of its sign.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The main body of the book is comprised of 360 explanations based on images and keywords given to us by Jones. So, we can study the particular degree that accommodates the Sun's position in our horoscope. The opposite degree may also add real insight – Jones invited us to study both Taurus 16 and Scorpio 16 if we were born on the 6th May. This can be extended to include other planets – the Sabian image takes on a completely different sense according to which of our planets inhabits it.

It is required that the reader engages with both rational and intuitive aspects of intelligence: left and right brain. Hence there is often bizarre imagery, a counter-intuitive connection between the images and the keywords, and the combination of sharp logic and poetic writing. We have no interest in proving the point – a written passage has served you well if one of these speaks to you meaningfully and causes you to readjust your perception. Let it wash over you – yet also challenge its message thoroughly with a discriminating mind.

A word of caution – if your time of birth is given inaccurately (e.g. 11.30 rather than 11.28) then you need to exercise care with the four angles, which change their exact position rather quickly and can shift one degree in a few moments. This affects the Ascendant, Midheaven, Descendent, Nadir, the Part of Fortune and all the house cusps – and is why houses are not included in this work. Of course you will need to have your horoscope done, and gain a small degree of competence with the symbols. This can easily be achieved, free of cost, online (e.g. at www.astro.com). Be careful to note the first degree of a sign begins with zero – if a planet is at say 15°38' Taurus, then it is studied as Taurus 16 – the sixteenth degree.

LAYOUT

According to Jones's schematic, we need to bunch together a batch of 5 degrees into a composite message, and of course each sign has 6 such bunches. Jones did not name these bunches – and now, in this work, they are given names. They are called Expressions. For example, the first 5 degrees of Aries are bunched together and called by the name Emergence. This allows us to have the following pattern: Circle → Sign → Expression → Degree. We are then able to show how the whole circle of knowledge flows from sign to sign, expression to expression, and by degrees. So the 16th degree of Taurus is not only living out the path of 'Tenacity', it also serves the 4th expression of Taurus, which is 'Common Sense', and indeed the whole mystery of Taurus itself. Also – even if it is to a lesser extent – this extends to all degrees, expressions and signs. Let us be clear – each and every one of us is also living out each other's mysteries. Even Aries has eventually to learn Taurus wisdom, but has far less willingness to give attention to it, and lacks an intuitive sense of rapport for that mystery. Still, knowledge is universal and we must all eventually realize it, whether we are Leo or Taurus.

You will notice that each degree is expressed in 7 paragraphs. These are indicators of the analysis of the wisdom of the degree into the 7 Words System. Much is written elsewhere on this – it is enough to say here that everything can be expressed as an unfolding of 7 essential forces. These are succinctly summarised and described by the 7 primary words: No, Hello, Thanks, Goodbye, Please, Sorry and Yes. So the first paragraph may be about scope and boundaries, the second to do with expansion of experience, the third with love and feelings, the fourth often indicates a challenge, the fifth a vision and the sixth something of significance in our spiritual progress; the final paragraph relates to our need to adjust to what must be. However, it is not necessary to understand this in order to interpret the meaning of the degree.

DIVINATION

It is so easy for us to forego our natural faculty to open a window into the future, because we believe the future to be unknowable. It is true to say that we cannot know what the future *may* hold – but we do know what the future *must* hold. The future must hold – in fact *is* – the response to our attention. Divinatory techniques deliver good answers if two conditions of enquiry are met. These are: sacredness and specificity. Pray for exactly what you desire – or ask reverentially for a detailed specific question to disappear. It is the disappearance of a question that is its ultimate answer. So when you are clear about your question, open the book to a random page and study the words as if they came from your God.

STUDY GROUPS

These need to be somewhat meditative in their purpose, since students will access the material more fully when in a state of detached contemplation. It requires exemplary listening skills to do this well. Naturally astrologers will be interested – yet it can easily have a wider relevance to anyone concerned with spiritual philosophy. Certainly it adds a dimension of absorbed concentration when a person is studying one of the degrees from their own horoscope.

A two-hour session might include a) Silent Meditation; b) Guided Sharing – where one member chooses a sentence or paragraph arbitrarily, which is read out three times. Each person is given time for reflection and then shares their feeling-response and ideas; c) Zodiac Signs. One is studied, for example Taurus, first by reading out the text and trying to understand through discussion the sign's six Expressions (power, application...and so on). Then find the specific degrees of any planets in the horoscope of those present – (remembering for example that Venus at 15.38 Taurus is Taurus 16) – and read out that degree, so that its particular image and wisdom can be given a more lifelike interpretation with immediate personal significance. Of course the planet itself affects the interpretation – someone with Saturn at 16 Taurus will see it differently from the Venus person; d) Social time.

MEANING OF A SABIAN SYMBOL

Each of the 360 symbols and explanations can be seen as a life mystery. Each of us will have our own personal take on it, and this can be as valid as any attempt the author makes to give objective meaning. It all depends on how capable you are at opening the subtle aspect of mind to unveil the mystery. It's worth acknowledging two things – first, that intuition only deepens as you trust it, and second, that intuition is never entirely trustworthy. That's how it is with the mysteries – they are in the end unknowable, at least not definitively and never as an objective, measured truth.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL EVENTS

There is no significance to our personal experiences except the entirely subjective meaning we give them. Our feelings and our life events are of no cosmic consequence whatever, and our interpretation of the impact of planetary transits upon our lives has no objective value at all. Holding this to be true is a necessary and sufficient condition of personal freedom. The reason we try to track the changes is to bring meaning to our lives, so it is entirely our business what meaning to give to the planets and their journey in relation to our horoscopes and circumstances. It is very helpful to notice the cyclical nature of all life and to find evidence of the various cycles that we live by. Astrologers tune in to the cycles of the outer planets quite easily by noticing the key points particularly as they transit the natal planetary positions and four angles, using the stages indicated below (Transits). Events are obvious indicators that life is changing – beginnings and endings of relationships, living situations and aspects of work for example. Yet feelings also point to inner processes of change, and as these are so quickly forgotten, diaries are useful tools to record and measure the impact of transits at a personal level.

VALIDATION

Scientists and other materialists disparage the validity of astrology because it does not conform to their methodology; yet esotericists awaken the part of mind that goes beyond limits of rationality – as of course does love, genius and imagination. The learning process is not especially esoteric at all; it conforms to normal learning practices. We need to apply ourselves to study what others think, then to find new interpretations and understandings and bring our own knowledge into some useful application. We trust that our point of view is valid, even if it contradicts accepted ideas – despite the danger of affirming a foolish understanding simply through lack of skills and insight. We address this point here, by offering a way to track the transit of slower moving planets through the individual degrees and keep a diary of the events and feelings we encounter. I suggest that Mars and even Jupiter may be too fast, and Chiron is still very poorly understood by most astrologers – so include only Saturn – which crosses a few degrees per month – and Uranus, Neptune and Pluto – which typically show in only one or two. In the appendix there are tables of these four planets.

In order for this process to be instructive it is necessary to come to terms with each of the variables: a) The planets' core meanings in our lives; b) The qualities of each stage of a transit; c) The significance of personal events; d) The mystery of the Sabian Symbol for each degree.

CORE MEANING OF THE PLANETS

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

Uranus | Stimulates us to reject the status quo by offering glimpses of ultimate knowledge

Neptune | Shows how we try to make sense of the mysteries, by creating our personal and collective stories

Pluto | Soul evolution, how we respond to the march of history, the slowest, deepest changes of self

South Node | Shows the inherited skills and attitudes deriving from ancestral sources

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

STAGES OF A TRANSIT

A planet appears to move both forward and backwards, and so typically crosses the same degree three times, although it can be once or five times. Here are the nine stages typical of a transit.

Stage 1 Approach	- Forewarning
Stage 2 First hit	- Shock
Stage 3 Moving away	- Assimilation
Stage 4 Retrograde approach	- Reminder
Stage 5 Second hit	- Echo
Stage 6 Going back	- Revision
Stage 7 Second approach	- Preparation
Stage 8 Third hit	- Realization
Stage 9 Moving on	- Application

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I was born in Bristol, England in 1951 – when Churchill, Stalin and Truman were in power, Streetcar Named Desire at the flicks, Perry Como on the wireless and, for the ones lucky enough to have a TV, I Love Lucy on the box. I have been living through waves of transformations, in attitudes and behaviours, which characterize humanity's recent journey from post-war recovery to 'post-modern' times. These included the popularity of washing machines, cars and other modern appliances, the birth of rock and roll, threats of nuclear holocaust, the Moon landing, belief in aliens, the 60s revolutions in diet, health consciousness, microchip technology, sexual ethics, feminism, gay lib, and music – plus the beginning and the end of the Cold War, the rise of the Arab nations, the fall of the British and Soviet Empires, US global supremacy, China's and India's emergence as commercial and political powers, radical shifts in religious attitudes, New Age spirituality, explosion of tourism, profoundly shameful exposures of politicians and priests, AIDS, widespread social collapse due to drug wars, awareness of oil politics, climate change and ecology. All of this, and then the Internet, computer-based lives, mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter, Russia's resurgence, focus on terrorism, 9/11, the Arab Spring, and banking scandals leading to insolvency of nations and the consequential existential threat to the European Union.

This period of rapid change provided quite extraordinary new opportunities, for anyone so inclined, to study age-old questions about the enduring realities that continue to make themselves known – no matter what temporary ups and downs are registered in newspaper articles and pub conversations. My own enquiries took me on adventures down the seekers' well-trod paths in Morocco, Indonesia, India and Turkey to meet travellers and masters who aligned with teachings from various spiritual and esoteric traditions. Sufism figures very strongly in this – both Islamic and Western approaches – and so of course does astrology, which has been of central importance to me since the early 80s. I was drawn to specialize in certain aspects of this subject – synastry and astro drama for example, as well as planetary walks and other facets of experiential astrology. Having given up my profession as an accountant, and a few stressful attempts at being in business, I travelled extensively to work as a teacher and counsellor, and had some part to play in the establishing of 'camps' in various countries – temporary outdoor community gatherings which offer people of an eccentric spiritual disposition somewhere to associate with kindred spirits.

I try to view life from a mystic's point of view; here's a summary of how I see things:

1. We are eternal, indestructible souls, sojourning for a short time in this particular physical body.
2. Our purpose is tourism – nothing more or less than to experience these times and places.
3. All of our circumstances occur according to the principle of attraction. We share our life events only with people who are similar to us, in both light and shadow.
4. With will, we can shift anything and everything, yet without it, we are constrained by destiny to live out the life path predetermined by our previous choices.
5. There are no imposed constraints; we have free will in every detailed particular of eternal life – if only we can claim it.
6. Life is a mirror. All inner feelings and thoughts go to create our situations, and we are responsible for every single outcome. This mirror is an amorphous field of energy of sublime sensitivity, like a spider's web, and responds faithfully to every input, and then resonates throughout the universe forever.
7. An overarching Universal Consciousness exists in order both to serve and moderate. This is called God. Its function is to maintain eternal cosmic order, and ensure individual freedom.



ARIES

EMERGENCE / DIRECTION / ATTAINMENT / REFLECTION / SELF-CONFIDENCE / PROFICIENCY

I am an original, unique idea bursting into the world; challenges delight me as I accomplish each of my goals

Before the emergence of duality – Creator and Creation – there was no need to distinguish this from that, me from you. In fact, of course it was meaningless because there was only One. Then, as the circle of diversity unfolds from out of the void, its first realization is that Identity must now exist. Aries is identity; Aries is first. Its assertiveness demands that it is in front, since without the first thing, there is nothing, and it is the job of Aries to start everything off. Since it comes into greater definition as it creatively establishes differences, its fundamental purpose is not to harmonize or merge, but to challenge and contradict. The violent eruptions and kneejerk impulse to attack are explained by the very imperative to survive as the very first being.

However, this defiant spirit soon learns that aggression and contrariness alone will never establish clarity of identity and the added dimension of direction is required so that a dynamic tendency becomes ever present. This creates a process of trial-and-error by which the super-abundant energy of emergent life-force is set in constant action. It shows as pioneering impulsiveness, a 'do or die' approach, adventurous enthusiasm and courage, even fearlessness. Course directions change frequently and quickly – no problem for one with such vitality – according to feedback from both outer experiences and inner signals.

The combination of high energy, constant change, readiness to start something new, and the longing to know the uniqueness of personal identity leads to the attainment of wisdom. This is not traditional wisdom but the wisdom of rebirth – greeting every new moment with a freshness of approach. Sufis invoke this with the term Bismillah, which affirms a willingness to become a receptacle for the ever-renewed expression of light in each new instant throughout eternity. The Ram, as the Lamb of God, is a sign of resurrection.

The focus of attention is always centred internally, truly wrapped up in the existence and qualities of 'I'. Nevertheless there is a profound awareness of 'other' too – occasionally even accepting a role as moral champion of the oppressed. It may often take the form of competition, or attempts to overpower yet, for all that, it is substantively reflective. Paradoxically perhaps, relationship is the essence of individuality. To be individual, one must be different – and that requires someone to be different from. The purpose of association is by no means limited to finding harmony and surrendering towards unification. It also serves to identify differences, since any failure to achieve, arising because of the resistance of another, will give pause, and from this arises self-reflection.

The struggle to exist, and the struggle to be individual, are the same, and acted out in the processes of involvements. As each new battle is survived, as each new connection is assimilated without loss of identity, something profoundly important develops. It is the faith that we actually exist as a worthy aspect of the whole. We may err on the side of over-expression of self, yet the goal is pure and valid. Self-confidence is a sacred celebration of divine blessing, which grows through interaction with another. Instead of seeking to be with others, reflectively to identify the self, we can reach up alone to the Source of inspiration, and receive the rewards of those who trust their own inner voice. Uncanny awareness of the subtle shifts in situations, coupled with a speed of intuitive response to opportunity, empowers Aries to create entirely new realities with unfettered confidence, catalysing the emergence of new forms, new ideas, and new experiences.

ARIES WISDOM

EMERGENCE

Knowledge of polarity awakens the power to create something out of nothing
There are many opportunities to uncover the deeper self would we but release the truth
Individual and community are mutually supportive aspects of each other
Unselfconscious pursuit of selfish pleasure is an entirely valid path to joy
Our skills, loyalties and values support us in our enthusiasm to soar to heights of self-realization

DIRECTION

Without the gift of knowledge, then experience is meaningless
Proficiency comes from living the path we choose, acting out our own will
Half-hearted warriors die
Perception of what is shapes what is to be
Old ideals have to be embodied into new experiences so that knowledge evolves

ATTAINMENT

Leaders must sacrifice themselves to an ideal, and suffer the consequences of their imperfections
Involvements lack meaning unless they lead eventually towards spiritual liberation
When energy flows freely, the outcome is ultimately always good
Appreciation of the highest aspects of life depends on the acceptance of the lowest
Sanctifying ordinary things shows great personal wisdom and leads to harmony

REFLECTION

We must act as though we make a difference, even knowing that we don't
We must be utterly true to ourselves
Two equal and opposing forces exist: pure impulse and conditioned response
Mind has an infinite capacity to overview experience and use imagination as a magical process
In the act of giving, spiritual nourishment is felt as joy

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Conflict provides the grit we need to become stronger
Vitality is made known by its appetite for new experiences
Vitality does not find its exaltation in petty things
Personal attainment is evidenced by the spiritual state of abundance
We get what we want, or we will come to want what we get

PROFICIENCY

Our life-path is the answer to the question: 'at what am I competent?'
We constantly re-create our lives and characteristics out of our imagination
The hardest lesson we eventually have to learn is detachment
Having faith in the meaning of life, we articulate it through devotion
When we trust in the cosmic order, then everything falls into place

THE EXPRESSIONS OF ARIES

EMERGENCE

ARIES 1 – 5

With all creation stories, out of nothing something emerges, making real what previously existed only as potential; it has duality as its core principle, yet it is a single identity – in Astrology that is Aries. It thinks of itself as 'I', and strongly affirms self as the centre-point of reality. This affirmation triggers a response from the 'non-self' aspect of self, and there arises a polarity between non-self and self. In fact, what arises is the plurality of involvements with others, the collective non-self; this is the stuff of all life – relationship.

Whereas impetuous pursuit of self-interested pleasure is an entirely valid path to joy, our drives lead us towards self-realization only through processes of maturity and refinement, involving others. Life is the mirror that shows us who and what we are, and as individuals our first challenge is to find a way to be with this, by showing who we are within the context of relationship – rather obviously with others who are not us. The fact that they are not us has great consequence. Although the friction of this interplay increases as we struggle to become more unique, and we may find that socialising with others is both limiting and troublesome, it nevertheless is the backdrop of all existence and without it we can neither evolve nor express our unique qualities, because 'I' and 'other' are each aspects of the self and mutually supportive.

DIRECTION

ARIES 6 – 10

The willingness to struggle within society opens us to be pushed and pulled about, a process which can be quite unsettling until we fix our motivating direction. Yet when we find a clear target for our intention, we can learn how to juggle realities, pick up skills, tricks and wisdom, and renew our trust in the deeply-felt exuberant, joyful life-force that enables us to banish all self-doubt. We need to find our path, and become so competent that we take initiatives to shape not only our own future but also the collective vision of society.

Self and non-self are always competing, even within. 'Polarity in dynamic equilibrium' could be one useful definition – or at least description – of life itself. When we get distracted and lose focus, the further we go away from centre, the greater is the force that flips us back to the opposite polarity. Thus from a condition of self-proclaiming, we are flipped to more humility, and then back again towards confident self-expression, and so on indefinitely. We see this process very clearly with Aries, as it struggles to embrace self-confidence.

ATTAINMENT

ARIES 11 – 15

Lesser attainments – fame, fortune and position – typically rob us of true freedom, and the more enlightened Aries, rather than serve them, will use them as development tools. The urge towards freedom is so wrapped up at the core of our essential existence that it is irrepressible; this is because it is spirit itself acting through us. Yet within the context of a social setting, however we seek freely to discover and express our thoughts, feelings and aspirations, we find that we are just acting out an appropriate part of the community's highest ideals. Equally, no matter how we serve others, we end up serving ourselves. Bringing this into awareness, and acting out freely all of the consequences, is a liberation most feared by society as a whole, yet most respected within an individual. It cannot be safely expressed except by one with a high degree of spiritual attainment. Evidence of this is found in how spontaneous we can be in refining and revealing our skills and wisdom. This includes choosing our focus of life clearly and finding a way to balance freedom against involvement.

REFLECTION

ARIES 16 – 20

It is important to understand that the awareness we give to our spiritual, social and physical environments defines us, so the focus of our attention must be very prudently directed. We can learn a lot about how to optimize this important life task by reflection. Reflecting on how nature works, and how natural processes generate the life-giving energy that creates abundance and fortune, and how well we are responding to that. Two equal and opposing forces that co-exist, pure impulse and conditioned response, must be held in balance – so we learn how to be utterly true to ourselves, and act as though we make a difference, even knowing that on a cosmic scale really we don't. This leads us to question our identity and true worth, and we are stimulated to a greater refinement of being. A sense of resolution unfolds – we feel reconciliation with the inappropriate differences between outer purposes and inner feelings, which causes the friction and stress in our lives.

One lesson to learn is the value of retreat. The hustle-bustle of daily life is good to shape and define us, and yet it is very helpful to take time out to assimilate and take possession of what has been experienced. The reward for this exercise in self-reflection is a broadening of outlook, a sense of expansion of personal freedom, and a shift in the level of our self-assurance. If the mind is occasionally nurtured with silent contemplation, it develops its capacity to overview experience and utilize imagination as a magical process. It is only through reflection that we come to understand that helping others is what brings us happiness.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

ARIES 21 – 25

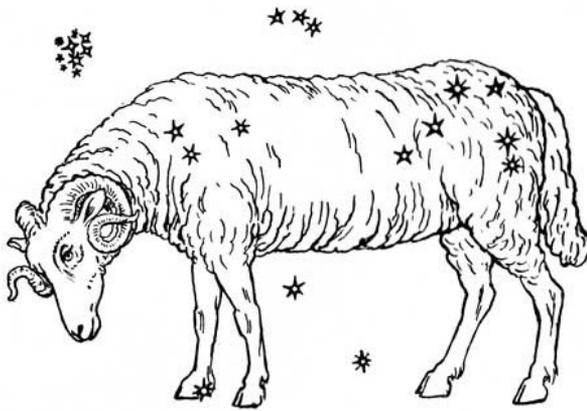
To defeat the dying of light, then we must have faith in life and in ourselves, together with an ardent outlook that welcomes new challenges. Such optimism is to be recognized as a force – in fact the outstanding force of life; it is equivalent to self-confidence. With it, whenever necessary, we can decisively take up a confronting stance, and come to terms with and everything in full mindfulness of how we may serve, and also be served, by whatever comes along. When we are fighting to survive – against an enemy or the dark vacuum suction of entropy – we may need to hide some secrets to protect our vulnerabilities from the force of social enquiry. We also need to develop a thick skin for the same reason so, if sensitivity to others is at a very low ebb, then that's just the way it has to be. Yet self-confidence, fully expressed, leads to satisfaction, and satisfaction leads to further confidence, as we expand our horizons of expectation to greater levels of possibility.

PROFICIENCY

ARIES 26 – 30

Exceptional abilities and wealth can be attracted when, through a refined contextualized self-confidence, we equip ourselves with the intellectual and emotional tools required for a successful life. Then just being ourselves is enough to call upon the world to align with our choices, and subsequently we can cope well with all events and bring them to a creative expression of who we are. Such psychological maturity bestows great presence, a commanding atmosphere, and willingness to become the absolute author of our own destiny. We look no more for popularity and social affirmation; such rewards are seen as transient and lacking in any depth of worth. The power and proficiency we have acquired are applied towards dramatizing visionary potentials in ourselves and others, because somehow the eternal celestial notes are heard to be sounding out life's essential harmonies. There can be found a greater sense of sacredness in every aspect of life. This shows in that we do everything as well as we can, constantly reworking plans to improve outcomes, and being free from any need for approval or permission, having surrendered to an inner sense of what is meaningful to us.

PLANETS IN ARIES



SUN in Aries (☉♈)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 14 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Aries (☾♈)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

Exceptionally quick sensitivity to changing moods and opportunities makes the Moon appear restless and discontented in Aries. It needs to move, first and fast, to feel alive, and seems nervous or irritable whenever its feelings to progress are thwarted. Spontaneous, honest, hurried and independent, here the Moon is somehow always new.

MERCURY in Aries (☿♈)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Clarity and originality are sharply presented at the first opportunity by this very assertive positioning of Mercury. Aries is first, strong, inspired and often challenging, so this restless mind pushes the comfort zone of slower types, and rattles cages by firmly expressing new opinions, at times arguing its case quite fiercely.

VENUS in Aries (♀♈)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Since Venus is born to relate and Aries is required to discover selfhood, when Venus is in Aries there is the option to want nothing more than to relate to oneself and enjoy solitude – striking out to initiate connection occasionally when opportunity arises. In relationship, you may need repeatedly to reclaim your freedom, or at least take the upper hand.

MARS in Aries (♂♈)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

This is the warrior in its absolute form. Spiritual teachings that come through martial arts exemplify honour, mastery, poise, clarity, control of emotion and blameless but ruthless self-serving power. In order to fully awaken into your being your Sabian Symbol for Mars, you must walk its path – and make it a pioneering path of daring.

JUPITER in Aries (♃♈)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

In Aries, Jupiter takes on some of the high qualities of a knight – honour, courage, heroism and independence of spirit. Confident and assertive, it can be seen as either arrogant or noble, bullying or forthright, yet its purpose is to grasp new opportunity for the good of all and take innovative risks on others' behalf.

NORTH NODE in Aries (♁♈)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

The spiritual challenge for this naturally-thoughtful placement is to become more self-assertive. We must not mistake what is actually lack of courage and call it willingness to compromise. In the end we are alone and accountable for all we have ever done or failed to do – so, come what may, we must be true to our own beliefs and ways.

SATURN in Aries (♄♈)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

The experience and implementation of authority is applied rather fast and 'whether-you-like-it-or-not'. Although sometimes likely to generate conflict, this is especially good for certain dangerous or unresolved situations that require a decision about an immediate, determined course of action without much sensitivity required.

CHIRON in Aries (♆♈)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

Chiron's message is that as we face our wounded self, we shift our perceptions and heal – first ourselves, then others. In Aries what needs especially healthy attitudes of mind is the ego – not too much, not too little; this is done as much alone as in relationship. The Sabian Symbol offers a clue to learn exactly what aspect of selfhood needs balancing.

ARIES – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

REALIZATION: SEAL EMBRACES WOMAN RISING FROM WATERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF ARIES (0° - 1°)

Potentially, anyone can take advantage of every moment

The seal is to be seen as the phallic principle responding to the woman rising from the depths – indicating a version of creation myths, which symbolize pre-existence as waters of infinite potential, from which arises the polarity of feminine and masculine. Into this nothingness, something arises – drawn by the vacuum of the receptive potential, which always brings forth an initiative to meet her – and awareness expands. The expansion gives rise to polarity because it requires there to be space, and space separates things. Separation is born and requires, ‘this’ to be different from ‘that’.

As soon as duality occurs, we see the essence of relationship between things – the one is a tad more pushy, the other a degree more responsive. Taoism explains this phenomenon, which underpins all manifested realities. We are contemplating nothing more than the straightforward and intuitively pleasing arising of sex in its absolute essential form. The potential of space to give way has an awakening effect upon spirit to enter and express itself. The life-force of spirit naturally reaches wherever it feels that its desire-nature will be accommodated, and indeed meets an enthusiastic and willing response.

At the beginning of any adventure, we are advised that what previously was only dormant potential is now vibrant – with mutually interdependent emotion and purpose – and it is their interaction that generates the vibration. There is excitement. This is the mystery of life itself, in which things perpetually change position; there are separations and reformations, endings and new configurations. Realization begins to dawn that potentially anyone can take advantage of every moment.

Focusing this turbulent life force is the awesome task of a mighty will, operating through a clear mind with a precise vision, to produce a laser beam of intent. This power of will shapes uncommitted energy into the exact form that reflects this vision: what you 'see' is what you get, and seeing is active not passive.

Alone, the mind is an untrustworthy organ of understanding so the heart must also be engaged if our values are to be expressed sincerely. When we are moved by the heart, then such activation can be reckless, assertive, courageous and purposeful yet will realize only harmony and joy.

If we lose concentration, the result is clouded and requires the corrective processes of refinement. This is feedback, which can teach humility and help develop awareness of our interpretations; also it binds us into considerate relationship, so that character can be smoothed out. If we get self-obsessed then we fail, because we forfeit the ability to recognize more obscure aspects of the infinite potential within any situation.

Despite errors and pains, faith is never lost and another new beginning is always guaranteed. Restating original blessing is evidence of innocence and purity, and shows that hope is eternal and that faith is a birth-right.

RELEASE: COMEDIAN ENTERTAINING A GROUP

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF ARIES (1° - 2°)

There are many opportunities to uncover the deeper self would we but release the truth

Intuitively, the feeling of having our own distinctive mind-set of beliefs, needs, dreams and attitudes is subjective proof of our uniqueness of identity. Philosophers may suggest that this is an illusion born to form a particular relationship with our environment – although most assuredly, it has meaning to us. Yet there is the tendency to repress much of our uniqueness out of shame, fear or other inhibitions that have arisen from external pressure.

To the soul, it actually matters very little what role we choose to play out but, probably because we seek self-reassurance, we repeatedly rehearse certain aspects of personality. These are naive attempts to experience life on our own terms. The comedian's task is to reveal other aspects, those which lurk beneath the gloss of what is socially acceptable, so that these denied parts can find release.

There is no limit to the variations of expression of our uniqueness, and no requirement to favour this over that – in fact it is very important to experiment, and not to judge one aspect of personality better than another – since all aspects of the self need to be promoted to make known the fullest range of our potentialities. By laughing gently at humanity's funny ways, the entertainer softens the resistance within us to acknowledge certain of our own unlovely qualities.

Although this process facilitates self-awareness, it does not guarantee it. Really we need to reach out and attempt to understand the significance and wisdom of whatever comes up and is being shown to us. We can laugh with the comedian in order to release trivial tensions, or we can delve deeper to reach for hidden understandings, and then the release can be experienced on a much deeper level.

We come across the same type of light-hearted revelation in so many different connections with people, and it is according to our preference whether we see them as idle diversions or find a glimpse of the truth of transcendence within each seemingly insignificant event that we encounter. The clowning can now be considered as either a frivolous entertainment or profound and widespread spiritual teaching; the choice is ours.

Self-expression is a gateway to develop personal power; the power of personality is evolved in the confident unique expression of the true self, the authentic self, potentially in each and every moment. Individuality itself arises out of polarity – we live constantly stressed between the affirmation and the surrender of self. This we experience whenever our own worldview comes up against another's and – whether that other fights against us or just laughs gently at our strange ways – we are made to pause.

The emergence of who we really are occurs as life, day after day, in every situation, life holds up a mirror to itself through us and to us. This is the essence-secret. What we see is nothing more than a reflection of our own inner nature, albeit wrapped up in clouded mystery, with its own conflicts and distortions that have yet to be released.

EXPLOITATION: CAMEO PROFILE, MAN IN OUTLINE OF COUNTRY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF ARIES (2° - 3°)

Individual and community are mutually supportive aspects of each other

As much as the individual serves society, society serves the individual – not only in terms of resources, but also in terms of their evolving definition. The man and the country are in mutual exploitation.

There is huge social pressure upon a person to obey the rules and do what is thought appropriate by conventional ethics and practice. Even so, some are capable of rejecting the bondage that comes from reluctant or unthinking conformity, and find their own way to relate to the community that nurtures them. Although it may not appear so, in truth reality is personal. Each and every feeling, belief and opinion is an expression of this, and these all have ramifications in our life circumstances. If we are to reach our fullest potential as unique individuals then we must give full play to all of our potentialities.

Naturally, there are forces of empathy and familiarity that bind an individual to the collective reality that shows through culture and tradition. However – notwithstanding the benefits of a degree of acceptance of social norms – each of us will characterize our own take on this, as indeed we must to be authentic in self-expression.

The point is that by doing so, we necessarily dedicate ourselves and our lives to the best interests of our community. We are as much part of the whole as anyone else and, without our doing what we feel is right, then there cannot be full engagement with the society of which we are an integral part. The community would be diminished.

This is in no way different from a personal imperative to dramatize our very personal wants and needs through the group, as a path of self-actualization. How could we be ourselves if separated from the context of our traditions and culture? Where is the meaning in that? Even when we travel away, it is the place we travel away from, and is ever present in our history, memory and habits; this gives special meaning to our new experiences, and feeds the home community that learns of them and through them.

A real breadth of community involvement is therefore a sign of one who is truly self-oriented, having the wisdom and sensitivity to understand that each must serve the other if harmony is to emerge. Even more than that – it goes beyond just harmony to fulfilment.

The individual is thus silhouetted against the background of his country, each exploiting the other in the process of expressing a general principle in specific terms. If each would relax into this truism, then personal and communal interests would be more profoundly in accord and more richly expressed.

ENJOYMENT: TWO LOVERS STROLLING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF ARIES (3° - 4°)

Unselfconscious pursuit of selfish pleasure is an entirely valid path to joy

In all that we do and feel, we experience the uniqueness of the world that we alone inhabit. If the feelings are not in alignment with our sense of rightness, then it is because something is not right. This is probably because we have moved too far away from the childlike sense that joy is our birth-right. Wish-fulfilment is our optimum life-strategy; being utterly relaxed is to be true to oneself and in fact loving – since the necessary and sufficient condition for living in an atmosphere of love is actually to relax fully in the natural state of being.

The image of two lovers taking a stroll in a quiet, beautiful setting, speaks of an experience of happiness without the burden of accountability. The moment is itself enough to justify its value as a valid and important experience, when no extraneous forces are allowed to press upon us any unwelcome responsibility. We need not even respond to society's requirements, knowing that such innocent joy is self-evidently good.

Such an act of faith is a guarantee that potentialities of character will blossom and thrive. It demonstrates the all-important self-confidence that brings a sparkle both to material and spiritual realities. Confidence is powerful magic that generates further confidence and somehow leads to material success and spiritual freedom.

Taking this idea to its exaltation, we see that what is often called selfishness is in fact the spiritually valid principle of enlightened self-interest. No true meaning can be derived from behaviour that does not serve oneself. Nor does power have any purpose except continuously and persistently to promote our own reality in which our own interests are well served.

All our resources therefore are to be focused with complete commitment to serve the high purpose of enjoyment. Joy is sublime, so true enjoyment is that which moves us towards sublime self-realization. When the least opportunity presents itself, then we strike! We affirm joy; we pursue enjoyment – as a path of awakened self-liberation.

Whatever sense we may have of responsibility, it must first and last be somehow in service of ourselves, or it simply lacks authenticity and is almost certainly an arising of hidden fears or guilt. Of course we have a measure of sensitivity to the needs of others, and yet that consideration is an elegance that takes second place to the primary duty of continual self-disclosure.

This wisdom is considered too permissive to be acceptable to mainstream society, which marginalizes those who are strong in their personal power and have no willingness to conform to the fear-based morality systems of the majority. Self-indulgence, which often triggers criticism, is only really a danger for those who practice this philosophy without a minimal degree of spiritual awareness or conscience.

ZEAL: TRIANGLE WITH WINGS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF ARIES (4° - 5°)

Our skills, loyalties and values support us in our enthusiasm to soar to heights of self-realization

Three aspects of individuality are encountered and refined in our interaction with situations and environments. These are our skills, loyalties and values; through these we make ourselves known to our selves. Each of us develops their own set of values and these become known through what we stand for and what we study. Skills unfold as we employ an inner quality of personal creativity; loyalties extend out from family to embrace friends and compatriots; values are what give life meaning, and point to our spiritual aspect. Together they ground our spirituality within the community context.

Just like a triangle, which is particularly well balanced, these three aspects firmly support us in our aspirations. Yet they are no less to be seen as wings that enable a zealous enthusiast to soar to heights of self-realization.

In the journey of self-discovery, it is of key importance to appreciate the special worth of our impulses. As life throws up its adventures and challenges, we will know who we are through the purity of these original impulses and our essential nature will hold us in good stead if we trust them, whatever occurs. They are of course fundamentally shaped by values, loyalties and skills.

Life is necessarily a transformative sequence of events that examines the inner nature of a person through endless experiences. There are many aspects of the inner nature of our personality and desires, and they offer real evidence of the deepest enduring vision we hold of ourselves – that image of the future that tends to become reality. This image is inevitably based upon the three qualities, and the zeal we experience as we pursue our vision is a measure of our commitment to them.

The goal of life is to determine what finally we hold to be good and true. Do we assert light over darkness? And for us – what is light?

The basic self goes through unending tests of worth, the higher self unending examinations of conscience – and through these processes, refinement is assured. It is worth noting that these three motivating forces are inter-connected, and tend to develop together in a steady, evolutionary, progression – rather than shocking revolutionary shifts.

Without such a progressive approach we are left with nothing more than the dismissal of every ordinary experience as inconvenient, even pointless, except the extent to which it offers pleasure and promotes in us a blissful state of obliviousness to the truth of who we are and what we are doing.

SET: A SQUARE BRIGHTLY LIGHTED ON ONE SIDE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF ARIES (5° - 6°)

Without the gift of knowledge, then experience is meaningless

This image employs traditional symbolism: a square indicates materiality, and the light is spirituality. We are all challenged to set ourselves upon an enlightened path as we struggle with physicality.

A path must have meaning if it is to inspire and motivate us – otherwise we cannot grasp the flow of our life direction, and events are disconnected, lacking of purpose and depth. There is an unending flow of different worldly encounters to assimilate into consciousness, which we can only achieve by giving meaning to these experiences. At some level of spiritual philosophy, it is seen that everything is symbolic. Without the gift of knowledge, then experience is meaningless – yet without the reality-check of experience, then knowledge is not only unfulfilling, it is two-dimensional. Therefore can we see that knowledge is the symbol of experience, and experience the symbol of knowledge? Each is the meaning of the other, and neither has meaning without the other.

How we choose to create meaning out of experience is entirely dependent upon our system of values and preferences. There is interplay between what we value, how we understand things, and what we accumulate as knowledge. This subtle connection informs our every choice and our every response.

Those events that really touch us, and reach deep into the core of our being, do so because, on some level, they have importance and can stimulate hidden aspects to awaken within. Establishing our unique authentic identity really is a prodigious task. We are taken into states of confusion, timidity and indecision – all of which are the antithesis of spirit, whose essential nature is spontaneous, courageous and certain – then our thoughts waver, and even the best of us lose sight of what we are becoming.

A set life-direction, based on passionately-held principles and adherence to standards, is of greater worth than one that lacks purpose or clarity. It is more useful to oneself and the community; it brings substance and distinction, and in time it develops gravitas and wisdom.

It does take strength to assert oneself against the many forces that constantly push and pull from all sides, and we must not surrender to the frustrations that arise, or else the integrity of true self will be lost to distortion. Yet, for all that, we still have to accommodate others' positions and visions in order to maintain relevance and win support.

A set attitude to life will create two types of experiences – supportive and challenging – and both will be clearer and stronger according to the clarity and strength of our decided purpose to give a set form to our beliefs. We must learn to welcome each experience wholeheartedly, because both are eventually needed if we are to optimise our required outcomes, and integrate knowledge of the meaning of our lives.

PROFICIENCY: MAN EXPRESSING HIMSELF IN TWO REALMS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF ARIES (6° - 7°)

Proficiency comes from living the path we choose, acting out our own will

The nature of reality is not made clear to us except insofar as we are able to create for ourselves a well-defined identity. This clarity of identity progresses in direct proportion to the degree of proficiency we develop as we learn how to control events. It is wrong to assume passively that there exists, in secret, a complete and detailed version of self and that our life's purpose is to uncover it. Identity is created out of a never-ending succession of choices; it does not exist at all except when making these choices. They can be choices of action or perception – doing or being – and they arise out of what we are doing with our attention and its focus.

Our mastery over external situations can never be total, yet we get better results when we learn how to divide our attention. We need to know how to divide our focus of attention enough to determine between this and that – as a matter of choosing what has little urgent consequence and what is actually important now.

According to conscience, preference or expediency, a more developed person chooses where to put their attention. Typically they focus away from what is no longer pressing and towards what now deserves the mind's full concentration.

In this way, we come to realize the principles by which to discriminate what we value. We better define who we are by making informed decisions that enact these higher values.

Because of the confidence that comes from living out of values, we can express great versatility of action, always moving towards the most likely activity by which to approach an appropriate, currently important, goal. Proficiency comes simply from living the path we choose, and acting out our own will, not another's.

Yet the easily-distracted mind can so easily be directed wastefully, and then it achieves no more than an impotent, unthinking scattering of resources.

There is any number of interpenetrating realms of existence. Simultaneously we live in physical, emotional and spiritual realms, and each person has their own version of what is happening – this is much more a true representation of the nature of reality. It is so recorded within our multifaceted identity, whose potential has a limitless reach and breadth going immeasurably beyond our best efforts of current imagination. If we master the mind's focus, then we are able to participate fully and powerfully in these many different ways to see the world.

EXCITATION: LARGE HAT WITH STREAMERS FLYING, FACING EAST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF ARIES (7° - 8°)

Half-hearted warriors die

A primal assertive force presides within each of us, equivalent to the excitation indicated by an erect phallus, and stirred into expression by the imminence of new experience, into which we feel to inject an initiative. Those of us, who have watched the Sun rise, know how all-pervasive and compellingly pure this feeling can be. We feel powerful, even in the face of the absolute life-giver.

Naturally society has to assert the collective will; that is its essential role. Yet the spiritually awakened individual has awakened the power of spirit, and this power is not social at all, it is self-glorifying. It is exuberant and demonstrative, it is naive and self-proclaiming and it is receptive to the fiery powers whose only apt symbol is the Sun. Naively, we show our joyful exuberance by showing off our fine feathers, tying streamers to a party hat which catches the wind, so we are noticed and seen to be filled with life force.

In this mood we enter relationships with those around us and are ready to engage with any and all of the possible variations and novelties that humanity throws up.

We come to realize that we can utilize all life experiences, all kinds of interactions and involvements, to the benefit of all concerned, simply by having sensitivity and responding assertively to bring forward the potential in all situations.

Every scenario is new; each moment has its own dawn, its own birthing of potential – and the one who sees it first can claim it, and integrate much of the great force of its life energy into their growing expression of self.

Feeling God-like, the assertive ego knows itself to be capable of creation and has absolutely no false modesty about his rights and duties to create whatever its perfect imagination suggests. Life itself is a force that triggers assertiveness and initiative. It does not serve to posture or pretend, because a false interest or involvement leads to unhelpful kickback. The required commitment is an absolute, unconditional assertiveness – half-hearted warriors die!

By this process a person can find an underlying trend, and actualize it as their life purpose. Then they are able to offer complete and unconditional cooperation in every moment, co-creating with awareness through a continual act of dynamic balancing.

ACUTENESS: CRYSTAL GAZER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF ARIES (8° - 9°)

Perception of what is shapes what is to be

A person who gazes into a crystal ball is attempting to access an aspect of the mind that needs to be stimulated by non-rational techniques. Often called right-brain intelligence, this half of the mind's understanding is found through soft surrender to intuition.

Through the marrying of this with rational thought, we are able to perceive with much greater acuteness the linkage between what is imagined and what comes to pass. We actually have the capacity to bring to mind an entire universe, to grasp its operating principles, and to learn of the tools by which to manipulate it.

Rather surprisingly, we find it to be entirely subjective. The bigger, cosmic picture, though indeed accessible, is only accessible through personal experience, with all the uniqueness, prejudice and ambiguity that that entails. We see that our perception of who we are, with all its convoluted oddities, is none other than a perfectly authentic, graphic representation of our slant on outer reality.

We come truly to understand that what we imagine is the map of what we will come to experience. Fiery imagination and watery intuition married together offer unique and mysterious glimpses of what is to come. From nothing more than these glimpses, we are willing to modify the set of our journey and bend towards the dark temptation of the unknown. There is a hint of the hero's quest beginning to emerge.

The hero is not the pioneer, nor the leader. In order for the hero to realize his potential he needs to resolve the paradox of how an individual can simultaneously be the thesis and the antithesis of society. The hero is thrown up from within the community at a time of crisis specifically in order to rework the principles of the group consciousness into a new form. The crisis has arisen because the old ways are no longer being interpreted meaningfully for the evolved times. Danger is at hand and the hero is the first – and often the only one – to be ready and willing to act upon the omens that speak of permanent radical change. Interestingly, this so often occurs in stories when the hero consults the oracle, typically a crystal-gazing woman.

The world and the individual are thus in a cosmic interactive partnership, each in time reflecting the other in every mood and every situation. So this allows a rough indication of what is to come, since what we feel now must somehow be reflected in the future. With care, this facility can be used to shape our attitudes and strategies in organising outcomes to suit our personal convenience. We are advised to be aware that, taken beyond a helpful level, such ability inclines us towards idle curiosity. Why seek information about the future if we have not the willingness to shape it? Gazing upon it will shape it – that is cosmic law – so are we clear enough, energetic enough, to deal with the implications and consequences of that?

INTERPRETATION: MAN TEACHING NEW FORMS FOR OLD SYMBOLS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF ARIES (9° - 10°)

Old ideals have to be embodied into new experiences so that knowledge evolves

What is so often imagined to be a creative slant on reality can be nothing more than a witless distortion of values – just a twisted perspective of events. Although truth is a subjective, unique personal experience, our interpretation surely needs to be kept within the boundaries of reasonableness. Some renderings are simply silly and entirely unworkable as useful models of life.

What is needed is a continuous readjustment of understanding that can only really be brought about through a careful assimilation of our personal encounters. Checking out our experiences against the viewpoints of others, including predecessors, provides a degree of objectivity, and helps us to find a more genuine picture of what is actually valid.

This brings abstract concepts into the realm of personal significance, so that the collective, usually inherited, ideals of society take on meaning for us as individuals, with our own system of values. And that set of values is a very important part of how our reality is experienced, since we tend to see things the way we want to see them.

There arises new insight as a direct result of bringing the theoretical intelligence of old symbolism into the hard truths of real encounter. These realizations are reorientations on emotional, mental and indeed physical levels – you can feel them change you.

The wisdom of the race is constantly subject to a renewal process that depends entirely upon the dynamic interplay between the theoretical ideals of collective reality, and the hard fact of personal experience.

This renewal is by process of trial and error – and works on many levels to keep fresh the heritage that cooperatively we are part of. It works because it validates theoretical knowledge against the incomparable worth of practical experience.

Eventually, bit by bit the eternal progression of refinement leaves its mark, and a divine truth emerges, that a singular principle is dramatizing itself in multiple forms – one in the many – and is valid for both the individual and the community.

IDEALIZATION: PRESIDENT OF A COUNTRY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF ARIES (10° - 11°)

Leaders must sacrifice themselves to an ideal, and suffer the consequences of their imperfections

The ultimate expression of self-assurance arises only when we focus entirely upon our chosen primary value, for example honour, courage or wisdom, subordinating all other characteristics to that one purpose.

To become president – the highest representative of a country – one has not only to be shaped to an extreme degree, one has also to sacrifice other aspects of self – so it is important that the primary value is carefully acknowledged and is of essential worth to the individual. To become a central and principal influence, it is not enough to be able to find a new way to spin the established wisdom and ways of your society; what is required is the deepening of qualities also.

Any major life role is selected so that it can allow the fullest, broadest demonstration of whichever value we champion, so that it is fashioned and strengthened to the highest degree possible. Recognition by others is a major shaping force that moulds our qualities and characteristics to fit the exact requirements of the position.

Although the ego is in high relief, it serves not the individual, but the society's needs for leadership. The spirit of any community is held up for a while by one whose own spirit is in close alignment with the group's. Members tend to tolerate only the slightest discrepancy between the behaviour of the individual and the values of society, and critically challenge all else. It behoves them to indicate clearly and unequivocally whether the leader is conforming to their ideal – to the exclusion of any other non-aligned behaviours.

What follows is a study in idealization. An ideal is not a real human quality but a philosophical concept. It is held up as an aspiration that guides people to awaken the best version attainable within them. The more emotional undercurrents of the zeitgeist incline towards expression through qualities rather than simply beliefs. Ideals not ideas. These are more enduring and speak to the hidden parts of society's unconscious memories, and have far more impact upon the collective psyche. Rousing the people to support a new initiative is better done with tone and rhetoric rather than logical, patient explanation.

However well intended, efforts to become more assertive and realize the ideal will usually lead to vain pretence and destructive outcomes. There will always be disappointment – the ideal is after all only a dream. The leader so often gets caught up in a situation based on make-believe; it is entirely unsustainable.

We must be willing to accept the disappointments and the resultant projections of others – of reproach and criticism – in the knowledge that it is the ideal itself that is being furthered, not our self-love. In fact, rather strangely, the impact of a leader, or indeed spiritual teacher, can be measured by the extent to which their supporters end up blaming them for their own denied shortcomings. A highly aware leader will be willing and able consciously to adopt the role of scapegoat in service to the community. Christ did.

INSOUCIANCE: FLOCK OF WILD GEESE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF ARIES (11° - 12°)

Involvements lack meaning unless they lead eventually towards spiritual liberation

No matter what life circumstances arise, no matter what challenges and temptations there are to face, no matter how noble the aspirations we embody, there is one quality that can never be beaten down – we all want freedom. Insouciance means being carefree or unconcerned and light-hearted.

This is the true essential core of personality and is irresistible in every single aspect of life experience. This absolute indomitable freedom-urge speaks to us of our immortality and our spiritual heritage through the innocent imperative of independence.

It is this that allows us to have the expectation that our ideals will all be fulfilled, and cosmic obligations towards us met. We trust in this because in the end that is what freedom means – that we get what we want.

What we know sets us free, yet knowledge, to be raised to the level of wisdom, requires experience – and therefore involvement. Of course, if we want to deepen our involvements, then we must invest our freedom. We may well lose sight of the inherent freedom-feeling whenever we concentrate upon the challenges within the involvement, yet our ability to rise above things is ever-present. An aspect of our humanity is its naive gift to be spirit-like, and free from burdens. Eventually, no matter how important one has become and how burdensome the responsibilities carried by ones broad shoulders, an inner voice cries *'freedom!'*

When geese are seen to rise above it all, the picture of insouciance, they are as free as birds – yet they are slavishly obeying their undeviating characteristic migration. We too are absolutely free to do whatever it is that we must do – a beautiful paradox.

As a personal characteristic, this quality can become a very selfish attitude that actually does very little to add real value to self. We need to guard against an irresponsible, wasteful lack of focus that amounts to nothing more than reckless negligence.

It's a thin line between this and the high spiritually valid pursuit of one's unique, unencumbered destiny, detached from inappropriate burdens and fruitless anxiety. There is, at the core of our eternal being, an absolute sense of our cosmic birth-right to be free to choose every step of our path throughout eternity, whether embodied or as spirit. This sense is the fundament of all existence and is more powerful and pervasive than all else. However much the individual is cajoled by society – oppressed and brainwashed, emotionally blackmailed and simply deceived – still they know deep down that freedom is the absolute eternal truth of life.

IMPETUOUSNESS: UNSUCCESSFUL BOMB EXPLOSION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF ARIES (12° - 13°)

When energy flows freely, the outcome is ultimately always good

A person can find how to achieve a dynamic balance between two opposing motivations. One is to serve society at a high level of responsibility the other to be absolutely free to follow one's own destiny. The inner intuitive knowledge of how best to act in support of one of these and not the other is often entirely unreasoned – no more than a feeling of impetuosity.

We all have destructive urges at times and these can sometimes seem to be as evil as an anarchist's bomb. Yet they are not evil. These urges are rendered dark and unwholesome because they generate frustration when they are denied and judged inherently wrong-minded. Even the destructive forces of forest fires, tempests and volcanos have an invigorating – life giving – dimension when seen from a wider time perspective. These forces are entirely necessary to rebalance things.

The heart remains open when we allow innocent impetuosity to sponsor our words and actions. This has special worth because the open heart absorbs and nullifies the destructive acts of humanity, making unsuccessful any unconscious attempts to do harm.

In the battle of dark against light, light is always the winner in the end. Goodness eventually overcomes all else. It may be that this is less than self-evident – yet surely it is self-evident that we are always better off to affirm optimism, even to make it our moral code.

When innocent impetuosity is distorted into petulance and vanity then nothing useful is created. A futile expenditure of energy and general waste of resources is its outcome. The feeling itself is valid, yet any feeling can be distorted as it becomes embodied into self-serving behaviour, and we always have to guard against these distortions.

Even so, forgiveness also has its place in the deeper mind of society, and most often these naive outbursts are not severely punished even if they result in apparently anti-social behaviour.

The truth is that nature is dangerous, even human nature. The civilising processes are relatively recent innovations and are far from fully embodied in the species. However liberating and creative these impulses may be, they cause distress in others who feel the need to be more controlled and 'civilized'. Often enough, the dangers arise when the fears of such people are not sufficiently respected.

REVELATION: SERPENT COILING NEAR MAN AND WOMAN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF ARIES (13° - 14°)

Appreciation of the highest aspects of life depends on the acceptance of the lowest

The snake imagery points towards revelation of the most profound wisdom of sexuality. In sex, the wisdom of naive impetuosity is balanced in time by the wisdom of responsible self-discipline. The continual acquisition of this quality shows that we are developing a very real understanding of the nature of cosmic reality and our place within it. Provided we have a significant degree of self-control, we are safe to explore the lower aspects of our nature without fear. These baser impulses substantially rejected by society, are actually important contributors to our total wellbeing and must not be denied.

Nature is dangerous, make no mistake about that – and human nature is no exception, especially sexuality. Yet if we are to attain any understanding of who and what we are, then then we are required to feel deeply into the hidden areas and accept our darker side. We have urges and they must not be denied or repressed, or else we will soon find ourselves overwhelmed by these baser instincts, and lose the truth of our balanced condition. Our appetites lead us into the darker region of human experience, and towards the knowledge of the more essential, less civilized, aspects of our true selves. Without this exploration the deeper secrets, kept taboo by society, are never assimilated as wisdom.

Half angel, half animal, we are forced to develop the power of balance that is afforded by an active, sensitive, expressive heart. Sex is an activity that allows, in fact revels in, the interplay of two people enjoying their animal nature in sacred play. Were animal to dominate, then it would become hollow; were angel to take over then it would lack full-bloodedness. When the heart is open, both sacredness and lustiness can be found in exaltation – a true revelation of wisdom.

Without delving into the depth of unconscious urges, we could never rise up to the heights of conscious experience. We can never, without accepting the basest aspects of ourselves, have any appreciation of the highest, sacred aspects of life.

The idea of Original Sin is refuted here, and biblical knowledge of good and evil is now understood as distortion of a profound esoteric principle. The 'Fall' of Adam and Eve is in fact a courageous adventure into the acceptance of our baser nature so that the higher self becomes free to emerge and express the greater glory of God.

The mystery of three is revealed as man, woman and sex, or as rational, emotional and creativity. This comes about when duality is neither obeyed nor feared – it simply is what it is. Neither good nor bad can ever exist alone, and both are essential aspects of Creation and creativity.

Revelation is not a part of religion, it is part of mysticism. A student of the mysteries will have to slough off the constraints of good and bad – the moral code by which society controls the masses – in order to awaken the depths and heights of knowledge, well beyond the limits of duality.

DILIGENCE: INDIAN WEAVING A BLANKET

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF ARIES (14° - 15°)

Sanctifying ordinary things shows great personal wisdom and leads to harmony.

The simple business of life is able to give a sense of great personal satisfaction. Just meeting our own personal needs and taking care of very basic matters is as meaningful as any activity. A highly developed person makes everything look both easy and important, demonstrating high principles by doing mundane tasks properly. The Indian is not only anticipating the survival need to guard against cold nights, but also creating beauty, continuing a sacred tradition, and developing personal qualities.

When we place this idea into a cultural context, we see how a range of arts and skills are to be learned in order to live in keeping with our community. The development of such skills not only enhances the culture but also stabilizes the individual ego.

It is this ego-centring, as much as the learning of skills, which enables us to experience deeper self-awareness. Through these two processes, self-service and community service, the ability to bring about desired objectives is fixed. Being ourselves is then entirely enough to achieve our highest goals and, at the same time, enjoy life to the full.

This is the difference between achieving success and being successful. The best grounding of these most subtle understandings takes place when we learn simply to be who we are, and how to cope with life. There are enough little day-to-day challenges to keep us focused on the matter in hand, and these demands upon our skills and artfulness are important lessons – in fact examinations.

We are therefore advised to be diligent – to get on top of things in the ordinary daily life circumstances that we have, so that all necessary skills become embodied as personality traits. Whenever we do anything to the best of our ability, as an act of sacredness, then life becomes a simple demonstration of personal excellence.

Indeed, there is no better demonstration of the genius of our highest being than persistently to engage fully and quietly in doing what needs to be done, and doing it excellently well.

Otherwise what? No merit is to be found in the acceptance of the daily round as dull, and simply in service of our need for comfort and security. In that case, external results may show shallow signs of success in material terms, yet on the inner planes, little is gained.

INVIGORATION: BROWNIES DANCING IN THE SETTING SUN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF ARIES (15° - 16°)

We must act as though we make a difference, even knowing that we don't

It is perfectly meaningful to approach life with a reckless sense of liberation, with unfettered confidence that it is simply a dance of sorts, whose purpose is to facilitate the exhibition of each and every special aspect and potential of selfhood. This part of us wants to go a bit crazy and, against society's expectations, take big risks. It is reckless, spontaneous, very life-affirming and vigorous, and throws caution to the wind; it trusts the forces of nature and is rewarded for its courage and sense of adventure with real tangible abundance.

This approach is supported when we trust that the relationship between an individual and nature itself is essentially friendly. What could show this more than spirit and nature together dancing down the Sun like an innocent girl child? Evidence is found for this also in the very fact of the life-giving properties bestowed upon us by natural elements. Do we not all feel invigorated by the wind, rain, Sun and stars?

What is going on, in and through the individual, is the operation of universal law reworking reality by sorting and resorting, sifting and shifting, in an ever-dynamic review and reveal process. As a direct result of his enthusiastic willingness to participate in this continuous dynamism, at whatever expenditure of effort, the individual attracts great good fortune – whose fruits are felt as simple, reliable, constant abundance.

It is a rare individual that can grasp the eternal paradox of life. One who can, will enjoy this great abundance, and often has access to a delightful, sparkling nature. Enthusiasm is a divine quality, quite literally the flowing of God through one's whole being, and it has the supreme ability to create success on all levels. With this, all is possible. It engenders confidence, optimism, charisma and other positive qualities that defeat life's heaviness. So what is this paradox? It is – that we must act as though we make a difference, even knowing that we don't.

Sufis call this 'struggle and surrender', and teach that happiness depends upon finding a dynamic balance between them. As taught in Taoism, all action adds to imbalance – and yet the absence of imbalance is the end of dynamism and vitality, the end of life. Therefore, since nothing really matters on a cosmic level, it makes perfect sense to do crazy things, trusting in our luck, and our ability to dance around the difficulties with a smile.

The test of awareness for this degree has to do with finding the correct balance between complacency and struggle. Some could suffer delusions of self-sufficiency instead of appropriate self-serving activity.

Everything returns to Source to be purified; this is an eternal cosmic law, which maintains the integrity of all and everything in its non-stop waves of eternal change. A lifetime of vigorous action pulls the individual away from unification for a speck of cosmic time. It is folly to believe that such activity matters much, and yet foolhardiness to think it does not. To act anyway, knowing it is reckless and pointless is evidence of a very inspired wisdom.

DIVORCEMENT: TWO PRIM SPINSTERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF ARIES (16° - 17°)

We must be utterly true to ourselves

It can be totally fitting to divorce ourselves from everyday living with all its judgements. The image of a couple of old ladies, having lived alone together for decades, is often considered farcical, sad and bizarre – yet such eccentricity speaks of a very private sustainment of reality, a valid personal creation of the world. The insular condition of retreat shuns the triviality of superficial relationships, which so often waste our precious energy.

Society's morality, laws and practices can be too burdensome for certain people. At what cost this support? If the price we pay for these securities and comforts is the loss of uniqueness, then the soul suffers. Better to insulate ourselves from such a corrosive influence than to live without access to the soul's spiritual wisdom. We are who we are and, within reasonable limits, let society come to terms with that!

Great pleasure can be found by isolating ourselves far from the madding crowd – we feel joy when we shield ourselves from distractions. We turn our backs upon worthless, spiritually unprofitable relationships, and reject their lesser rewards. Mindless pretence of virtue and distinction is poor substitute for the true unfolding of our inner qualities. Being caught up in such vanities precludes the possibility of real accomplishment in life.

A moment's wry reflection upon the quality of ordinary day-to-day conversations gives us to understand just how shallow and lacking in wisdom is the general population in its work-a-day mode of being. Yet, a lot of people find such intercourse to be the exaltation of life.

People can become concerned with their distorted perceptions of our business and what they see as our particular pros and cons. On a superficial level, to please them, we could get drawn into a process, of raising up that which is in fact shallow. There is of course absolutely nothing life-denying about casual commerce – but each of us has our own unique and creative spin and, rather than conforming, we must bring this to bear in every situation, and as we do so we enrich both the lives of others and our distinctive sense of self.

Above all else, we must be true to ourselves. Yet it is far from easy even to know who we are and what we stand for – so how can we even know whether we are being true? What we do is to use the process of idealization. We raise our principles to the level of ideals, so that we may feel them to have a spiritual quality. We need to find and define our unique specialization and allow nothing into the private domain of our personal experience that would compromise our integrity.

Living according to our ideals, we then become capable of rejecting social pressures to conform and, with them, the implicit judgements against those who do not. Such an approach usually brings a solitude that is not easily endured by most people. Except for the very advanced, this becomes loneliness, and so is no longer life-enhancing. It's good to find a like-minded companion so that some measure of society is maintained.

RUMINATION: AN EMPTY HAMMOCK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF ARIES (17°- 18°)

Two equal and opposing forces exist: pure impulse and conditioned response

Contemplation is the first step towards inspiration, and time spent ruminating can actually be very productive. An active person needs to set aside time just for being, or lose a sense of how they feel. Down-time is a requirement of a healthy psyche – so better to plan for it and make it serve, rather than disrupt, outer reality.

Life throws up an almost constant barrage of difficulties and most people have absolutely no idea why. Others at least take the time and space to lie on their hammocks and ruminate on matters. With poise, we find peace and good conscience, so we find greater awareness of the conflicting polarities within us. By reaching a state of inner reconciliation, we become wiser and more capable of organising adjustments in our circumstances.

In fact, this is the process whereby we form relationship, as we strive to find a good fit between the inner and outer inclinations in life. The urge to balance is the motivation towards conscious relationship. Through contemplation, we find that the disharmony arising in our situations can readily be reconciled within. To do so, we remember the integrity of our being. To bring a sense of balance requires the heart to become involved, which typically is easier when we slow down. External lack of harmony arises if the heart is not still.

We have impulses, and always to deny them is to deny life – and yet always to allow them is to deny the civilising processes of self-control. Here is the knife-edge of self-definition, the crux-point of identity. This is the frontier of self.

Personal freedom is an absolute imperative, as strong an urge as any other; it cannot be denied – it will not be thwarted. And yet the self requires a society, or it is nothing. So the advanced thinker envisions a society wherein each individual's vision is aligned with, and supportive of, society's collective vision.

Self-adequacy is maximized through an absolute dismissal of any compulsion of society's conditioning. We may not understand the purpose of conditioning, nor indeed why others conform while we reject – but the intuitive mind doesn't need such explanations. Life is always subject to our perception, re-interpretation and influence. We cannot dodge it – the best we can do is optimize it according to our own sense of rightness.

It is therefore not enough to clearly refine our personal vision. The task goes well beyond that into the higher realms of group consciousness. *'What is the collective vision of this time and place – and how does my unique self-expression give greater glory to that?'*

PANORAMA: A MAGIC CARPET

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF ARIES (19° - 20°)

Mind has an infinite capacity to overview experience and use imagination as a magical process

Although religious teachings emphasize social involvement, invariably the higher esoteric wisdom pursued in mysticism is arrived at following a process of learning how to become detached. The mystic scorns ordinary living with all its burdens. Social influences make intense demands upon the mind to focus on worldly matters. We are trained to pursue position and wealth at whatever cost to our spiritual wellbeing. This is madness, and of course is supportive of depression, anxiety, superficiality and Godlessness.

Daily spiritual practice will remedy this condition, allowing us to rise above the denseness of the earth so that the mind can enjoy a relaxed state and recuperate from its ordeal. There is a misconception that meditation takes up time and diminishes our effectiveness in dealing with life. The reverse is true, because we spend less time making mistakes and have a general access to a higher degree of wisdom and insight. Then all of our involvements become meaningful, and our vision of the future becomes rich and expansive.

Curiosity is a key quality that distinguishes our species – it is that which unlocks greater human potential. The expansion of potential, the expansion of vision and the expansion of consciousness are all correlated. To grow, we need first to see further. As we look, so we find. Those who look out towards distant horizons will envision a broader future for themselves and for humanity, seeing how great is the gift an unlimited array of possibility.

With the correct attitude of mind, we can glance around at a vast panorama of potential as if from a magic carpet, above it all. This overview enables us to decide how and where to become involved in human affairs – and the degree of our involvement reflects the extent of our willingness to let go of the panoramic viewpoint. This greater vision, gained through detachment, can be put to real advantage, as we learn to use imagination to expand our destiny.

Life offers such possibility for each of us, limited only by our imagination. Even when we focus down, and temporarily lose the perspective of detachment, a part of us remains a little aloof, so that we can periodically pull back in order to reflect and consider.

The soul's freedom is never completely lost, although there is a real danger that it can be all but forgotten. If we lose sight of our spiritual self, then for a while life becomes shallow – a hollow, pretend life lived out by a caricature of ourselves and surviving on a scant diet of vicarious or imagined joy. It is to be avoided at all costs. Such a life is a distortion of the spiritual principle of detachment.

With an unattached state, we celebrate all potentialities, variations on a theme, a kaleidoscope of experiences – without a need to become over-involved. The trick is to maintain a subtle, fluid, state of mind wherein we are able, moment by moment, to be both passionately committed and completely detached simultaneously, being lost in neither material nor spiritual realms.

HOSPITALITY: YOUNG GIRL FEEDING BIRDS IN WINTER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF ARIES (20° - 21°)

In the act of giving, spiritual nourishment is felt as joy

Hospitality is the spiritual mystery of the mutuality of joy created and released by the act of giving, where the subtle and the substantial are married together elegantly, with a delicate awareness of the importance of each of these two aspects of life.

Our love for the beauty of nature, whose power is actually often cruel and life-threatening, is hard to balance with our quite normal fears of danger. Yet for some people, there is an inexplicable force of innocence that makes them quite comfortable with the challenge of finding the balance, and usually enables them to do so.

It is usually the power and beauty of nature that stimulates a sense of wonder within us. Without doubt this is more easily accessible to the young-minded, receptive, innocent person. The qualities of youth, and of the feminine, are more perceptive to the experience of nature, and seem to have a more profound attunement to its mystery. The girl does not rail against the cold, she does not wallow in useless feelings about hungry birds; she feeds them.

It seems, on a surface level, that it is largely the birds that are receiving the benefits from this act of generosity; yet there is more to see. A truly significant benefit is accrued to the giver – an extraordinary power of self-assurance is enhanced by such an act. As we give to the needy, we the givers experience nourishment.

If the gift is of bread alone, with a zealous do-good intention, then much is forfeited, especially if the deeper hidden intention is to win approval. This more masculine act serves quite a different purpose and has a barren quality, rather like foreign aid, whose purposes are political rather than caring. The physical item passed – bread or money – is merely the objectification of the real, deeper gift of love.

The level of our spiritual station is often marked by how much sensitivity we bring to acts of charity. The hidden, loving aspect of the gift has far more power to sustain life and hope than one can easily express. When we trust in nature, in life itself, we find ourselves rewarded each day with the blessings that are all around us. In nature we see the seasons change, so we learn to flow; we see both passion and stillness, so we allow each its place in our expression; we see how everything is sustained by the constant interactive flow of abundance, so we become one with that and open ourselves to receive abundance and to become a conduit for hospitality and generosity.

Despite all appearances, and in fact because of its innocence and vulnerability, a baby is not without power – it strongly influences behaviours and outcomes. This is evidence of humanity's essential goodness – we are gentle with the vulnerable, and kind to the needy, when we have no reason to be. By making themselves entirely at the mercy of others, like babies the innocent attract kindness and thereby contribute receptively to the spirit of generosity. We need to surrender to life in order to open ourselves up to participate in such generosity, either as a receiver or a giver, and trust that our own needs will be met, and that we have more than enough to share with those in need.

EXERTION: PUGILIST ENTERING THE RING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF ARIES (20° - 21°)

Conflict provides the grit we need to become stronger

This image of a boxer is of one who has conviction in their powers of accomplishment, and vigorously exhibits a concentrated attempt at self-determination. Success supports the expansion of further confidence, until eventually we let go of the need to achieve goals – yet up to then we will be drawn to test ourselves. We seek the triumph of victory. No significant difference separates the strength of self-knowledge and the power of self-confidence because a person who knows their strengths and admits their weaknesses stands strong.

It is understood that such confidence is enhanced by the supportive attention of others, in their role as an audience, enjoyably observing such a complete and compelling revelation of full exertion.

There is a need to guard against a surly inclination to offer blind rebellion against those who would try to limit our manifestation of ability and force. Such defiant behavior will inevitably lead to a squandering of resources on things of little or no true value.

However, much is to be gained by a courageous, energetic, up-and-at-it approach to dealing with the business of life, revealed best in combat. We can speak metaphorically of the fighter – but really the battle is first internal. It shows in the world at large as conflict – and it supports our yearning to grow strong. We seek it.

Raw experience is the grit that promotes such self-realization. There is never any shying away from an ardent mobilization of capacities. Pushing forward against resistance is necessary if we are to maximize capability, so antagonists have a cooperative influence. Competition and conflict are not to be seen as negative forces. We can't improve who and what we are without coming up against others who test us. We are tested in many ways – strength, commitment, ability and courage – and this does more than measure us; it develops us. Without them, we cannot move to fulfillment of potential.

There are situations where it is not useful to pull punches, since we need to punch through to a new level of self. Whether this disturbs others is not our concern; they must look to their own strengths to deal with their own experiences; sensitivity to the needs of others is not stressed at all. The likelihood is very small that we will allow any empathy to diminish the chances of success in achieving goals.

Without conflict we cannot awaken the resources with which we deal with conflict – courage, concentration, resistance, a willingness to take risks and cope with friction, uncertainty and antagonism. We put aside all other concerns and focus on one thing – wholeheartedly dedicating ourselves to ourselves. We only improve our game by competing with a stronger opponent. To push further and develop potentialities, we are willing to risk the fruits of previous attainment without caution or fear of loss. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

PROSPECT: GATE TO THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF ARIES (21°- 22°)

Vitality is made known by its appetite for new experiences

I am. I exist. I am alive. Beingness itself is the first and most mysterious truth. It is self-evident and incontrovertible – nothing can deny existence – and it is evidenced by desire. As desire opens up more prospects of self-disclosure, it rewards itself with a deepening of faith – and the affirmation of optimism.

Curiosity and the need for adventure are longings that pull us all into undiscovered regions of potential. In this way all new impulses are given form, as the twigs and branches that give greater and richer diversity to shape the metaphorical tree of life. Free will allows us to choose hardship, or to choose the fruits of our heart's desire. When we strike out to fulfil our hopes, then the universe aligns, and delivers – for those strong in faith.

Similarly, personality is shaped as we seek reassurance that our aims have value and are appreciated – that they serve to beautify life. The process is continuous, a reflection of the universal pattern of twigs and branches – thus do ideals become real, embodied in us and expressed as new facets of an evolving persona.

Pursuit of self-fulfilment is directed with courageous enthusiasm towards new frontiers. Rivers are there to ford, mountains to climb. The overcoming of obstacles is welcomed as the only route to development. A pioneer is involved with stepping bravely where no-one has been before, gaining the advantages of being first.

Arrival is not attractive as a final destination; it is simply a resting place. Fulfilment of visions would only offer evidence of the poverty of imagination, which has no truth here. We are at the gate of the secret garden, the celebration of all desire. The prospect is abundance; a bounty that reveals itself to be beyond the reach of appetite for a normal person.

Yet there is work to do! Fruit does not jump off the branch into the mouth, and fantasies are ten-a-penny without effort to realize them. Time spent a-dreaming has to be measured against time spent a-doing. Imaginings are powerful, creative urges that bind subtle feelings into substantial images. For dreams to come true these images have to become thought and deeds – and that requires effort.

Most people are caught up in the struggle for survival, yet others always enjoy the choicest fruits, the deepest relationships, the most exciting adventures. How do they do it? They celebrate life itself, with joyful, optimistic expectation that the superabundance of goodness promised in the Garden of Eden is theirs for the asking. A sense of the eternal comes through the heart as naive optimism, the conceit of youth, which is as blessed as it is charmed. This arrogance sees an unlimited future of desires fulfilled, only then to be replaced by new desire newly fulfilled – in a never ending tropical garden constantly and simultaneously in fruit, in flower, and in bud.

RETICENCE: WOMAN IN PASTEL CARRYING HEAVY VEILED LOAD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF ARIES (22° - 23°)

Vitality does not find its exaltation in petty things

A modest woman, with her own burdens, is somewhat disinclined to open up. We consider here the basic importance of anchoring ourselves inwardly. In order to attend to our own issues we must somehow cut ourselves off and establish a wall against intrusion. This can be done elegantly and without giving offence by veiling ourselves, and being cautious about opening up to new things. We can afford to understate our aims while we establish the worth of engagement – in fact, our very vitality and personal integrity will often depend upon such an approach.

Each of us can, when optimum resourcefulness is at hand, reach up to a state of personal brilliance. There are various elements that need to be in correct relationship for this to occur, and we have to give them our fullest attention. Our sense of self needs to centre on these elements, and not so much on externals. We must not engage too much in trivia if we are to remain true; since the hidden truth is that actually we each have the capacity for genius. Becoming bogged down in pettifogging niceties will certainly erode this capacity.

It is best to avoid situations where there is pressure to conform to low standards of interaction. It behoves us to defend ourselves against the insidious vampirism of those people who drag us down to their level of mediocrity. If we lack true involvement then external events are mostly transient distractions, since any experience of enduring value is established only to the extent that we take personal responsibility for its outcome.

It is easier to say no than goodbye, so it is usually better to resist new involvement than abruptly curtail what has already begun. We do not want to disappoint another; it could lead to resentment and perhaps attack. Such an attitude – where we concern ourselves deeply with what is our business, and shy away from what is not – leads towards an unimpeachable integrity of character.

It also promotes a great fullness of life, not only for us, but also as a significant and proper contribution to the community. This is because we successfully engage with what we are doing, with not much wastage of effort.

We may need honestly to identify any disinclination to engage with the community at large on fair terms – and to check that we are not taking more than we are giving. Eventually this would bring distress.

It becomes clear that most interactions are inconsequential, that the superficial variances between people are unimportant and that, if we are not careful, we can easily waste too much time and energy dealing with things of no ultimate worth. A certain reticence to become involved with such trivial matters may therefore be particularly helpful whenever we have heavy loads to carry.

MUNIFICENCE: OPEN WINDOW; NET CURTAIN BLOWING INTO A CORNUCOPIA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF ARIES (23° - 24°)

Personal attainment is evidenced by the spiritual state of abundance

Symbolically, the open window is inviting; the prevailing breeze is unseen, yet points towards the horn of plenty. From this it is understood that, for those ready to respond, subtle guidance must not be ignored if we are to 'seize the day'. In Sufism, the mystery of the Earth plane is seen to be abundance. The perception of oneself as poor is false – either a false interpretation or a false strategy of mind.

A Sufi sheikh instructs a student who is travelling to a strange town – *“Seek out the luckiest person you can find”*. The student is perplexed. *“What is called luck is one of the outward indicators of a spiritually advanced person”*, explains the teacher. In a real sense, luck is a spiritual principle. When we have learned well what to do and how to be, then we attract good fortune. It has a lot to do with sharing. The wise have learned to embody the spiritual principle of open-handedness – as an example of the Golden Rule. This rule teaches us to be to others the way we want them to be towards us. What we give out, we get back – so being generous attracts generosity. The unconscious aspect of mind interprets our generosity as evidence that we are well-off, and therefore leads us to expect to receive good fortune. This expectation is self-validating.

Therefore personal attainment is evidenced by abundance. This need not be financial or material – it is a state of being, felt as the absence of want. A strong, clear ego brings confidence because we are being true to ourselves. Such confidence brings good luck because abundance is the natural condition of an aligned being. So there is an alignment with all parts of our being; we have found our natural authentic state.

Therefore this degree shows an irrepressible gift for capturing the richer rewards of life, and sharing them generously with others.

Human and cosmic truths are interactive – each reflecting the other – and here we see that the cosmic truth of abundance is matched by richness in the material world.

Also, we remember to be both grateful and graceful, and avoid the smugness of those who vainly dispense favours as though their bounty is an aspect of self-love, rather than cosmic love.

At the level of self-development, we are shown, by our good fortune, that uninhibited enthusiasm is a spiritual practice, which gives evidence to the wisdom of mutual prodigality. Giving and receiving with an open hand, we become more and more certain that abundance grows if it flows.

SENSIBILITY: A DOUBLE PROMISE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF ARIES (24° - 25°)

We get what we want, or we will come to want what we get

Whenever we fully access the information made available to us through our senses, and feel into the implications, then we experience greater sensibility. Resourcefulness is the result. Since few people are able to do this, one who does gains an edge.

Misuse of this ability is a compromise of personal integrity – chicanery is better avoided. Whenever we are thwarted, we have the ability to find alternative options. Some of these will have equal or even greater value to us. Noticing this allows us to grow in trust that everything always turns out well in the end.

The double promise is that we get what we want, or we will come to want what we get. There is skill in learning when to move from the first to the second.

Looking beneath the surface of this life-affirming idea, we may see how it readily applies itself to the process of optimising cooperative endeavours. Cooperation often asks us to moderate or put aside our own track of activity. With the full confidence that the unexpected always eventually leads us true, we have no difficulty bending a little.

We gain the ability to turn all of our negative ideas and feelings around, confident that better things are coming. Everything can be seen as pertinent – to test and train us – to assist our process of learning how to measure our own needs against those of others, and seek equality rather than advantage. That we can gain advantage is a false concept. What suits our long-term wellbeing best is to live in balance; advantage disturbs that balance, and might lead to a distorted perception of self as having greater importance than another.

Having reached a high degree of satisfaction with the way we are, we seek less and less to externalize our conflicts. We deal inwardly with the ever-present dualities. It is still extremely helpful to engage with others whose life-view differs radically from our own, and we seek cooperation rather than competition. Everything needs to find its balance, and this is more explicitly enacted in cooperative endeavour than elsewhere. So we can learn how to find it within ourselves from finding this balance with others.

The optimist would see set-backs as clear symbols of a better situation approaching, and begin actually to look out confidently for this newly-expected good fortune. Of course, this anticipation of success speeds up the process and quickly attracts hard evidence of its realization.

EQUIPMENT: MAN POSSESSED OF MORE GIFTS THAN HE CAN HOLD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF ARIES (25° - 26°)

Our life-path is the answer to the question: 'at what am I competent?'

We do not look for nails to bang just because we own a hammer. A toolbox includes equipment that, once mastered, is only used when necessary. Too many psychological skills and gifts can confuse, because priorities are more difficult to establish, so it is constructive to discriminate clearly between what has importance for our life-journey and what does not. Obsessional interest in things of no consequence needs to be eliminated.

The journey towards self-discovery is the central motivation of a life well-spent and it is very well supported by adamant independence. The skills and knowledge to support this drive are found in social contact. Energy expended making connections is well rewarded, giving rise to a great personal capacity for public involvement.

The driven individual becomes of real value to their fellows, having an extraordinary spread of sincere interests and an inclination to try all and everything. Yet the risk of exaggerated self-confidence is strong and there is a tendency to take on too much, leading to frustration, restlessness and self-betrayal.

There is, however, the capacity for effort to underwrite an impressive level of ambitious self-projection, which can lead to real self-fulfilment. Life is meant to be somewhat challenging, otherwise our abilities could not be developed. As we face up to these challenges, we find more and more inner resources, which perhaps were only ever experienced as dimly-felt potentialities, if indeed we even experienced them at all.

Let's not get too attached to the abilities themselves, and especially not the fruits of our skills. These are lesser treasures that can blind us to the real gold, and diffuse our focus. The real gold is soul-development, and this comes through developing the qualities that give rise to our abilities, rather than just the abilities themselves – for example virtues such as sensitivity, compassion and truth, which will bubble up in all our relationships whether or not we perfect proficiency as counsellors.

However distracting corporeal life is, it is all illusion and only of temporary and personal relevance. What is eternal registers on the level of soul; in fact we can meaningfully describe the soul as that part of an individual's psyche that registers and stores information of permanent – that is eternal – consequence. What makes us competent is the ability to choose what matters to us – from this, all flows. This is because we are, by nature, existentially competent; we are born to be capable. However, the real mystery that we need to penetrate is this: 'at what am I competent?'

This question is our life-path. But ironically, perhaps the best answer to this question from the soul's perspective is 'it actually doesn't matter very much at all; whatever you do, do it well'.

REFORMULATION: LOST OPPORTUNITY REGAINED IN THE IMAGINATION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF ARIES (26° - 27°)

We constantly re-create our lives and characteristics out of our imagination

Life is a game of snakes-and-ladders, and the successful have found a way not only to avoid certain of the snakes, but also to limit the reach of their downward thrust. Without making mistakes, we make nothing. To deal with setbacks, to optimize our gains and minimize our losses, it is expedient to put some safeguards in place. This is done by setting a foundation table, below which we simply can never fall. This baseline is probably best expressed as qualities – truth, justice, non-violence and self-control for example.

At core, we are immortal beings, whose essential purpose is to recreate inner characteristics as our outer identity. This is like a river, ever-changing yet seemingly constant; it reformulates itself in every moment. Of key importance is the ability to take effective command of ourselves and find ways to be more than a pawn buffeted around by external superficial situations.

Life usually isn't smooth for very long. Every step we take is met by resistance, and big steps meet big resistance. The youthful fool runs helter-skelter into any mountainous challenge, showing their skills and celebrating their exuberance of energy. Not everyone learns from their mistakes, some seem to re-enact their faults perpetually as though caught in a treadmill. The more astute person will establish a base-camp before moving forward, and firmly claim and establish new territory before setting off to higher goals. Using creative imagination to find new opportunities, the wise become authors of their own destiny.

They work according to well-defined plans and principles. These wisdoms are fruits harvested from their earlier exuberance. Plans have the effect of shaping the mind clearly so it projects a better, more efficient intention upon the field of possibility. Principles are firm constraints that enable difficult questions to be resolved without too much soul-searching. The soul has already searched, and decided its position in principle – so we simply need to fall in with its guidelines.

We are directed to greater accomplishments in response to our particular desire-nature. The formula of our life-plan is always a work-in-progress, and we need continually to reformulate strategies if we are to do better than we did. This is the key to mastery – never-ending adaptation and consequential improvement.

Otherwise the frequent disappointments, frustrations and false starts will simply lead to defeatism and self-pity as a retreat from reality. Sadly, it has to be observed, this describes most people in today's world. This indulgence of self-pity is thoroughly demoralizing, and is entirely avoided in a fully mature adult.

Not every bit of the energy invested in consolidation is always well-spent – but over a period of time it usually is; anyway it's insurance, so part of its value is to bestow peace of mind.

DISJUNCTION: A LARGE DISAPPOINTED AUDIENCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF ARIES (27° - 28°)

The hardest lesson we eventually have to learn is detachment

Self-identification rests not in shallow demonstrations of acceptance from others, but securely in our own sense of how we creatively deal with life's challenges and opportunities. The superficial rewards that are offered in life are transient. Only that which is basic, stable and true will endure.

There is little value in pursuing popularity by triggering or responding to fleeting moods of the masses. The audience's disappointment speaks of their expectations rather than the real worth of the celebrity they target.

In order to be free of the seductive pull of popularity, we need to be willing to create disjunction from that which does not offer us lasting value. It is meaningful for a child to copy parents, and students to follow teachers, yet this process is introductory. The enlightened adult needs no parenting. Any attempts, by priests, officials, family and friends, to influence the opinion and behaviour of a mature adult have to be carefully examined. The individual must become indifferent to persuasive rhetoric if they are to remain free to be authentic.

This concept is taught in Buddhism, as the enlightened principle of detachment. Finding our true spiritual path, we learn to cater to nothing external, except to demonstrate preferences. How people respond emotionally to us should not be the major factor when we choose what to do. There is a much more important set of criteria by which to live. This surely has to do with expressing our unique take on life, and the deepest, soul-level motivations that we feel.

Others' feelings can pull us into their world of resentment, prejudice, depression and untruth. This needs to be firmly refuted. We must set boundaries against their cynicism, and disregard how our controversial approach is received; then we are protecting ourselves from its demoralising influence.

We need to be involved with others, since we learn from their teachings and we have both a stage for our self-proclamation and a source of grit to stimulate our growth. However, it is helpful to become self-reflective. Since we cannot depend upon applause, eventually our immature attention needs would probably lead to disappointment and disillusionment.

This reflection appropriately supports the development of our own unique set of values. Otherwise, unconsciously we surrender our true self into the defeats and frustrations of others, and the risk is strong of becoming identified with failure and losing our sacred optimism. Let those who witness our activities be disappointed then, it is not for us to be overly concerned with others' emotional processes.

VENERATION: A CELESTIAL CHOIR SINGING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF ARIES (28° - 29°)

Having faith in the meaning of life, we articulate it through devotion

It is said of the Cherubim that throughout eternity their sole purpose and activity is to praise God through music and song. Within us, we experience the cosmic overtones of this vibration as spirituality – or at least the foundation of spirituality – and this is made known by our attempts to project spiritual curiosity into daily life.

Then we can transform the fear-based distortions, such as self-deception, flattery and fantasy, into more useful expressions such as self-examination, appreciation and imagination. Whatever we bring to the table adds to the feast whenever we tune in to what Sufis call the ‘music of the spheres.’ All personal powers and skills can be harnessed legitimately for purposes of self-projection without fear or embarrassment.

Combining two things, power and beauty, we create the world we choose to inhabit. Each of us is an immortal being, an instrument for enduring visions, and our aspirations hallow the world – our hopes are prayers.

Veneration is a subtle form of articulation. What are being expressed articulately are eternal realities. Bringing them into the world requires both the power to act in the world and the mystical knowledge of how to infuse ourselves with beauty. To be competent in the world of phenomena, we must become competent also – and perhaps first – in the unseen realms. That realm of the psyche that is approached through spiritual practice is largely unknown, and not quantifiable. Materialists therefore disdain it, and often deny its existence willy-nilly, without examining the super-abundant evidence that points to this realm.

Something truly unexpected occurs when we put aside our conditioning, and give praise. There is indeed great power in the voice to actualize our thoughts – hence the importance of cleansing ourselves of cynical conversations. When we speak the name of God, with a tone of beauty and awe, then we invoke divine presence. We therefore invite into our bodies the associated qualities and awareness – of divinity, beauty and wonder.

Few people are willing to raise their unrestrained voices in praise, yet there is a dimensional difference between feeling devotional and expressing that feeling. Something magical happens when we train the voice to express the highest aspirations we can reach – whether or not that is seen as spiritual. Negativity is healed so that we begin to express optimism more readily than cynicism; the result of this healing is seen in our lives as improved good fortune, and a better attitude to difficult situations.

Prayer has become habitual, empty or avoided by so many, yet the sincere seeker comes to understand the esoteric significance of this practice – that devotion beautifies the personality, that prayer is fundamentally human and self-empowering, and that we are psychologically healthier when we engage fully with it.

RELIABILITY: A DUCK POND AND ITS BROOD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF ARIES (29° - 30°)

When we trust in the cosmic order, then everything falls into place

The image is of a very ordinary event: animals finding an environment in which to raise young. Yet a person is born to greater things. Of course we need to become a reliable agency of natural processes like nesting, breeding and feeding, but any tendency to accept such a life as meaningful is evidence of complacency, and is wastage of human potential. Humans are said to be part angel, part animal. The angelic connects us to the Absolute, whereas the animal nature teaches us about fight, flight, food and sex. Competence in a human must surely then have to do with finding a workable balance that acknowledges both parts of our make-up.

We learn how to establish our own world according to our unique needs and preferences, and mostly this is done automatically and without much self-reflection. Yet the inner self would gain much from understanding why these preferred qualities exist, because it is qualities rather than events that speak of the soul's purposes.

All things are fit for purpose, yet we ourselves have a lot to do before we discover what that purpose is. Where do we fit? We need to push ourselves into life with a specific, albeit tentative, intention, and the responses we get will only be smooth and positive if we align with our deepest goals.

If life's feedback shows a lack of fitness then we can try something else. We trust that there exists a cosmic order, even if we may not yet grasp its fullest mystery, and that we have our own special place in it. Our life task is to find it.

To function optimally within the cosmic order, we need to trust in our own inner aptitude and align with it. Rather than seek it through an arduous process of analysis and strain, we can just sink into it by simply being true to ourselves in every moment. This is highly satisfying, and very empowering.

The vast majority of people struggle to find even the same level of worldly competence as animals. We seek to acquire home, job, partner and kids – and we need to understand that these pursuits are all animal functions. Anyone who has managed this is already quite rare. But what of the angelic dimension?

If the function of angels is to awaken in us some resonance with the Divine, then we presumably need to awaken divine qualities in order to become a competent human being. These are universally acknowledged – such things as love, creativity, truth and joy – and we each have our own special mix of them. We learn that by surrendering to something greater than ourselves, our own mix of these divine qualities brings us happiness. We then find that there is as much reliability in our spiritual competence as in our skilful worldly management.

TAURUS

POWER / APPLICATION / AUTHENTICITY / COMMON SENSE / AUTHORITY / DEPTH

I feel the power of nature in every cell of my being yet I prefer simply to surrender into the serenity of silence

Seeing a bull in a field, we intuitively understand this sign on the psychological level: it reeks of power. Except for Scorpio, its need for security is the greatest in the whole circle – and to be secure Taurus feels it needs to be powerful. Without tangible involvement, we cannot express our fullest, empowered potential, and life would lack depth of meaning – yet no sign is more devoted to freedom than this one. The paradox is that we have to come to terms with the dichotomy between involvement and freedom. Seemingly they cannot co-exist, and yet, as the twin aspects of authenticity, both principles are deeply and meaningfully prized.

An extreme intensity of desire is embodied within this exceptionally sensual materialist, and such emotional drives can be felt within as profoundly destructive vulnerabilities, which the raging bull finds impossible to explain; it takes remarkable control and great self-discipline to restrain this force. The channelling and application of such energy explains its toil, hardiness, stability and stamina – and why it is the safe anchorage point for those who are easily overwhelmed by inflated dreams, strong feelings, or unworkable undertakings.

A truly great, watershed-level shift in civilization occurred with the domestication of the ox, enabling ownership of land, and other agricultural advantages that arose from the brute strength of a bull dragging a plough through the earth to establish rootedness, and the emotional and material security of food-abundance. Taurus is down-to-earth and rock solid in character, establishing firm principles, and with a steady, refined and totally realistic approach to life that is thoroughly appreciated for its steadiness. Indeed Taurus likes to own property and solid things that appreciate over time, offering steady returns on investment.

When Taureans adopt an objective or commit to a bond, they stick to their promises and loyalties, remaining unflinchingly faithful to their allegiances. This is how to build that which lasts. It is one thing to build castles in the air, and it is quite another to dig deep foundations, and add the next level only when the one below is firmly and certainly safe. With a plodding, predictable, risk-free, long-term, methodical approach to any task, they cannot do anything except build that which is reliable and functional – and this applies as much to constructing a dependable personality as to amassing more securities and comforts. That which is safe and long-lasting needs to have a root structure that mirrors the branch system – and rooting is all to do with commitment.

Wise people trust those who do not seek position and yet have a steady pair of hands. Without the quality of moderation, authority can become tyranny, so power is best held by those whose involvement is moderated by their equal love of freedom. There are people who desire power for its own sake, but Taurus simply wants to be safe, and must be free. Of course the bull would rather govern than be governed, and yet really its preference is for neither. Power untested is not as powerful, yet the freedom of self-conquest, rather than dominance, is the intention, and the real preference and capacity is for stillness and inner grace.

Like a tumultuous hurricane, the centre is always at rest. Alone in a field it will munch contentedly for ages, impervious to boredom, and will activate its will only when desire takes over – yet it is placid, good-natured and very slow to be aroused in passion. Until then, Taurus is the exemplar of peacefulness and contentment, with the last word in strength – a resolve to do nothing at all, except refuse to budge.

TAURUS WISDOM

POWER

We may trust in the irrepressibility of pure spirit
As much as we accept inner transformation, we are able to transform outer situations.
Hopefulness is a force of nature, a happy marriage between expectation and trust
Faith is rewarded with both spiritual and material richness
Life is death, and we have to come to terms with that

APPLICATION

We optimize achievement by opening up to a higher power
If we awaken to honest self-realization, then we are blessed by spirit.
To the creative optimist, answers and resources are ever close at hand
The spiritual ideal of reciprocity is applied through ritualizing the celebration of giving
The mystery of who we are reveals itself as we serve others

AUTHENTICITY

Caring is valid for its own sake whether or not the recipient is deserving
Desire is an authentic feeling and must not be denied
That we serve is more important than whom we serve
Self-discovery is the emergence of the individual from the group
All we are ever doing is dramatizing the true inner self

COMMON SENSE

Since all is folly, nothing is folly – and realizing this brings ultimate freedom
We must learn to discern between what ennobles, and what betrays spirit
Neither visionary intention nor mundane effectiveness is more spiritual than the other
The exact purpose of human existence is to bridge spirit and matter
Physical and spiritual realities are aspects of each other

AUTHORITY

We need values and goals in order to determine truth from fancy
The mind is shaped and strengthened through guidance
We preserve what has importance with tokens – to bestow durability upon the ephemeral.
Conquest of the lower self leads to mastery and the power of command
Experiences in common sponsor discovery of individual skills and characteristics

DEPTH

As we speak, so we are
Prioritising the soul's journey requires us to be relaxed about worldly outcomes
We do not avoid disappointment by denying life but by affirming faith
To optimize our own achievements and joy, we need the wisdom of others
We illustrate our own qualities only ever in contrast to the status quo

THE EXPRESSIONS OF TAURUS

POWER

TAURUS 1 – 5

The life-force that interpenetrates us is eternal and absolute, and there never has been, or will be, anything else in this or any other reality. To access its incomparable power, we have, at least for a while, to determine a specific unassailable course of action and stick to it at all costs. This mysteriously creates a state of being that inevitably brings about general foundation-level changes in the reality of our situation.

Such certainty of purpose registers even at a cellular level. We surrender fully to a compelling desire – and then we come to realize that we are in no way less than any other force of nature, co-creating the fruits of our imagination. We can easily make physical the wealth of spiritual awareness that we possess, and so become as rich materially as we are spiritually. Or we can rise above social constraints – and encumbering attachments to emotional and physical comforts – satisfied entirely by the nourishing power of this high resonance with spirit.

APPLICATION

TAURUS 6 – 10

Having power, we expect to apply it, to resist imposition and to overcome obstacles in pursuit of our desires, and this expectation is a compelling motivating force that reaches out to find mountains to climb and oceans to cross. Inevitably, issues arise. Often, dark energies become quite dominant, and we have to come to terms with choices where we are absolutely challenged on matters of principle. It takes greatness of self-assurance to trust that the dark side will lead to the light, and indeed that there is no other path available to travel if one is to awaken at the very deepest levels of self.

The supreme test – to master physical reality – requires the attitude of a magician, who applies powerful will, and a profound inner sense of spiritual heritage, in order to shift manifestation around. In all realms, whether higher or lower, the magician, with great aplomb and elegance, plays out the role of creator. Everything is seen on a symbolic level as a representation of the deeper hidden truth – and this way of seeing life becomes a path that supports continual self-renewal. It is found by the wise rather counter-intuitively that optimal personal influence arises through complete self-application in service to the needs of others.

AUTHENTICITY

TAURUS 11 – 15

However absorbing and supportive of self-love, the developing of personal power through overcoming challenges is the lesser game. The soul's magnificence is no dim light to be defined by such empty recreation; it is an aspect of Divine Light and has no limit. Its creative power can be better expressed by taking over the stewardship of growing things; it wants to build something new and lasting.

Authenticity of desire is known to be the seed-form of building, whose potency is magnified according to the degree of passion with which it is vibrated. The physical body is used as a tool to tune up the desire-nature to a high pitch of passion. Like an arrow quivering with maximized potential, vibrant desire is then released towards a specific well-defined vision, which then simply must become real. This is no airy-fairy dreamer playing mind-games – it is an artisan whose purpose is to serve by working hard to make actual things happen.

COMMON SENSE

TAURUS 16 – 20

Things continue the way they are going, and become less energetic, unless impacted by a force equal to the mighty task of resisting this universal, cosmic entropy. To best serve the needs of a naturally-degenerative community, we must learn how to be such a force – to be creative and assert values, yet be flexible according to what is practically possible, thus demonstrating mastery in management.

There is no moderate way to cause to exist that which previously did not exist – because, symbolized on the deepest brute level, tectonic plates are crashing together to make new mountains. What we think of as originality is actually nothing less than the remodelling of the physical universe, rebuilding of reality into new forms, a substantive revolution of materiality itself. Learning how this all works bestows a lightness of being, vast and subtle. In this expanded state we can grasp a strange truth – that, although we must exert our personal authority as an obvious imperative, it is ultimately futile, and an offence against common sense to expect to shift collective realities very much.

AUTHORITY

TAURUS 21 – 25

The right to shape reality is automatically conferred upon those who are able to tune into the wisdom of old – to understand the established operating processes of real life. Anyone with the acuity to read signs and interpret symbols meaningfully will know enough of the racial memory to influence the race. The old is thus honoured and preserved by those who, by taking on a conservative role, keep alive that which still has merit.

We slow down our passage into the future, avoiding a helter-skelter recklessness, by drawing attention to the impeccable beauty and enduring value in our heritage. Thus authority takes on the dignity accorded to an elder and this is no small matter. The power of command depends upon an atmosphere of gravitas backed up with all the symbols of position. By such means one takes on the crucial social responsibility of stewardship that binds the community into expressing proven group values and building lasting group projects.

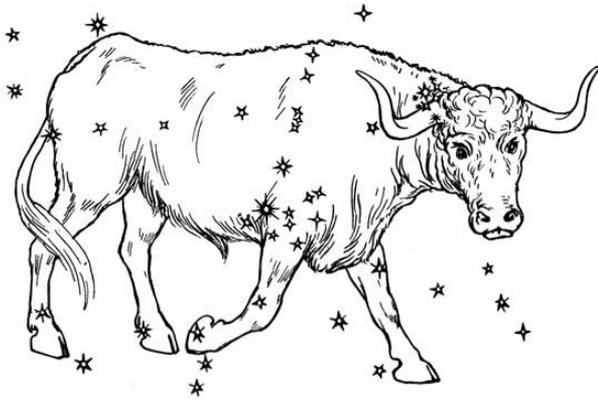
DEPTH

TAURUS 26 – 30

Following on from our mastery of material management, it is good to seek the inner peace that enables us to listen to the soul's quiet voice. Outer realities are given minimal attention as our focus turns within, to attend more sincerely to inner knowledge. There is a shift in perspective where time appears slower, age is appreciated more than youth, and experience more than prospect. Gentle cooperative involvement, both with natural forces and other people, is the natural fruit of such a sense of inner stillness.

The eternal promise of life is revealed. Why compete? Why even strain over much? Things need to be carefully weighed up – perhaps the status quo has its own value, so why move to change anything at all? Knowing already that we can move mountains, the test is to learn how to feel whether they actually need moving. Let superficial shows of aspirations have their place then – all is illusion, all is hoax – and despite all the comings and goings, successes and failures, nothing fundamental ever really changes. Perhaps, on the deepest level, all is unfolding just as it should.

PLANETS IN TAURUS



SUN in Taurus (♉)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 50 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Taurus (♉)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

This is the rock, the safe place that expresses an acute need for tangible material security; it must establish stability, rootedness, solidity and poise into each life situation by slowing things down and being realistic about what is really going on. Feelings are deep and slow, and, with very little wasted emotion, the general influence on turbulent circumstances is settling.

MERCURY in Taurus (♉)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Taurus demands that Mercury's thoughts are physically authenticated, so there is a slower process of communication while it checks out feelings before it settles into an idea. Whether ponderous, or simply considered, this creates a calming, realistic map of reality where generally nothing much is either hurried or silly.

VENUS in Taurus (♉)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

In Taurus, Venus unashamedly enjoys the sensual pleasure of touch, and can bring affection and sexuality into a beautiful, relaxed art-form. Romantic encounters tend to be loyal and long-term, easy, elegant, earthy and physical, with a preference for peaceful, cosy love – and an eye for what works in practical terms.

MARS in Taurus (♂♉)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

The fieriness of Mars has a lot to deal with when encased in fixed earth, is hugely reluctant to start anything, and very slow to find a natural rhythm. Yet when it is moving along it is a steamroller – tireless and all but unstoppable – until finally exhaustion takes over. It can be clumsy, and is better outdoors with a simple task worthy of its impressive strength.

JUPITER in Taurus (♃♉)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

Growth is this planet's principle, and in the earthy way of Taurus is exemplified here by biblical Eden – gardens, forests, buildings, and general land-based, material abundance. Taurus often sees such things as the final proof of life's worth and similarly your Sabian mystery gives a clue as to how your sense of self-valuing can be fully realized in material form.

NORTH NODE in Taurus (♊♉)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

We can get too caught up in the passion of emotional drama, fascinated by its very passion. The test of the North Node in Taurus is to firm up well-considered principles and live by them, making them clearly demonstrated in physical things, especially material abundance. Living in physicality, we show how materiality is but an expression of universal spirituality.

SATURN in Taurus (♄♉)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

This is the plodder, the experienced bank manager, the farmer who plants for the long-term benefit, not for cash-crops. Slow, cautious, methodical and totally trustworthy, Saturn shifts lumberingly through Taurus as though wading through mud, yet dealing fully and competently with all that needs to be put safely in order.

CHIRON in Taurus (♆♉)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

The Earth is hurting and, in Taurus, Chiron knows this and feels it very deeply. Physical therapies, planting and caring about living things, and tuning into Nature are all indicated.

TAURUS – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

RESOURCEFULNESS: A CLEAR MOUNTAIN STREAM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF TAURUS (0° - 1°)

A stream will find its way to the ocean

A clear mountain stream is spirited, pure and free. In essence, so are we.

Resourcefulness is indicated because it arises out of these essential qualities. As the stream races onward, so we dash headlong into the unknowable future with no reassurances except the existential sense that spirit always finds a way.

One of the risks we feel that we take is that, by acting spontaneously in trusting in our naive feelings of desire, we will forego better opportunities. Such doubt diminishes will, and undermines the trust we place in ourselves.

However, we may indeed certainly trust in the irrepressibility of pure spirit. We will always feel the urge to move on – and, deep down, always feel strength in the certainty that as long as we are true, we are eternally safe, and will eventually find our optimal path.

The only activity that can significantly restrict our freedom is a self-selected intention, whether conscious or not. Our goals are the means by which we focus the mind, and pull together all the variables of a situation towards a given end. Very few people have learned how to focus on one thing at a time. To focus on more than one thing is to lose focus – it is not focus. High achievement is realized through an unswerving fidelity to some definite course of action. The stream's single purpose is to unite with the ocean.

Emergencies arise. These are to be interpreted as issues of urgent feedback, which call up previously unused potential in order to awaken new skills and so augment our toolbox of talents.

It is by trusting in the contents of this toolbox that we are freed of the constraints laid down by our circumstances. Patterned behaviour is for those who choose blind obedience for its predictable safety. Freedom is for those who depend on the power of their resourcefulness.

TRANSFORMATION: AN ELECTRICAL STORM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF TAURUS (1° - 2°)

Only if we accept inner transformation, will we transform outer situations

A person is potentially as awesome as a thunderstorm, but most are too timid even to express unique opinions.

Life throws up crises again and again – we can fear them or grasp them. By embracing them as opportunities, we awaken inner forces that cannot only enable us to cope, but actually make us powerful. No challenge ever comes which we cannot answer fully and to our best advantage.

It is by tuning in to the nature of the electrical storm that we reconnect with the forces that birthed us. Magnetism, sound, vibration and release – these elemental events occur eternally both throughout the cosmos, and within us. Our excessive indulgence in comfort and security takes us away from the more profound aspects of who we really are, and what we can do.

The power to have our maximum effective impact on events eventually must call up these cathartic forces of nature that are within us. Only as much as we accept inner transformation are we able to transform outer situations.

Stress is commonplace – even felt by those without much responsibility in life – and irrefutably points to mismanagement of affairs. Whatever arises can be dealt with immediately and completely – to the exclusion therefore of any storm – by one who has found how to access transformative energies within. All complexity is reduced to this one simple and immediate imperative. The thunderstorm is not in two minds, nor patient.

Society fears an individual's passion and has created norms of acceptable behaviour to deny it. This engenders terror in us that we will lose aplomb in public – that we must maintain face. But keeping a false image allows for the build-up of great tensions, and distorts our inner sense of self. A raging storm clears the air and allows us to re-centre in truth.

When we realign with the authentic pole of our being, we connect once more with our ability fully and uniquely to dramatize our lives – present and future – with flair, so that our core values are undeniable and clearly expressed.

HOPEFULNESS: STEPS UP TO A LAWN BLOOMING WITH CLOVER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF TAURUS (2° - 3°)

Human spirit – especially when strengthened by hope – is indomitable

Self-realization is the outcome of both spontaneity and restraint – and we see, in the image of wild clover in a manicured lawn, an easy juxtaposition of both, each enhancing the magnetism of the other. The steps up speak to us of our hope of attainment.

Who we are is a matter of choice – specifically the series of innumerable selections that we have made since birth. It is especially meaningful if we choose our lives to be aligned with our sense of both good order and wild natural beauty.

Most helpful, and possibly the ultimate wisdom, is the attainment, as an everyday condition, of the state of optimism. The danger with this is to fall prey to silly idealism, and practice a self-indulgent disregard of practical considerations and irresponsible beliefs in the glamour of the fantastic. Yet, with such a certain, optimistic attitude to life, every facet of our experience can be seen to have its own charm and logic.

Since we constantly expect – and fully appreciate – good things, then good things are attracted to us; the fruits of life are ours for the taking.

Hopefulness is a force of nature, and has its own special atmospheric quality. In some way it is a happy marriage between expectation and trust. It holds the twin conditions of desire for something particular and acceptance that apparent failure is only ever temporary, and will always lead toward greater success.

Though subtle and sensitive, human spirit – especially when strengthened by hope – is beyond measure, and indomitable.

What is suggested with this imagery is nothing less than the possibility intuitively to grasp a sense of divine reality. There is interplay between freedom and form, anticipation and acquiescence, giving out and getting back – and the indication that the core lesson for life on earth is that we need to be optimistic and adaptable.

FAITH: THE RAINBOW'S POT OF GOLD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (3° - 4°)

Faith brings the power to manifest

Faith is possibly the most treasured achievement of a person – it is an inner assurance that enables us to hold a steady course. It is built by belief and trust, and must be developed and used if it is to be a constant life practice that defines the faithful.

Until faith is adopted as a life path, we are in danger of being catastrophically overwhelmed by floods of emotion – yet when we do adopt it, we are promised a pot of gold. Indeed, Noah had faith that the rainbow was God's covenant, following a flood.

The valid expectation of material abundance acts as an incentive. It helps when we feel a heart-warming sense of gratefulness – it is this feeling that rewards us for keeping the faith.

Always there are physical tokens for whatever spirituality the self has brought into manifestation through its own efforts. Gold is more than currency for exchange; it is a symbol of power, yet also purity and often used to commemorate sacredness, for example, in marriage or religion.

Some people trust in life and present their beliefs confidently and expectantly into the world. Typically they are blessed with a feeling of being rich.

This is because life is a matrix – that's what it is and all it is – an accommodation for the outpourings of mind and heart. We get back what we put out – a faithful expression in material form of whatever we are within.

Life will reflect back to us the implications of poor alignment whenever we wander off the track of our faith into unintelligent flights of fancy. Loss of opportunity and futility are the result.

REORIENTATION: A WIDOW AT AN OPEN GRAVE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (4° - 5°)

The gate to freedom is in the ability to turn feelings around

Everything that is physical will die. We need to have the ability to release our attachments, and move our focus of attention away from what has passed. We are severely tested in life, often to the limits of our capability to cope, and if we are to maintain the integrity of self we must be able to live with grief, and resist the descent into ineptitude born of distress.

One of the most debilitating features of the grief that follows the departure of a loved one is the sense that we are powerless. This, of course, is essentially false because it neglects the creative contribution we have in which we are responsible for the larger whole. Learning how to turn these feelings around is the gate to freedom and happiness.

The widow at the grave indicates our natural inclination to relate with certain special others with an open vulnerable heart. Our needs for warmth, companionship and comfort are usually tied up with one or two particular people. It is quite normal, and not entirely unhealthy, to expand our reach by investing our identity and intimate life circumstances in these people.

It takes great personal aplomb to be able to regroup and refocus. Disappointments, loss and even grief can be transcended by a correct attitude of mind, so that even these most troubling events are seen, by the true seeker, as grist for the mill. The ever-spiralling, eternal, evolutionary journey of the soul requires such examinations for its best progress.

Death is as much a beginning as an ending. We are profoundly challenged to come to terms with loss, to reorientate, and to claim back whatever we had invested in those who leave us. Everything real is within us – what we cannot fully embody within ourselves is not truly ours.

This wisdom applies generally to every aspect of our lives. Whenever we permit reality to become static, we are lost. Each moment is already gone in the instant of its arrival – life is death. The advanced being knows how to release completely and immediately all experiences – they are outworn the moment we recognize them.

CHANNELLING: A BRIDGE BEING BUILT ACROSS A GORGE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (5° - 6°)

We optimize achievement by opening up to a higher power

The gorge is a natural obstacle and is a challenge that requires real focus to overcome. This points us towards the spirit of conquest, which is an inherent aspect of humanity's evolutionary curiosity; it has taken us to the Moon and beyond. In essence, we are able to become free from the inconveniences of physical life through our refusal to be defeated, and finding the application it requires to prevail.

If instead, we look for shortcuts, then the ultimate purpose is lost. We may arrive sooner – yet we will be poorer, deprived of the wealth of the experience, and the rewards from its tougher lessons.

Those who always seek the easy way to avoid challenges inevitably cannot be trusted to back up their word. They have little to give of value that can be relied upon.

Others, the heroic types, will apply the depth and breadth of their conscious abilities and qualities to transform physical limitation into personal or social assets.

To do this involves focussing a strong clear will to resolve an impasse. There is a mystery in this – the secret of channelling – that when we apply ourselves completely to a task, we are assisted as if by, and perhaps even actually by, external subtle forces.

We have humbly to acknowledge that sometimes we depend upon such agencies in order for the best of our inner qualities to emerge into life, especially as we deal with adversity.

By opening up to a higher power – whether we see that as within or without – we further optimize human intelligence, and we benefit directly in the development of practical instinct by which we obtain real benefit from our latent capabilities.

AWAKENING: A WOMAN OF SAMARIA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (6° - 7°)

We need to awaken into honest self-realization in order to achieve our potential

The image of this immoral biblical character warns us of the challenge to steer clear of a tendency to resort to a carefree dissolute attitude – seeking passing pleasure instead of lasting joy – as a distorted compensation for feeling the lack of any real meaning in life.

We can so easily forget an important and extraordinary fact of existence – the coherence of our own essential divinity. Whatever our background and current circumstances, we are fundamentally an aspect of goodness and truth.

It is this fact that creates in us an instinct for higher things. Through it we attract opportunities to open up our sense of what life really is all about, and what we can offer of ourselves.

When motivated by the hope of honest self-realization, we are actually capable of plumbing the depths of life to the utmost reaches of our authentic being. It is true that, like this woman at the well, we may be shunned by society for what is considered prohibited behaviour. However, Jesus made himself known to her – she was blessed by spirit – and subsequently was celebrated throughout history.

In order to find entirely gratifying fulfilments, our strength of will is expressed in an indomitable striving for successful realization of specific goals. Unless we awaken and express all of our abilities, actual and potential, we can lose heart – and yet if we do awaken to them, then we are blessed by spirit.

Typically we all concern ourselves with our own business and that of the family, yet is it not beyond us, as developed beings, to surrender our own pursuits whenever it seems more appropriate to serve another's needs. At this level of awareness we come to see how our business is everyone's business; we serve ourselves as we serve others.

We can even reach levels of insight where our trust and our love of adventure are so strong that we can easily and happily submit to any situation that life presents us, knowing that it will serve us well – whatever the outcome.

SUSTAINMENT: A SLEIGH WITHOUT SNOW

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (7° - 8°)

The creative optimist will make something out of nothing

Although a sleigh is usually associated with snow, there could be many other uses for it that is not contingent upon a very specific set of natural phenomena in order to be valid.

With the right imaginative attitude of mind, we will find sustainment in nature for all our needs to be met, since its key feature is prodigality. Everyone's reality is met and can be satisfied by the resources we find available.

It is a question of aligning ourselves elegantly with what is; only then will we be able to resonate with the full potential inherent in any set of circumstances.

Surely this is how we cope with everyday living? We rise to deal with whatever comes up, with whatever we can find close at hand.

There is magic in our ability to make something out of nothing. Firstly we have to see that there can never be nothing – that there is always something available. Secondly, we need to use the mind as a tool for change – it can manipulate reality to conform to our imagination.

What is the alternative? A life-attitude based on needless acceptance of defeat – a cheerful tolerance of today's frustration in the vague hope of a better tomorrow?

Trust is a learned skill of the mind – it requires that we look optimistically towards the future and confidently upon the present, while downplaying our frustrations with good humour.

SYMBOLIZATION: A CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (8° - 9°)

The spiritual ideal of reciprocity is applied through ritualizing the celebration of giving

At Christmas, we enjoy fully the abundance of the material world, even to the extent that we feel joy when someone else is receiving the pleasure of having something nice.

Symbolized in material form, this is a spiritual wisdom – that the joy of another brings joy to us. In other words the spiritual ideal of reciprocity is applied through practical ritual.

It is a feature of the distortion of the modern world that selfishness is pursued as a way to happiness. Older, better established communities have not lost sight of the relationship between sharing and personal satisfaction.

Opportunities to share need to be created, preserved and honoured because this is a practice essential for self-renewal. The act of giving releases emotional blockages, which would otherwise stifle growth and, in time, cause dysfunction and discomfort. The inclusion of ritual raises the action to the level of sacredness, and so empowers the process.

Whenever this ritual has widespread significance, a further dimension comes to exist, so the connections that bind individuals into a community need to be re-made from time to time to keep them alive and powerful. Shared visions need to be reiterated at the level of tribe and extended family. We may perhaps find it tedious to re-enact old patterns of behaviour, yet their meaning is very potent.

The unification of material and spiritual messages is of deep consequence. By making an ideal out of material reciprocity, and by giving substance to spiritual practice, we bridge the worlds of the seen and the unseen.

Thus we demonstrate the continual re-emergence of spirit into form, symbolized in a Christmas present as it was in the ideal Human that we are remembering and celebrating.

ENLISTMENT: A RED CROSS NURSE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (9° - 10°)

The mystery of who we are reveals itself as we serve others

It is only through the surrender of self-importance that we can truly realize the importance of self. A mystery reveals itself to us as we serve others – the hidden truth of who we are, and what really matters to us.

Even when we don't feel the urge to serve, it may be helpful to act as though we are quite humanitarian. Certainly this often enhances our social reputation, as long as we guard against the risk that such a superficial approach may hinder our grasping the deeper meaning in service.

Yet truly, for its own sake, the loving heart seeks opportunities to care for others with a steady, constant concern; rewards and success are secondary issues.

The benefits are long-term and subtle. Basically, there is no greater path of self-realization than to help others, even when this is at our own personal expense of effort and emotional cost.

A Red Cross nurse is just one example of a person who has enlisted to dedicate themselves to a worthwhile, enduring project. There are many equivalent paths available, one of which will certainly offer challenges and demands that are appropriate to our particular skills and resources.

It is entirely consistent with the fundamental qualities of being human that we will look for an ideal occupation in order to ground our spiritual principles. The philosophy of spiritual wisdom is of no consequence if it lacks application so we seek to create a life that demonstrates in real terms what we believe in and hold to be of lasting importance.

Thus we renew daily our ability to put aside our need for ego-recognition – and by doing so we may start to feel a dissolving of our sense of separateness. When my-self is surrendered, there may even be occasions when the mystical awareness of all-self is glimpsed.

CARE: A WOMAN SPRINKLING FLOWERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (10° - 11°)

Caring is valid for its own sake

This is to do with the high level of stewardship by which we build everything around us into an enduring organism for our own fulfilment. Included in this is our requirement to offer succour to those in need, because we want to do that to feel good.

However, we must be careful not to get too interested in superficial satisfactions and a wasteful worrying about petty concerns. Our ability to help has limits, so that extravagant, foolish expenditure of energy will disempower us from assisting properly with more deserving causes.

The key principle is care. A simple act of watering flowers is evidence of heart-felt interest in the wellbeing of things and presumably, by extension, people. The act of caring is valid for its own sake, because it cultivates the quality of Care, no matter whether the recipient is plant, animal or person – or indeed even deserving.

When we are strong and clear, there is a natural eagerness to pour ourselves into every potentiality of living. We do so by offering to help wherever we can.

Also, here is evidence of the easy and rewarding partnership between man and nature. The image is a symbol of the soul's determination to give constant and tangible manifestation of its creative powers, so that a natural profusion tends to match its inner generosity of spirit.

When we are mature, and free of excessive neuroses, then we inevitably feel responsible for the welfare of the world. Then we have sensitivity to the requirements of those we meet, and the willingness to soften their burden to some extent.

Rewards, for this level of interest in others, are very great. They may well take the subtle form of a feeling of wellbeing, yet also there are usually more tangible compensations. Of course, the recompense can come from an indirect source, apparently unconnected to what we have done. A Sufi teaching suggests that we cannot do work of any kind, at any time, which is not eventually paid for – because otherwise a mysterious, cosmic, energetic balance would be upset.

VISUALIZATION: WINDOW SHOPPERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (11° - 12°)

Desire is an authentic feeling and must be allowed

It is all too easy to put ourselves down and simply dismiss desires as unrealizable. Yet desire is an authentic feeling and, on the path of happiness, must not be denied. It is certain of course that false desire often comes from ego, but normally we can intuitively distinguish the true word of the soul.

Rather than practising self-denial, spiritually it is more meaningful to realize and present new possibilities of personal potential. This is made known through the agency of reckless imagination; Cinderella represents the principle.

It is helpful to consult our emotions and check whether there is good alignment between desires and deeds. If these do not align then ambiguous messages are being sent out that will lead to delay or failure.

Having discovered, upon examination, that further potential is within reach, then action is called for. Some people dream and dally; others live with a constant, restless inner demand for movement towards success.

Aware of our personal magnetism, we expect to win cooperation. A clear and detailed outcome is visualized, and empowered by anticipation of fulfilment. In this way imagination is employed as a tool of magick. The words 'magick' and 'imagination' share a linguistic root, pointing to the power we have to influence future outcomes through the process of visualization.

Also we need to use our imagination to adjust to feedback. The first image of what we desire was perhaps naive or poorly crafted, so versions must evolve in response to experience, a course correction as for a wayward vehicle.

Some people 'see the glass half empty', and go on to use their power of mind to create a future that enables them to validate their pessimism. Others seek to develop their creative capacity so that they can fully enjoy the fruits of their desire. It takes skill and the appropriate mental attitude – but then, what doesn't? To such optimists, 'failure' is seen as no more threatening than apt and helpful feedback en route to victory. They have discovered that on-going realignment, in response to experience, is actually a true path of self-awareness. Paradoxically, and perhaps surprisingly, failure very often serves us to a greater degree than success.

INDUSTRY: A MAN HANDLING BAGGAGE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (12° - 13°)

That we serve is more important than whom we serve

Frequently, tasks appear that could become nothing more than drudgery if performed reluctantly without protest. The porter is in danger of losing all ambition and losing his sense of self-worth if he does not find a way to approach his work positively.

The key to life-satisfaction, whether in the context of work, relationships, home or social life, lies not in the externals but in the way we internalize experiences. Generally speaking, no matter in what circumstances, a joyful person will experience joy, a miserable one, misery.

In this example, when facing potentially soul-destroying conditions, we need to look differently at the matter in hand – either at the detail or at the wider picture. We could challenge ourselves to become absolutely perfect at the task in hand – placing each bag ‘exactly so’ and delighting in their colours and shapes. Or we could discipline ourselves constantly to serve the spirit of industry itself and become a conscious supporter of Work as a spiritual principle.

A person needs to be useful, the integrity of the community requires this – and in fact affirms that, on some level, all functions have equal importance. For example, when garbage handlers go on strike, the health of the city is jeopardized.

It matters less what we do, than that we serve in some appropriate capacity. It is vitality itself that we seek to express, which is not at all dependent upon the specificity of the activity itself.

A happy life requires that we learn to adjust ourselves to circumstances. When we do this properly, as a spiritual practice, then we find that what we actually have is the better option compared with what we thought we wanted.

We come to learn through this that we have greater strength and wider, deeper resources than we could ever have imagined. It is not the case that getting what we want leads to happiness; contentment actually comes from learning to want what we get.

EMERGENCE: SHELLFISH GROPING AND CHILDREN PLAYING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (13° - 14°)

When we improve ourselves, then others also do the same

Whether we think of shellfish groping around in murky depths or kids making up games to learn skills, at all levels of existence, the absolute imperative of individual survival is self-sufficiency – even if the ‘individual’ is in fact an individual group or species.

This degree speaks to us of the importance of the community as a field of potential for the emergence of the individual. We need to resist foolish teachings that suggest that self-abnegation is the only true spiritual path. It is doubtful whether at this period in human evolution it is a true path at all. We are hard-wired for survival of the self – for good reason. Perhaps when we have learned how to be authentic and unique individuals, then an advanced level of awareness would permit altruism as a spiritual expression. Without such a high degree of enlightenment, this behaviour cannot be authentic, and therefore strikes a false note.

The lower orders have a wider perspective on what is considered to be self: the ant identifies itself with the colony, and expresses self-sufficiency of the colony, even at the expense of the particular ant. The cell of a human body is equivalent. By feeling the connection between lower and higher, we grasp that the individual's path of self-expression is not separate from the group's process of evolution. Each is not only interdependent, but is an aspect of the other.

Evolution unfolds not as step-by-step ascension of a ladder, but rather like the mist clears, in a non-linear fashion – and at different times certain cells or individuals lead off in a new way. This is self-discovery and is seen as the emergence of the individual coming out of the group. The experience of high profile has a special quality that requires a clear statement, since the individual is subject to constant group pressure. They must stand for a while, then fall back and allow another to claim center stage.

The group shines its light of attention onto its current hero, whose magnificence elevates one and all, and who is then once again brought down by the general population.

Masters do not waste energy by attempting to raise the group; such a divergence of focus would diffuse their will. They wait at the pleasure of the mass until opportunity arises, then strike out for themselves clear and strong, drawing support from those around who develop beside them.

Being ourselves is the highest service we can offer to the group and to the universe. Yet the self has rhythms: now active, now passive. They are the rhythms that vibrate in order to sound our true note, and this adds to the harmony of the whole. People who believe they are behaving altruistically are deluding themselves; there is always a selfish motivation underlying the apparently humble aspiration to serve. Our current task is to find a way to be who we are, and to use our community as a means to that end. As it happens, there is no better way to serve our fellows.

SOPHISTICATION: A MAN MUFFLED UP WITH A RAKISH SILK HAT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (14° - 15°)

In dramatizing the true inner self, we do not identify with appearances

No matter what degree of sophistication we employ – dressing up in the latest expensive fashions and so on – the absolute integrity of the self will shine through. Our costumes and manners may describe us, but they do not define us. It is said '*manners maketh man*' – this is false; it is the man that makes manners.

We all have our roles to play in life, and it is entirely appropriate for us to be fully aware of what that role is and how best to enact it. Yet all we are ever doing is dramatizing the true inner self.

There is always a risk that we over-identify with the drama and, by surrendering to the image, lose sensibility of our deeper impulses. Then we mistake pleasure for joy and glister for gold.

Yet the risk is worthwhile because, when acting out an imaginary persona, we can uncover a new and authentic aspect of character. Through experimentation, a constant rediscovery of the greater powers latent in selfhood supports superb self-confidence.

Confidence is power. Through this expansion of selfhood we learn that the human spirit has supremacy over all possible limitations or embarrassments. No scenario arises that is beyond our ability to find an appropriate role for.

Society will put pressure on us to dictate the limits of our scope. Yet the developed individual is unwilling to be truly constrained, and becomes able to use all their experience to produce a creative persona that elegantly responds to the needs of the moment, for an unbounded range of possibilities.

We remember that it is only a persona – the surface dressing of something so profound, so mysterious, so undiscovered, that most of the time we can only ever show the merest clue to our deepest character through what clothes we wear and what mannerisms we adopt.

TENACITY: OLD MAN ATTEMPTING VAINLY TO REVEAL THE MYSTERIES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (15° - 16°)

The highest reward is in process not outcome

Despite the apparent futility, the old man keeps on trying to demonstrate to others what he has learned of life's meaning. It is of supreme importance to him, but mainly so that he can reveal the ultimate secrets of life actually to himself. As a life path, this degree offers constant proof that all life is ephemeral and nothing is what it seems. Ambition therefore is clearly foolish – yet since all is folly, nothing is folly. Realizing this, one wins the freedom to be exactly what one is: nothing more, nothing less.

Through his studies, he has awakened to the awareness of how transient is the nature of reality, and therefore how inadequate is any attempt to explain the patterns and equations of life. The mystery of life is not the same for everyone and any attempt to impress our perception upon another is pointless. All that can be done is to awaken ourselves so that others awaken by resonance. A teacher's deeper purpose therefore is to learn what they can about themselves.

So the determination to dramatize to others our own sense of what is real, and the tenacious, repeated stirring-to-effort, is motivated largely by the promise of personal self-fulfilment. The need to share our understandings with another is as much to do with our need for union as it is any compulsion to instruct.

True teaching is based on resonance not ideas. To be known, knowledge must be experienced – as both the presence and absence of a quality or belief. The revelation of both aspects of any teaching is required, as each side of a duality presents itself – now supportive, now challenging. A master shows indifference to short-term outcomes, in the knowledge that eventually a determined student will learn both sides of whatever is needed.

The essential self is always in danger due to inertia because 'self' is an energy configuration, therefore subject to entropy. Because it is kept awake when energized by conflict, the teacher chooses material of a provocative nature, in order to create a revolt in the student. Such an attitude is conducive to transformational growth for those who step up and choose to stay with the process. It takes this constant friction to maintain an uncompromising determination to fulfil our potential.

Nonetheless, even on the level of intellect, realization is of great value and has cosmic as well as personal importance. Both the means, and the result, is an uncompromising integrity of vision. However, there is a warning – that such single-minded focus on the mysteries tends to make us rather unworldly, and then practicalities are not always uppermost in mind.

Whereas tenacity was thought to be the means, it becomes the end. We learn that the nature of reality is sufficiently accommodating that any determined attitude is a valid life-path – and in order to develop such an absolute never-say-die approach, we need insurmountable challenges. Thus, difficulty and dispiriting results may well be the proper circumstances for a true seeker who wants more grit. When we are lucky or courageous enough to find a path that we can commit to, then the perfect task is one that can never be accomplished finally or fully. This is because the process, not the outcome, is the reward.

RESOLUTION: BATTLE OF SWORDS AND TORCHES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (16° - 17°)

We must learn to discern between what ennobles us, and what betrays spirit

What we want and what we need are not always the same. In fact the compelling force of necessity is rarely kind enough to indulge our pleasures much. Yet the mind is as a sword whose sharpness can cut through to the nub of any matter and give clear instructions that should guide us to the right path. Unfortunately, there is often a contrary compulsion within to follow what we hold a torch for, and go against what may be best strategy.

Distracted by things of secondary importance, we can lose self-competence. Yet distraction itself is needed if we are to learn how better to concentrate our attention on appropriate matters. We must learn discernment to know the difference between what is and what is not appropriate. The primary concern surely must always be to demonstrate and develop competence at being ourselves at the most profound level we can reach.

With care, we can learn how to look beneath the surface of the things that come and go, to find a centre deep and true. In every event or thing, however transient it may be, there is a central cause that speaks eloquently to us of its essence-nature. Whether we give our full enlightened attention to the heart of a matter has great consequence, because attention illuminates our path to the future, and shapes our very being.

Life is a glorious struggle – a constant full-on battle between what we must do to survive, and the purposes we pursue in order to give our life a meaning beyond survival and comfort. On this battlefield we are raised or we fall. Nobility of spirit is the true reward that can be enjoyed to the end of our days on Earth – and beyond.

A more immediate and tangible benefit, as we extend our ability to distinguish the important aspects in a situation, is a growing mastery in organizational skills. Understanding how things work and how to make things work, is nothing short of magick. And what skill is of greater value to a magician than his ability to discern the key to a matter – and to know how and when to turn it?

However – a note of caution: our own personal power may well be comforting and impressive, especially when it is not rivalled. Yet it is neither omnipotent nor everlasting. So we learn, whether by example or bitter experience, that the wise respect the power of all others. True personal power is as much expressed in our ability to accept and adapt to the inevitable as it is to change the unacceptable.

Life throws up situations that require us to choose between this and that. The wisdom of any situation comes from finding the resolution of which of two courses to pursue. These choices are very often of very profound consequence – they actually define us, they create our identity. We must learn to discern between the trivial and the consequential, between wants and needs, between struggle and surrender, between that which ennobles, and that which betrays the spirit. As we do so, we gain mastery over our lives and become excellent at managing the changes to suit our preferences and principles.

FACILITATION: A WOMAN HOLDING A BAG OUT OF A WINDOW

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (17° - 18°)

Neither visionary intention nor mundane effectiveness should be seen as more spiritual than the other

If we are dissatisfied with the way things are, we can set about bringing about change. This image – a woman and a bag – is very commonplace, rather like shopping, and shows someone in the process of fulfilling her needs. Many things in life are straightforward enough – yet we must not mishandle them if we are to deal properly with matters at hand. If there is no food in the larder, we need to go shopping rather than just hang a bag out of the window.

Every single purpose we have in life is of some consequence. The functionality of living is multifaceted, and so often seemingly trivial and mundane. Yet the soul's ministry is universal, and every activity is a spiritual experience to the developed being.

Sharing this awareness with other people, and noticing that they are engaged in a soulful act – as indeed we are ourselves – actually creates love, harmony and beauty. It is a very high achievement to bring spirituality into normal daily routines.

For any particular purpose, of greater or of lesser consequence, personal effectiveness is optimized when we maintain awareness of soul consciousness. All the elements of our experience are then commandeered in service towards our highest life attainments.

The distance between where we are now, and where we want to be, is transited by a combination of visionary intention and mundane effectiveness. Neither should be seen as more spiritual than the other.

The facilitation of our life's dream comes down to negotiating the nuts and bolts in real terms.

Such dreams have no place in real life except to the extent that they fulfil the aspirations of our community as much as our own – and this is achieved only by interaction at the level of the mundane.

ORIGINALITY: A NEWLY FORMED CONTINENT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (18° - 19°)

Changing things takes power

Raw substance emerges on earth through the interaction of unimaginable forces that can push tectonic plates into mountain ranges and form new continents. Within each individual the same potency is available; those who claim it have access to awesome creative power – that originality which brings new matter into existence.

Matter and energy interchange throughout eternity, in a long, slow, endless dance without limits of expression. Through cycle upon cycle, reality is reworked into different demonstrations of form by the constant process of recreation. The human mind, when exercised by consciousness, can stimulate these foundation-level shifts in reality. Doing so is both evidence of, and the celebration of, our ability to connect with both physical and cosmic worlds. This is the exact purpose of human existence, to be the bridge between spirit and matter.

The very ground of our existence is shaped by personal experience to conform to our desires. In other words, at this intensity of passionate involvement with life at its most basic level, substance is shifted to conform to individual will. That which is substantial, and that which is not, are continually shifting and changing, one into the other.

Unlikely as it may sound, the entire face of the universe is subject to this process. It takes a mighty confidence to know and trust this, yet with such confidence, we can remodel reality entirely.

This is none other than the dramatic exposition of a profound cosmic truth – that humanity has the ability to constantly re-establish itself, and its complete character and circumstances, according to whatever new powers and opportunities may present themselves to whosoever is ready and willing to grasp the nettle and claim such authority.

The danger that goes with such influence is the genius we could have for futile turmoil and finding cause for upset in everything.

At a very high degree of attainment, the individual will experience this capability as the gift to establish a link into the absolute stream of life force that descends through the crown as a flow of energy and comes to rest eventually in the origination of entirely new substance.

EXALTATION: WIND, CLOUDS AND HASTE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (19° - 20°)

The ego's exaltation lies in the depth of its stability during changes

Transiency – symbolized by the racing of clouds across a windy sky – stimulates a renewal of vitality. Each momentary scene of our lives is a picture of how various forces have found dynamic equilibrium to express one particular fleeting truth of existence; each new scenario is another examination to see if we can handle it elegantly.

That which distinguishes us, and our way of doing things, from others is the ego; it gives shape to a unique set of attitudes, beliefs, habits and perceptions that spin the divine message into its own pattern of expression. And of course the interaction with the world at large subjects each of us to the spin of others. We would become dizzily disoriented if the ego had less aplomb; it actually needs to feel a little self-important to do its job, which is to bring stability so that we can cope with life's changes.

Constancy of change creates the illusion of superficiality; it often seems that not much in life has meaning or even consequence. This view is a reflection of the instability of an underdeveloped ego. By investing more of ourselves, more passionately, in the details of what's happening, here and now, during ordinary, conventional and mundane events, the ego can develop its necessary strength to measure up to life on our own terms.

Then what ripens within a mature individual is a masterly efficiency to bring a measure of control and stability even to non-ordinary events – those unfolding during the transitional stages of evolutionary, or possibly revolutionary, crises.

Having mastered two important control issues – what to influence and how to exert that influence –we are likelier to feel confident enough to begin to relax and trust more in the flow of things. Then, the possibility arises to demonstrate a rising above the ego, a spiritual lightness of being. This hints at our exalted station, speaks of the soul's essential freedom, and is akin to the cheering effect of sunlight.

Spirit is, by nature, free. It does not enjoy such constraints as must be endured to inhabit this world of clay. Therefore each of us has somehow to come to terms with the need to find balance between two awesome forces – spiritual liberation and worldly involvement. Too much in one direction and we float on the surface of life and experience superficiality, in the other direction, seeking too much external stability, we find the result is stagnation.

There is a test of relevance. So much of what seems superficial and trivial is indeed truly trivial and should be ignored if we are to avoid wastage of our own precious life force through careless diffusion. What is and what is not perceived as trivial remains at the discretion of the individual.

CONFIRMATION: A FINGER POINTING IN AN OPEN BOOK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF TAURUS (20° - 21°)

We need values and goals in order to determine truth from fancy

A book that records some small part of our racial wisdom is ineffective except to the extent that it is read, and understood, by a contemporary student seeking to confirm and develop their own ideas.

The power of the human mind needs to be held in focus to be creative and useful. It is by pursuing our purposes and interests that we can pull the attention to a sharp point.

By this process, we hone our insights and become empowered to reach out into the world of events and phenomena. We learn to shape them and so find our own way to delve into the life's unexplored potentials.

We need values and goals in order to determine truth from fancy. What doesn't work for us doesn't work, so we reject it. We are thus made capable of a fine power of discrimination.

Each complete rearrangement of human affairs has its own significance, and we yearn to penetrate its meaning on an entirely personal level. Concepts and theory are the dry speculations of philosophies, yet all of us want to validate wisdom in the context of our own worldly reality.

We are bound to adjust the hypotheses of others to be in accordance with our own experiences. If wisdom teachings do not fit usefully – to help us live normal lives – then we will find our own particular way to rectify them to suit our special purposes.

Otherwise, through blind obedience to the written word, we become automatons enslaved by the persuasions of those who have the will and confidence to proclaim and pontificate.

GUIDANCE: WHITE DOVE OVER TROUBLED WATERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF TAURUS (21° - 22°)

The mind is shaped and strengthened through guidance

In Sufism, the white dove is symbolic of Holy Spirit. There is a part of us, deep and abiding, that resonates with this image. It is this part of us that can be identified as the Guide. If we find an external version of this feeling, then we are directed towards a person for instruction, otherwise we are drawn to stimulate this sense of perfection on a deeper more personal inner level through situations, people and ideas.

Two contradictory core beliefs exist within the minds of people. Some see danger and scarcity, fear predators, and expect trouble. Others trust that there is always a way out, a choice to rise above it all and enjoy. On a very practical level, the positive attitude is safer, in fact, safe – and yet some of us need to be guided towards this belief.

The default condition in life, freely given and ever available, is the understanding of this. We have actually to do work, and creatively insist on pessimism, in order to attract bad luck. In other words, relaxing is a very positive life strategy.

An unencumbered mind is creative, effective and optimistic – but it can produce some very unpleasant circumstances if it is allowed to gather dirt and dust around itself, by habitual thinking, woolly or detrimental thoughts.

Mind is by nature flighty and easily seduced; it needs to be shaped and strengthened through guidance. When we have clear reasons, well-defined purposes, and meaningful thinking processes, then we become skilful in reconciling our difficulties in life.

We are born of spirit. As a direct result of this, we have an indwelling orientation towards the re-enactment of divine heritage. The heart knows how to pull us towards the essential pole of our sacred centre.

The beauty is that this all happens whether we want it to or not – automatically. As long as we do not actively steer away from it, we will always be somehow guided towards the true and deep centre of our sacred self.

PRESERVATION: JEWELLERY SHOP

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF TAURUS (22° - 23°)

We preserve what has importance with tokens – to bestow durability upon the ephemeral.

Whatever is going on for us psychologically is given physical form in the immediate circumstances of our lives. In fact nothing else is. What we see happening around us is who we are. We must not get confused about which aspect of this is cause and which is effect – we are the cause; the effect is the outer reality.

We determine what we value in our everyday lives, to the level of preservation and cherishment, according to the value within ourselves. A writer will treasure a piece of their succinct, inspiring prose, a traveller will have photos of places, and a mother will love her children. Typically what we most appreciate is a reflection and measure of the effort expended in our achievements.

These tokens of effort give durability to what otherwise would be painfully ephemeral. We want to preserve what has been important to us – and a jewellery shop very often helps us to do this.

It is the glory of this world that it has the capacity to reproduce an unlimited kaleidoscopic range of phenomena to illustrate, through physical embodiment, what is going on in our minds. So we always tend to seek out that which can shape our vision within a larger dimension.

It is useful sometimes to project a clear strong statement of worthiness into our community – “*I can afford gold, take me seriously!*” The inclination we have to direct our aspirations towards non-trivial expression is in line with our sense of self as worthwhile, and somehow a seeding of something eternally valid and consistent.

Naturally this healthy and growthful experience is subject to distortion if its subtlety is lost – so we must remember that the abuse of this principle will have unwanted consequences. Greediness betrays the soul in its quest for false gold; fame and fortune are poor substitutes for a sense of one’s wellbeing.

Luxury can be evidence of great success as we develop skills and character. Our joyful experience of abundance comes as we participate in fair rewards for our integrity – the alignment of body and soul in the pursuit of meaning and happiness.

COMMAND: A MOUNTED INDIAN WITH SCALP LOCKS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (23° - 24°)

Conquest of the lower self leads to mastery and the power of command

The power of command is a quality of great worth and found in only a few exceptional people. Often such people take a pride in their appearance as a tool to convey this quality – although in the modern Western culture it is more likely to be an expensive suit than scalp locks.

There are other personal attributes that support command, and these include the power of attention. At the highest levels of attainment, senses are honed and brought to the full service of an individual's aspirations and ambition.

Taking a position of leadership in no way removes the possibility of heart empathy – but there is a temptation often to ride roughshod over the feelings of others, and even behave ruthlessly with complete inhumanity.

The lesser person will be content to achieve conquest over an enemy – even enjoying the momentary supremacy – while the master will develop an unimpeachable conquest of the lower self, through a life path of constant discipline and self-control.

What arises as a direct result of such self-discipline is the facility to discipline others. Indeed, the ability to take a measure of control over both nature and the future can actually unfold. Exceptional authority is the result.

In less dramatic terms, in ordinary life, we find ourselves pushed and pulled by external forces – social and physical. To deal with them satisfactorily and take command of our life requires discipline.

The greater our power of self-control, the luckier we seem to get. It is not luck in fact – it is simply the echo of the work we have done on ourselves. Rewards come in the form of both material acquisition and development of spiritual qualities.

RECREATION: A LARGE WELL-KEPT PUBLIC PARK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (24° - 25°)

Communal experiences help us to discover our individual skills and characteristics

In order to create and maintain resources on a community level, there needs to be a body corporate, like a council, whose mandate is to put collective issues above the personal in importance. Yet we must be careful not to surrender our uniqueness of personality and accept imposed judgements about what is good and true – that would tend to trivialize our lives.

However we surely can see how there is great merit in the devotion of time and effort to assist the practical welfare of people collectively – for example in keeping a park.

Then we can all use resources that are only feasible for a community to afford, so each member has a high degree of self-enjoyment as a direct result of this spirit of collective collaboration.

The economic and practical benefits are obvious; also there is also the potentially transformative personal gain for each person who takes on a special role in such project – because the division of labour will never be equal, and this could be an area of potential conflict that needs skilful handling, which takes a high degree of integrity.

The essential point made here is the emphasis on common experiences of humanity as the setting for an individual to discover their skills and characteristics, with particular focus on recreation as an appropriate application of available resources.

In isolation, we could never fulfil our wants and needs – we need interactivity with others.

It is further implied that self-discovery and self-realization comes about almost as an incidental fruit of such interactions, which provide the grit that stimulates the development of a very wide range of personal attributes.

CONSTANCY: A SPANIARD SERENADING HIS SENORITA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (25° - 26°)

As we speak, so we are

The skilled individual may have ‘kissed the blarney stone’ and be able to add wit and humour to flattery in order to control others with the smooth talk of a silver tongue. Yet the wiser individual will see the futility in this misuse of glamour.

The reality we encounter is built by what we think, say and do – and every little contribution matters. A casual remark here, a white lie there...what does it matter? Well it does matter. Each nuance of what we allow out has its subtle effect – it materializes.

Those of us given to poetry and music are asked to honour these powerful devices as they create their effects. Through constancy we can become the embodiment of the ideals that romance points towards. If the soul exults in the beauty of love’s language, then we must be true to that feeling, or we will betray it as do prostitutes and gigolos.

As we speak, so we are. What comes out of our mouths is a measure of what comes out of our hearts. If our hearts are to be true, then what we say must be true.

Also, we need to remember that the vision we are projecting into the world’s future is not only that which pleases our own desire – it is greater than that because others also participate in its creation.

If our soul is to be undeniably present within our created vision, then so must others’ souls. This requires a kind of courtship – soul needs to be reassured, coaxed, serenaded, and won. To achieve this insincerely is a betrayal at the level of soul – and it is difficult to think of a more poignant crime.

With constancy, we learn that everything is at hand – that all we desire is already ours, and that no sense of the need for compromise is truly valid.

DETACHMENT: SQUAW SELLING BEADS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (26° - 27°)

The soul is indifferent to circumstances and scenarios

Whatever life throws up as a challenge or temptation, a person who is anchored to an inner sense of self will always ring true and remain dignified and calm, little troubled by outer circumstances.

A squaw scratching a living at the roadside is an image associated with squalor and poverty – yet these are only the outer conditions of her life, and say nothing of the depth of richness experienced within.

This inner wealth is a cornucopia of gifts, and a person who draws on these hidden reserves of skill is paying tribute to what is the heritage – the soul – of their culture. We can see the beads now as having a much deeper meaning, they are more than demonstrations of dexterity; they contain a poignant record of times gone by, anchoring us to a past upon which today's reality, and our resourcefulness, have their foundation.

Humanity has an astonishing ability to respond to any situation, however squalid, and find a way to express joy and creativity within it. One who has this realization will move from one thing to another with no attachment to anything permanent – since anyway nothing is permanent – and no attachment to positions of importance, since nothing external has importance to the soul.

However, we need to avoid being stuck in the distorted interpretation that 'nothing matters so life is sterile'. This leads to isolation and the self-fulfilling outcome of unfruitfulness. The fruits of one's abilities may well be inconsequential, yet without them, the talents that produce them cannot be developed, and these are the true treasures. The beads are near worthless; the skill is priceless.

Detachment is a state of grace; it certainly does not preclude full and sensitive participation in the affairs of others, it simply allows for that participation to be without agenda – having no intention to exert unasked-for influence. This is described by Sufis as *'being in the world but not of the world'* – this is a strange idea to many Westerners, yet well-understood in India and the Middle East. We take the perspective that we are simply witnessing a mirror image of inner hidden processes, which we find engaging and worthy of constant review. Such a review function cannot operate when we get too involved, so we downplay the importance of things and circumstances, releasing attachment to public opinion and material security in order to turn within, to seek ancient and intuitive wisdom.

The soul is impervious to the needs of the personality and seeks to be neither rich nor poor, neither loved nor despised, neither respected nor disdained. These are petty irrelevances that threaten to distract from the true purpose of the inner self, which is to experience itself as fully as possible.

PERSUASION: A WOMAN PURSUED BY MATURE ROMANCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (28° - 29°)

We do not avoid disappointment by denying life but by affirming faith

It is useful to consider the journey of the incarnated self as an aspect of the soul's journey through eternity. The rigours of physicality forbid the survival of casual preferences, and demand that only truly enduring qualities are examined in depth. Eventually all potentials will be realized – because life is ageless and endless – however this pruning process facilitates timely optimization of the soul's most important current priorities.

By identifying fully with all eventualities, we can come to understand that external events are simply expressions of conscious and unconscious personal choices, rather than enforced limitations.

The feeling state of appreciation, a most joyous and sought-after experience, is heightened when this pruning process has reached a certain level of maturity. With fewer distractions and less confusion, the more mature individual can focus and project more of the soul's deepest qualities. This, of course, attracts the external situations that bring clarity of form.

Motivation is of great importance. Whereas imagination is indeed a prerequisite for life optimization – it is not enough; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Without motivation insufficient will is awakened to project imagination into substance. Rewards then fall short of expectation.

Expectation itself is an inherently-arising condition of the human spirit. We, as a species are imbued with hope. Even after previous disappointments, we can be persuaded into romance; its glamour is allowed.

Disappointment is to be avoided; it is demoralising and robs us of will. This brings further disappointment and begins a downward spiral. The trick is not to take any deprivation as final. The struggle between the soul's priorities and the ego's propensities is that which drives the life of a progressive person. Such a person always returns to the light after fact-finding sojourns into the darkness. This is the only means by which maturity can develop. We may well be light-beings, whose instincts ever draw us home, yet we are entirely fascinated by the glamour and romance of the darkness. Long may it be so! Without this, there is no driving force to propel life vigorously. So it is not by denying life that we avoid disappointment, it is by affirming faith.

In a false understanding of modesty, which is so often an excuse to hide the real problem of under-stimulated will, we are in danger of settling for less. We must not lose heart, but refuse the lesser with a confident expectation that the greater is at hand.

CAPABILITY: TWO COBBLERS WORKING AT A TABLE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (29° - 30°)

To optimize our own achievements and joy, we need the wisdom of others

At one level of interpretation, two old men are putting away their lives on tasks that lack personal meaning or life satisfaction. And indeed many people engage in jobs to pay the rent rather than to fulfil personal dreams. This can so easily lead to a very grim attitude and a grey heart.

Yet looking beneath the surface of the task of shoemending, we can see the need for a keen eye and a sharp intelligence applied to a very specific outcome. The two men are in a working relationship, one that requires a very particular form of reliable communication so that they operate effectively together as a team.

Each has their own talents and preferences that blends with the other so that a harmony is achieved and the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. Individually they would be far less impactful than they are as co-workers.

The artisan and workman have a unique and highly respected quality of integrity that is derived by their simple and absolute commitment to performing skilfully the task at hand. This is done by balancing the pros and cons accurately for each of the many aspects of the job – customer liaison, assessment of damage, cost benefit calculation, knowledge of materials, methods, and so on.

Taking this metaphor into our normal lives, we see that we gain much if we become capable of calling upon the general assistance of others when we have complex challenges to deal with. To harness the power of a division of labour requires particular, and highly important, attitudes, talents and social skills.

We need the wisdom of others, and so we need to learn how to facilitate sharing, in order to optimize our achievements and joy.

We can make the world our own – not only by developing our own capabilities but by learning how to enjoy those of others too.

ALOOFNESS: PEACOCK PARADING ON AN ANCIENT LAWN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF TAURUS (29° - 30°)

Seek answers from within, if necessary against popular opinion

The ancient lawn in the image symbolizes racial heritage and history; the peacock's display is contextualized by this background. From this, we remember that we can only illustrate our special qualities in contrast to the status quo. Defiant strutting actually dignifies what went before – by selecting specific old ways and wisdoms as chosen markers against which to push.

It is helpful to externalize the doubts and deficiencies in our self-understanding. We must make choices about exactly what to parade in public, and this tells us a lot about what we aspire to be. We get information from this, which helps us to refine our general approach to life. We learn to see criticism as clues, through which to find balance between what we want of society, and what society wants of us.

Consciously or not, we are ever struggling to develop our own, highly personalized, set of inner values. We do this by examining our aspirations against eternal values, partly discovered by those who went before us, and encapsulated as laws and morals. Others have struggled to find their truth before us; we walk a well-trod path.

Too much self-contemplation can be as damaging as too little, and eventually can become unrewarding. However, it is highly beneficial occasionally to turn within, and bring the mind to a state of repose. This allows us to validate our world-view on the level of meditative thought, and feeling.

The striving for outer ornament is a tool by which we emulate those whom we admire. We can raise ourselves momentarily to a higher station by the *'fake it 'til you make it'* principle, which is very useful because it stimulates both the desire for, and the knowledge of, our idealized potential.

By remaining aloof, we diminish the influence of others' opinions and atmospheres, and this underlines our willingness to seek answers from within.

Sadly, despite our deepest yearnings, we will never be completely understood. Our values will never be totally aligned with another, and eventually we are left alone to uncover the deepest aspects of the mystery of who and what we are. That's something we all have to learn to accept.



GEMINI

APPETITE / FRESHNESS / AUDACITY / PARTICIPATION / INSPIRATION / ENCHANTMENT

I really find life absolutely interesting and love to understand both sides of every new thing

Life is interesting when we are youthful and free-thinking, because our situations are the expression of vitality. Play leads to both knowledge and wisdom with no burden of justification. This is a philosophy – *life is fun, enjoy it!* Curiosity is driven by an instinct to explore, but Gemini is more breadth than depth, so adventures can lack focus. Moods are erratic – from introverted self-contemplation to shallow gossiping – yet always uniting intellect and intuition with slick alacrity. To test whether freedom truly exists, we must celebrate fully what liberties apparently are offered. This can be done in an exuberant display of childlike enthusiasm, allowing spontaneity to determine behaviour. Society puts boundaries in place only as a demonstration of appropriate good stewardship. Further restrictions need to be questioned – why are they necessary?

The Twins' symbolic two pillars signify all duality, including the polarity of spiritual and material, also the rational and the instinctive – and the mission to settle and merge all such inconsistencies into one. This points to the rare gift to experience a fusion of extremes – living two mutually dependent conflicting forces at once – materialistic scepticism as well as naive inspiration; the vanquisher and the vanquished; the healer and the client; the student and the teacher. From this ingenious, constant repositioning, develops awareness of the intimate relationship between the state in which we manage the mind, and the state in which we find our circumstances. Then the game becomes how to manage our thoughts. The study of people, of ideas, and of processes leads to a fine ability to organize thought into a clear focus that can change things. It leads to a much finer sense of self, more subtle awareness, a greater depth of joy. These qualities are non-trivial, true and deep, and may successfully be projected outwards so that new situations are created – that stimulate further interest and further opportunities to become involved with new ideas and experiences.

Communication is the sacred purpose of these reporters, teachers, diplomats, interpreters, linguists and writers. It's not important what the message is, as long as messaging occurs. This is networking – connecting so that information can flow easily and quickly – and its importance is absolute, since without it nothing at all can occur; it enables a fellowship of sympathetic souls. To raise such a code to an exalted state, there must be conditions to sponsor each viewpoint without prejudice. Each voice needs to be able to be heard so that its wisdom has the right to exert its fair weight of influence – according to popular opinion, not imposed belief. Freedom of speech is evidence of freedom from fear, at both the individual and collective levels.

The gift to explain ideas in words was once revered as mystical. Writing was honoured as religious activity, and words were understood to be magical symbols, mirrors of the Mind of God. With precise tone and the correct sacredness of approach, they were spoken to create effects, summon the angels, and heal the sick.

When we simply stop time for a moment, and really see with fresh eyes what is before us, we awaken to the deepest of mysteries. Even in trivial encounters – with a person, or aspect of nature, or just in being alive – there is a profound secret in the here and now. Each person has a unique and subjective glance at Unity; each one valid. Each moment is a reworking of the eternal kaleidoscope; each one valid. In this realization is to be found the most graceful lightness of being when we simply and completely allow it to be so.

APPETITE

Inquisitiveness keeps us prepared for the unannounced calls of fate
Appreciation and abundance keep alive a community's awareness of spiritual values
Authority is given to those who can achieve
Rituals renew our initiatives
Through the tangential touch, we link to everything else

FRESHNESS

Progress is mostly about taking risks as we follow our urges to enrich our experience of life
We can rely upon nature to fund all of impulses
If life circumstances are inadequate to provide scope, then we need to change them
To realize our potential wealth, we follow the formula: preparation, practice, power
In passion, danger of death does not disturb us

AUDACITY

An aware person sets a specific orientation for their day-to-day lives
Freedom is expressed in a unique and self-assertive character that rebels against tyranny
The greatest accomplishment is mastery of the ego
We actually cause effects first in the unseen world through a web of undercurrents
One familiar with our roots sees us – because they hear our unguarded, graphic truth

PARTICIPATION

Mature adults assertively claim full involvement in shaping their affairs
Soul achievement is measured by awareness of self and empathic appreciation of others
By mixing with our own kind, we focus our uniqueness, and so perfect our life potential
Experience is more important than events – and wisdom of greater worth than individuals
Things flow when everyone plays their part

INSPIRATION

Debate upholds the honour of human spirit, crafting justice and depth of principle
Our values, ideals, aspirations and prospects depend on community exchanges
The birthing of inspiration necessitates a degree of sanctuary
Life is never fixed, but lived energetically between what is safe and what is fun
We put our stamp on the world by showing of the relationship between Spirit and Matter

ENCHANTMENT

The true perception of beauty is a spiritual experience
We have found our proper place only when we spend our money and time enthusiastically
On the spiritual planes, all failure and success is futile
By revitalising others, we become more enlivened ourselves
Natural endowments are gifts of nature, to be shared

THE EXPRESSIONS OF GEMINI

APPETITE

GEMINI 1 – 5

To the adventurous, life is the experience of adventure; to the playful, all things are toys. If we live with the same open-eyed joyfulness, which normally we associate with children, then all material pleasure can be fully and unashamedly appreciated, and every opportunity grasped – we are hungry to find ways to enhance the enjoyment and beauty in each and every detail of our circumstances, delighting in the process. This custom expresses an appetite for living, and keeps us thoroughly invested in the evolutionary advancements of self and community. Life throws up any number of available experiences, each of which has its own attraction and validity, and can be considered a meaningful adventure to the curious-minded. There is always a risk with adventure, and yet a far greater one without it – the danger of stagnation.

FRESHNESS

GEMINI 6 – 10

Each of us has a particular background of information and wisdom that makes us lean towards our own sense of what best serves us and others. Building on these past influences, we offer ourselves to every new situation, and contribute creatively and fully in the overall wellbeing of our community, by bringing freshness of perspective. The very differences between us all, of specialized activities and personal enthusiasms, are the components of a collective network of continual cooperation – and the commonality of skills, opinions, language and background, are the building blocks of this network. These exchanges create clear guidelines for individual members to establish the all-important connection upon which a community has its foundation.

A deep level of empathy and intuition unfolds as a direct result of the great multiplicity of seemingly trivial interactions, and this creates the sympathetic fellowship of souls that is our wider community. So, it is imperative that each is allowed full opportunity to participate in an exchange of views, and open up new facets of personal expression. Only in this way can we expand the sense of self into true spiritual fellowship within the community, each taking full advantage of this extraordinary intersection of purposes.

AUDACITY

GEMINI 11 – 15

Seeking richness, of expression and reward, it is mainly through abandon and mental youthfulness that creativity is allowed its fullest, inspired degree of imaginative reach. A combination of intelligent planning and intuitive inventiveness equips Gemini to cope competently with all emergencies, and thereby bestows a near-reckless disregard of normal cautions and an extraordinary level of daring self-confidence. Coupled with sparkling, natural charm, this sign is capable of far-reaching subtle influence.

Invariably freedom must be protected and verified, so if we become the target of exploitation, or the object of an inconsiderate attitude, then audacious self-assertiveness arises. Individuality is a force that will always demand autonomy and behave according to its own sense of relevance – and if not in keeping with accepted ways, then as a voice apart, asserting its own values and views.

PARTICIPATION

GEMINI 16 – 20

With intelligent participation, we find the ability to learn and understand things, so we can deal with new or difficult situations. The task of self-development is considered an entirely reasonable coping strategy, which includes conscious preparation for anticipated challenges that might come up, often together with a delightful ability to harness cooperation, and become immersed in communality of endeavour.

The human mind is capable of such profound concentration that materiality bends to its will. Such specialized focus requires motivation, and very often this is found with this promise of material abundance. The luxurious trappings of social status, which are emblems of individual success, are there to be enjoyed as fully as success itself. It is this very fullness of life, with its various associated enhancements, which raises individual personality into exalted states, and amplifies personal will. This same ability to be absorbed and focus the mind is applied to the task of holding a clear sense of identity whenever external forces push and pull.

INSPIRATION

GEMINI 21 – 25

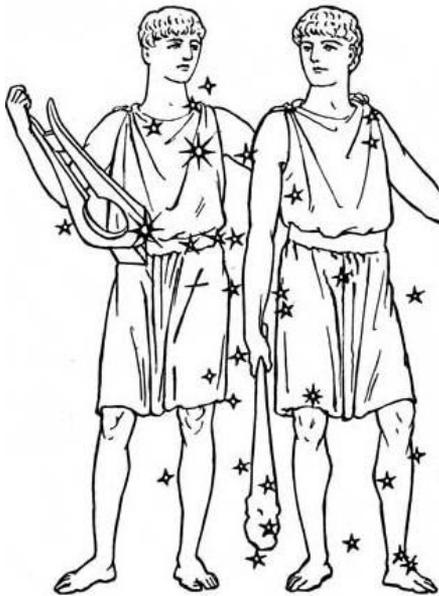
Gemini happily inhabits the shoreline between what is and what could be, playing with things and thoughts with a trickster's dexterity, and a child's innocence of agenda. This generates an atmosphere that so often attracts the muse. If we are prepared to risk rattling the status quo, then every new situation becomes an opening that supports us on our path of growth, and the reward for such uncensored personal participation in events is to reach an inspired level of understanding. When our aspirations are allowed to soar, we reach for the skies, and in so doing become a model for others, and consequently raise their eyes up to greater imaginings. The birthing of inspiration demands some degree of protection. So, since fledgling ideas need to be nurtured, we have to put our stamp on the world – but only to a certain extent, because life is never fixed; it has to be lived energetically somewhere between what is safe and what is fun.

ENCHANTMENT

GEMINI 26 – 30

There is a compelling force, evidenced by the power of nature, which can momentarily stop the world and freeze our attention to the perception of something awesome, the magic of splendour, an enchanting experience that Gemini lives for. The revelation of beauty is a spiritual experience, and we want to find that quality within as a resource, and as proof of our own cosmic significance. Then we can get into a state on the spiritual planes, where all investment in failure and success is seen as futile, so we can easily let go of any attachment to the rewards and penalties of normal life and rise above even the best and worst of ordinary circumstances. Radiant and charming, we bring the light of optimism to all around, and affirm, through a beautiful nature, the presence on earth of such qualities.

PLANETS IN GEMINI



SUN in Gemini (☉II)

Sun |Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 86 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Gemini (☾II)

Moon |Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

The polarity of ideas that splits the mind of a Gemini is experienced with this moon as constant restlessness. It must have, and can adroitly handle, interactions with others on all levels of mind and heart, and can be a key emotional feature within the centre of many circles simultaneously.

MERCURY in Gemini (☿II)

Mercury |Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Mercury moves quickly carrying messages to all parts of the mind and body, and to others. So in Gemini it is at home – fast, dexterous, clever, sparkling and free of dogma, it picks things up quickly, explains them well and is generally light and easy. What is most enjoyable is a new interesting connection – just for the sake of connecting.

VENUS in Gemini (♀II)

Venus |Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

In Gemini, Venus takes on an ability to relate quickly and easily to anyone and everyone, instantly finding intersections of interests – and having no willingness to judge and no reluctance to welcome a new playmate. They may forfeit a little depth in exchange for breadth, and find any absence of intellectual stimulus rather boring.

MARS in Gemini (♂II)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

Energetic Mars, looking for fun and purpose, is almost completely unable to exclude trying their hand at anything in life – and quickly learns how to do any number of activities simultaneously rather than feel underused, restless and bored. It is an excellent multi-tasker, and fixer, yet is really best kept away from precise matters of serious consequence.

JUPITER in Gemini (♃II)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

Jupiter is expansive and all-embracing, seeking in Gemini to accumulate every experience it can through breadth of connection, and relating to as many people, ideas and activities as possible. It sponsors acceptance and shuns judgement, becoming versatile, well-read and friendly in its purpose to communicate freely and widely.

NORTH NODE in Gemini (♊II)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

Having evolved a sophisticated philosophy, and enjoyed the freedom of wide spaces for mind and body, it becomes a spiritual challenge to engage on a mundane level, seeking further evidence of truth and wisdom on a more workaday level.

SATURN in Gemini (♄II)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Saturn never quite knows where to put its foot down in Gemini – the line is always moving with the breezes of new factors to take into account. Yet the stabilising influence is very helpful for dynamic projects and scenarios where quick thinking creates useful guidelines just for the time being.

CHIRON in Gemini (♆II)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

In the 1980s, when Chiron entered Gemini, more esoteric works were seen on bookshelves – a symbol of the wider intellectual curiosity of this planetary position; it wants to know about everything. Building an accurate, flexible, mental map of reality is of main importance here – however, what can be tricky is choosing one, only one, particular life direction.

GEMINI – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

CURIOSITY: A GLASS BOTTOMED BOAT IN STILL WATER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF GEMINI (0°- 1°)

Inquisitiveness keeps us prepared for the unannounced calls of fate

At times, when not subject to the pressure of wants and needs, we are moved in certain ways to take definite creative action on our own account.

One pressing call to action is curiosity – we tend to be strongly drawn to keep abreast of what is around us. What may well have originated as an important survival strategy, has evolved into a willing readiness to maintain touch with the stream of everyday, and seemingly inconsequential, affairs.

The glass bottomed boat has been made by a person who wants to look deeper into things, below the surface. By this they ensure that they are alert to each and every ramification of experience.

The summon of our destiny is rarely a bugle or fanfare; it is often a low, unannounced whisper. Each moment has its particular unique qualities and potentialities, which would escape the notice of a less active observer, yet will contain subtle clues to the revelation of new openings.

Alert curiosity makes it becomes possible to notice what comes along, and capitalize fully upon it – with the knowledge that all it takes to find opportunity is to look for it. We grasp fortune unreservedly and take full advantage of unexpected potentials of the moment in hand. Indecisiveness – an inability to strike quick and true – is poor excuse for a life half-lived.

Yet some of these occurrences are really of no concern to us and we are well advised to hold a position of poise. Anyway, simply observing with an objective inactivity has real value.

Potency begets more potency – success breeds success and optimism is the seed whose fruit is inevitably joy. So the formula for a rich and interesting life journey is to strike out wherever we see possibilities.

PRODIGALITY: SANTA CLAUS FILLING STOCKINGS FURTIVELY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF GEMINI (1° - 2°)

Appreciation and abundance keep alive a community's awareness of spiritual values

Santa Claus is a symbol that engenders the feeling of thankfulness with an appropriate blend of family, humour, childlike simplicity and – because of its timing – a touch of sacredness.

Having lived for 2000 years under the auspices of Christian teachings, many Westerners have ambiguity about the relationship between their spiritual and their material aspirations. The natural joy that is felt when taking pleasure from worldly goods can be marred by distorted religious teachings.

Every day there are rewards to be had for no other reason than it suits us individually to enjoy whatever we can. Those who are not poor eat as much for pleasure as for need.

It is very helpful indeed, on a spiritual level, to practice appreciation, because it opens the heart centre, which both generates a warm feeling of love, and attracts abundance. If we forget to do this daily – well then, at least once a year we are reminded.

It is a little sad that the taking of pleasure is so often done furtively. This is seen in other areas such as sexuality and celebration of success, and indicates the power of the dark forces within religion to deny our natural feelings. It can lead to a sense of futility because it sets up an inner contrariness of purpose – where we have desire for something that we believe is disallowed.

Christmas may seem too crass to honour Christ. Yet the ritualization of generosity, of family connectedness and the licence to behave more openly is worthy – these qualities are not the sublime essence of the teachings of Christ, but they do not contradict them. At least it keeps some of the community's spiritual values alive.

Also, on another level, the ritual is a powerful programming process to train us from an early age to expect abundance, even prodigality. The expectation of surplus is not only a survival technique but also a profound spiritual teaching. We tend to be materialistic, even possessive, and Christmas brings this attribute of ours to a positive, conscious expression.

LUXURY: THE GARDEN OF THE TUILERIES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF GEMINI (2° - 3°)

Authority is given to those who can achieve

Parisians met, promenaded, celebrated and relaxed in this luxurious garden of the Renaissance period. They were seen as selfish, lording it over others. In England, so much of the national architectural heritage was kept alive by aristocrats and fabulously wealthy families, very often at the expense of the underprivileged. There is here an unpopular wisdom – certain types of people create, maintain and enjoy wealth and other types serve them.

It may seem to some that we are constrained by accident of birth to suffer lack of opportunity. Yet this interpretation of reality never promotes happiness. It is for each of us to bring our own capabilities and possibilities to a graceful, exquisite level of self-expression within our own world. Happiness does not relate to wealth – it arises out of making the best of what we have, and most assuredly is not given automatically to the rich.

In general, at all levels of society, people expect to enjoy the results of their work and their faithful commitment to what they value. We develop social position and wealth in the context of our community by demonstrating an appetite for preserving and caring for that which we have – whether in a palace or a mean cottage. It is this that brings us the fullest degree of satisfaction in life.

This is made evident by the universal practice of rewarding achievement with tokens of social approval. We may perhaps say '*well done*' to someone who tried really hard – but the prize still goes to the winner.

Authority is a prerequisite for the smooth operation of any community – and it is given to those who can achieve. Thus it closely relates to self-confidence and the outer evidence of that in material tokens and rewards of ability.

The exaltation of success in material benefits may well be criticized by the have-nots, yet it is an enduring practice throughout humanity's history – and is even studied in the animal kingdom. A male showing off its energy-expensive rich and colourful qualities demonstrates to a potential mate his capacity to provide for her offspring.

Besides, in a community there must be a stable system of values and rewards, otherwise an individual would never, and could never, aspire towards optimal self-enhancement.

RITUALIZATION: HOLLY AND MISTLETOE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (3°- 4°)

Rituals renew our initiatives

Holly and mistletoe are used decoratively at Christmas to mark the cycle of life, and give greater strength to the binding power of ritual. If we lose sight of our personal freedom of initiative, or lack the will to assert our own unique path, then with these rituals we become supported by society and our close associations.

Rituals can relate to the seasons, or daily rhythms, and they need not always be profound or universal; they can be empty of meaning or pregnant with potential – the difference has to do with our approach. Do we expect them to feel supportive, or constraining? Whatever the expectations, we are free to create our own personalities and situations, as well as our own rituals – in fact there is no end to the subtle encouragement we receive from every direction to express ourselves fully and expansively. This is because life is ever accommodating towards those who reach out with a specific course of action. Resources are always there – so too is the stimulus we may need to energize our imagination.

There are countless opportunities for us to try out new experiences. Each of them allows us to establish how our inner, subjective world-view can be substantiated with dignity, even within the outer world that is shaped by society and its customs.

If we choose to align with society, then its traditions support us; if not then they do not – they test us as to whether our actions are worth the price of disapproval.

Life throws up new versions of the eternal kaleidoscope – in cyclical manifestations of our range of choices – and, on some level, it is irrelevant which option we take of the many available. By responding quickly to each choice, life can superficially get very rich.

Yet it is the inner aspect of experience that bestows meaning. With a vibrant sense of sharing our own special magic, we can participate fully in any and every moment and each event. Through this, we experience perpetual inner self-renewal, and the deepening of meaning.

However, it takes a degree of composure and truthful self-awareness, to resist the temptation to indulge an obsession with the superficial. We perhaps need to make sure we are not mistaking fool's gold for the real thing, for example by enjoying the celebration of seasonal rituals without learning about their source and symbolic purpose. Holly and mistletoe are pagan mysteries not Christian.

TANGENCY: A RADICAL MAGAZINE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (4°- 5°)

Through the tangential touch, we link to everything else

Personality effectively puts its stamp on everything it touches, even if the touch is merely tangential. This is because personality is a co-created form, a characteristic of relating, and is shaped as it shapes.

A radical magazine touches our world with opinion and information about things right at the very edge of our awareness. Through such processes, we are linked to all and everything, and even the most subtle and hidden potentialities of our lives are introduced as real and functional aspects of our experience.

We are often tempted to quarrel belligerently with those whose world view is radically different from our own. This is perverse behaviour and is unhelpful, particularly if it does not sponsor the raising of awareness.

It is for us to come to terms with others who share very little of our perceptions and issues. Even if there is some confrontation, eventually a settled position must be reached.

On occasion, the introduction of new ideas is entirely necessary to stir us at the deepest level in order to raise something important in our lives to a high degree of self-expression.

The principal under review is finding an appropriate balance between inner and outer compulsions, with a clear sense that whatever stirs us deeply in our feelings has special worth in defining who we are.

It's worth remembering that change is the essence of all existence, so it is necessary for us to allow a significant element of adjustment and evolution in our interactions. This requires us to be exposed to viewpoints that challenge at root the status quo, and threaten our easy composure.

SPECULATION: DRILLING FOR OIL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (5° - 6°)

Progress is mostly about taking risks as we follow our urges to enrich our experience of life

Drilling for oil requires a great degree of specialization by which we concentrate our sense of self-motivation single-pointedly.

We are motivated by the wish to broaden our reach and availability of resources. Yet perhaps we are going too far in areas of self-exploitation – it is speculative; it carries risk.

We are naturally inclined to endow each and every life experience to the fullest extent. We seek to optimize our wealth – including wealth of experience – and this is not a safe process, nor without core-level challenges to our sense of self and self-worth.

The pursuit of this life direction, as with any other, can stimulate us to evolve an indomitable strength of effort. It is no easy task to exploit the earth's hidden wealth and requires us to dig no less deeply into our selves. The outer effort clearly reflects the inner.

We never really know what to expect. We have clear hopes for this enterprise to reveal its abundance and repay our efforts – but typically, as we pursue uncertain objectives, we have to be open to the revelation of new dimensions of life and of self, which may or may not fulfil our desires and expectations.

The process itself is the true reward. The utmost depths of potential in character are revealed.

None of this is available to us unless and until we accept the need for risk. Essentially, personal and species evolution is mainly about speculation.

RECOMPENSE: AN OLD FASHIONED WELL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (6°- 7°)

We can rely upon nature to fund all of impulses

This metaphor is about something that gives and gives and yet is not diminished. This is because nature replenishes – offers recompense for – whatever is expended. Despite the countless times that people draw upon our resources, we have the capacity to remain who we always are, and to rely upon that through a certainty of being.

We continually enter into exchanges with others – we always have to assimilate something of them in order to relate, and it always costs us energy.

Yet despite drawing in, and giving out, not much really changes – and even on the deepest levels, we are not essentially compromised at all through these interactions. This is because nature replenishes us no less than it would the old well.

Even the apparently solid ground beneath us is prone to suffer earthquakes – whereas the core identity of self is uncompromisingly faithful to itself. I am always me, and you are always you; ever will it be so. Sometimes what appears trite is in fact profound – and this simple organic integrity of being is such an example. Our very beingness is our most precious and important quality.

The more fully we trust in our indestructability of self, the freer we are to project versions and possibilities into the world. Everything we say, do or think is an aspect of something deeper – as with transient leaves on a tree whose trunk is solid and whose roots are strong. As no leaf can ever be false, so each and every insubstantial and ephemeral personal impulse has purity as its source.

In all our dealings with others – however inept they may be – we can know that we will, we must, always bounce back to re-state our fundamental life message.

The well is an unimpeachable symbol of life – and yet so are we.

PROTEST: AN INDUSTRIAL STRIKE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (7°- 8°)

A constant undeviating self-assertiveness is wholesome

It is not only the right – it is the duty – of self to assert itself and refuse to accept life circumstances that require us to squeeze into a lesser role than we feel is justified. We are obliged to protest against oppressors and demand what we deserve.

If the circumstances of life are inadequate to provide scope for our creative expression of self, then we need to act in our own interests and change them. Our right to space is inherent, and includes the opportunity to expand the reach of mind.

The constructive reorganization of situations is essential to our being who we are. Why else would we have values, and feelings of being undervalued, if we were not to respond to them actively?

Nor should this be seen as abnormal behaviour; it is a requirement of accomplishment that we cope with change. Whether or not we are the protagonists, change will certainly occur – and very often these changes are directed against the unacceptable.

We seek to create life situations wherein personal dignity is celebrated and never repressed by one over another. If dignity were to be denied it would degenerate into the distorted expression of pride, in the ego-centric sense. Nothing of real value comes from this. Therefore the expression of dignity is encouraged, since it leads towards nobility of attitude and visionary outcomes.

In dealing with the inevitable stresses and forces of life, a constant undeviating self-assertiveness is wholesome, and if this takes similar form to vigorous industrial action – then so be it; occasionally it must be so in order to oust oppressors and claim space.

Giving way to that which is life-denying or unjust is an unwarranted and unworthy capitulation of the sacredness of self; this is desecration. But when we allow a depth of Spirit to enter our decisions, then naturally and easily we disallow such improper self-surrender.

PREPARATION: A QUIVER FILLED WITH ARROWS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (8°- 9°)

To realize our potential wealth, we follow the formula: preparation, practice, power

The archer does not want to spend his arrows, and the encumbrance of carrying them is not for the joy of it. Some aspects of our life are for insurance; we are constrained to make preparations, just in case. We have a right to hold our place, and yet we may need to bring to our service the necessary resources and equipment to claim a position against intrusion.

In the modern world, it is better to equip ourselves with skills rather than weapons and tools. Within the realm of skills, the mind is sovereign ruler by having a quick intelligence and ready alertness to spot where our best interests lie. Training the mind is a sound investment.

Fruits are offered to those who go through the preparation to train and discipline their art to the level of excellence. Material rewards give evidence of the true wealth within – we feel rich when we know how to create abundance through employment of our skills.

Our right, to exist free from need or attack, extends even to the level of requirement upon others – we may demand what is reasonable to maintain our physical needs.

Yet permission and moral rectitude are by no means always sufficient. Sometimes we need to take what is not offered in order to pursue our quite legitimate intentions.

There is danger in this of course. It is not spiritually lawful to bully, nor take more than enough, and enjoy surfeit at the cost of another's insufficiency. Neither is it proper to press our case in the service of another without their petition.

We have a right to defend; we have a right to project. But do we have what it takes to claim those rights? The formula for success in all aspects of life is quite simple and entirely dependable. To realize our potential wealth, we follow the formula: preparation, practice, power. Be not seduced, deceived, overpowered and effectively enslaved by those in positions; be empowered by your appetites and abilities to take what is yours – and do it with a clear conscience.

CRISIS: AN AEROPLANE FALLING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (9° - 10°)

In passion, danger of death does not disturb us

An aeroplane falling is a symbol of being out of control and in great danger. This is similar to the unspoken fear that society propagates in order to dissuade powerful individuals from taking their freedom.

For the true seeker, this propaganda has its worth as an agency through which the self can reorientate its direction. Celtic spirituality honours the stag, the boar and the salmon because they go against the flow. When we are doubtful about our next spiritual step, here is the clue – go against society.

Like the salmon, we must plunge into all experience passionately.

We have to use a crisis to our advantage and re-establish conscious self-control. Following the direction of the herd is not entirely invalid during easy times, but when crisis comes, then if we can, we must take command.

If we are disinclined to lift a finger in an emergency we will be caught up in a rapid collective descent into jeopardy.

Some of us have not lost the sense of existential wellness. When in the right state, nothing whatsoever can befall us other than scenarios and situations appropriate for our best interests. We will even find a way to right a falling aircraft, as long as we trust that we can and pull out all the stops.

However, we can courageously choose to disregard both the potential, and the actual, consequences when we are in right relationship with the soul. Danger of death, and death itself, are not significant disturbances to the realized being.

IDENTIFICATION: A NEW PATH OF REALISM IN EXPERIENCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (10°- 11°)

An aware person sets a specific orientation for their day-to-day lives

We are obliged to find a specific orientation for our lives – a real path structured by real experiences. We have no choice about this – it is obligatory.

The way in which we participate in life is specified not much by grand visions and ambitions, but mostly by the minutiae of the daily round. Our understanding of the world is garnered from everyday occurrences.

We weigh up the pros and cons – who to be with, what to eat, where to go, how to live – and in this way we both develop and express our set of values.

Nobody else does it exactly the same way as we do. We therefore find identification by choosing a thousand ways to be who we are, and we do this every day of our lives.

Nor is this a static or even cyclical process – it is directional. In small ways, these details are modified bit by bit as we inch ever more closely towards the most enduring self-image we have imagined. Whatever resources we can muster are brought into play as we go forward.

Becoming aware of these changing idiosyncrasies of our ordinary life will help us perfect our character. Self-analysis is legitimately seen to be its own reward, and yet there are inevitably more tangible benefits occurring to the self-aware person.

The reconciliation is to be achieved between a healthy degree of experimentation – in changing certain aspects of our ways and means – and silly fantasy. Whereas it is healthy to try out new versions of self, there are limits to what we can make work in real terms.

GROWTH: A SLAVE GIRL SAUCILY ASSERTING HERSELF

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (11°- 12°)

Freedom is expressed in a unique and self-assertive character that rebels against tyranny

In this image, a slave girl is trying the patience of her mistress. She has very little power, almost none, and yet she does what she can – what matters here is the spirit of challenge to tyranny.

It is inherent within us that we are inclined to take personal advantage of any and every experience we meet in life, and most people have a commitment to the certainty of growth. Any oppressive attempts to restrict this completely will lead towards rebellion.

The deeper understanding within this metaphor is that we are all slaves to the comfortable attachments we have, and even if they are chosen, and thoroughly enjoyed, still they enslave us.

To break free and experience our birth-right of spiritual growth is a risky business. We risk losing what we enjoy, even what we treasure – yet these are secondary treasures, because the primary one is freedom.

If we are not to surrender to the level of total capitulation, then there are times when we must speak out, whatever the risk to the status quo.

Despite the restrictions placed on us by moral boundaries and legislation, there is to be struck a balance between these reasonable constraints, upon which society is founded, and the compulsion to fly away to freedom.

When we are pushed down to an extreme measure, we will often experience an almost spiritual degree of impudence that shows we still have a unique and self-assertive character.

ACHIEVEMENT: A GREAT MUSICIAN AT HIS PIANO

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (12° - 13°)

The greatest accomplishment is mastery of the ego

If, in our need to feel safe, we seek always to delight in momentary attention or superficial adulation, then our achievements will bring nothing to us but self-defeat. The great pianist is not great because of his dexterity alone – there are far deeper issues at play here.

It is better to rest assured in that all creativity contributes to human understanding, and take our security from that. By investing our sense of self-worth in the importance of being a small part of something bigger, we become more content to feel protected and nurtured by our community.

Individual art is actually the property of all; we must take but our own fair share of its rewards.

The greater achievement is not to demonstrate mastery of the piano, but mastery of the ego. This climax of skills and talents merely acts as a tool for us to attain to higher levels of self-improvement.

As mature beings, we aspire to become exemplars of our abilities in order to inspire others to raise their own levels of accomplishment. This shows of another subtle benefit of softening the ego and sharing in collective accomplishment – the group actually raises up the individual to greater levels.

We should not let accolades prevent us from reaching up further. However far we get, there is always somewhere else to go, and the horizon of possibility always moves away from us as we approach it.

By continuous effort and withstanding the perils of flattery and rewards, we can expand our being and have some revelation of our true spiritual estate. Yet, even so, whatever we feel is an acceptable height of success is probably nothing compared to the highest potentials of our best nature.

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INTIMATION: CONVERSATION BY TELEPATHY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (13° - 14°)

We actually cause effects first in the unseen world through a web of undercurrents

Although it appears on the surface that interactive communication between people takes place completely in speech and gestures, the deeper truth is that there is a transcendent dimension involved.

The very fabric of fellowship is made of the limitless connections between ourselves and each and every other person alive, knitting a web that supports all of humanity's involvements. The exchange of information that takes place is constantly in flow and ebb, mostly below the level of awareness – a conversation by telepathy. Such abilities are usually referred to as passive, in other words, it is said they are 'picking up' what already exists, and do not refer to the effect of their perception upon the perceived. But observation will always impress upon, and change, the observed. We know this from particle physics as well as in human behaviour.

Clearly there is more to this process than can be understood by the unfeeling mind, and indeed the fellowship between people expresses humanity's natural qualities of sympathy and cooperation. Despite appearances, there is in fact a deep and far-reaching resonance of empathy, compassion and kindness within the world.

An exceptional individual, intuitively trusting this type of influence, will proceed towards self-fulfilment in a rather subtle way – by intimation. Hinting rather than stating, they do not confront and provoke, but cause effects firstly in the realms of the unseen world. This speaks to the potential we all have to impact upon events without any physical evidence of that influence. We can tune in to the flow of what occurs, by which we gain influence, and then gently shift our perception towards our aspirations – by setting the mind to interpret things to suit our own purposes. If this is done with a loving heart, then it serves spirit, otherwise it serves our personal process of self-disclosure.

we can develop extraordinary capacity for achievement simply by moving naturally from one situation to another according to organic flow of things, winning cooperation by responding easily and unthinkingly to undercurrents that give rise to the tides of change.

It is good to monitor our motives, to avoid manipulation by innuendo and underhandedness, and it is important to use our unusual sensitivity in order to maintain a broad, deep and universal sense of the life force as it shows through each and every time and place.

There are many people whose level of spirituality is particularly profound, such that they can pick up very subtle feelings and ideas. Not much is discussed about this ability, especially not with a discerning, analytical approach – possibly because such people are not much given to analysis. Also, society generally disdains that which cannot be made measureable, and leaves transcendental issues within the scope of priests and hippies. Yet this is humanity's truest focus – to reach into the transcendent reality whilst being completely engaged in mundane interactions with the people and things that turn up and inhabit our unique world.

CLARIFICATION: TWO DUTCH CHILDREN TALKING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (14°- 15°)

One familiar with our roots sees us – because they hear our unguarded, graphic truth

It seems obvious, but worth mentioning, that we generally try to find ease in every situation; it is the default behaviour to bring things around to our advantage, such that we feel at ease.

It is also assumed that a person has a somewhat creative interest in a range of matters. It is unavoidable that we contribute something of ourselves to the milieu in which we operate, and anyone unable to share their ideas and impressions would be considered rather narrow-minded.

Each of us has a childlike familiarity with our roots – the Dutch children can be assumed to be speaking with more clarity in their native tongue, and reaching not only a more subtle empathy but a more refined degree of self-exposition.

On every level, we access a better grasp on life only when we get to a point of real clarification by talking easily with someone who understands us – significantly because they share a similarity of childlike experiences.

Self-confidence is the key to open up any and all avenues of life. It grows in direct correlation with the extent to which we learn to speak the unbridled colourful truth of all we have known and desired.

In the end, all relationships are reduced to a commonality of skills and backgrounds. No empathy can resonate between people who share nothing of fundamental value. Unless we can really tune in to another person's core sense of self, all connectedness remains superficial; nothing really matters between us.

We find ourselves through others. First, our experiences are vicarious; later they are personally realized. We cannot find terms for who we are unless we first borrow them – so we need to be open to certain others very deeply if we are to be open to our own hidden potentials.

INDIGNATION: A WOMAN SUFFRAGIST HARANGUING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (16° - 17°)

Mature adults assertively claim full involvement in shaping their affairs

Before the emancipation of women, it was accepted that certain categories of people were of lesser worth. These people – women – felt great indignation about this, and refused to continue to play along. They demanded full participation in life, as adults.

It is implicit that, for a community to operate effectively there must be mutuality in the exchange of opinions, so that each and every viewpoint is aired and heard.

In this way our life values are maintained both individually and as a community.

The responsibility, which goes along with this, is that we must desist from bias and bigotry and present our case in a reasonable and reasoned fashion.

This is how the worldwide reconstruction of situations unfolds without bloodshed. Diplomacy and democracy are attempts to resolve social stresses peacefully.

Unless all responsible members of a group have a franchise to exercise their perspectives and urges, then unreasoned conflict is inevitable, and the bloodletting begins. Opening up the power-sharing process eventually leads to benefits for all, in unimagined ways. All members of the community will enjoy an enlarged reach of privilege once false restrictions are lifted.

Yet, realistically, we have also to remember that those in position are always reluctant to diminish their influence. Power must be taken, it cannot ever be given, and righteous indignation is the first legitimate step towards justice – often followed by demands.

DEVELOPMENT: THE HEAD OF HEALTH DISSOLVED INTO THE HEAD OF MENTALITY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (16° - 17°)

Soul achievement is measured by awareness of self and empathic appreciation of others

The beginning of all development is the accurate and truthful approach towards the facts of the matter; for example it is on the level of physical health that wellbeing is finally measured. The freedom of mind is forced to reconcile with the constraints of body and all that entails, including how to cope with the world – and yet there is more to discover. As we advance, we go beyond this survival level comprehension.

The power of mind is unrivalled, and a well-rounded individual will be able to experience many lives in the realm of imagination, thereby developing an appreciation for other views and the different ways that people manage their own problems and aspirations.

Without constraints all achievements are of little consequence. Any fool may imagine, but it takes grit to actually deal effectively with reality, and a high degree of subtlety to understand how others deal with it differently.

We all have to release the illusions and distractions of youth at some point as we come up against life's hard knocks, and this process investigates everyone. We have to find the authentic and unique expression of our core values and creative angle on things.

Through this, we learn both how to overcome difficulties, and see how exactly to adapt our aim to align with a bigger, more realistic vision.

However, the real game is not so much what we achieve in material terms but what we gain in terms of consciousness of self. A developed person has a great deal of self-awareness.

At this level of attainment the revelation occurs of an overarching vision for our lives – as an aspect of the eternal vision of a spiritually-aligned species of highly evolved beings.

DIFFERENCE: TWO CHINESE MEN TALKING CHINESE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (17° - 18°)

By mixing with our own kind, we focus our uniqueness, and so perfect our life potential

It is totally normal, and taken as fact, that people are different from other people. Difference is entirely commonplace – even to the point that there are Chinatowns in many large cities in many countries all around the world. Within one culture, another finds a small place to secure itself.

These differences tend to be perceived rather more as an intellectual idea – a prejudice – than a felt reality, yet they have profound implications.

We are drawn to collect together with others who share our perspectives and preferences and cooperate willingly with these enthusiasts, who share our special interests. This goes beyond nationality, to a more subtle degree of shared differences.

By this natural process, we are able further to specialize. This corrects any tendencies towards self-diffusion by getting us to focus on what makes us who we are – unique and apart.

Through this we are able to become mobilized towards our special goals, and without this it is quite unlikely that we will do so as convincingly and effectively.

The track of our lives becomes particular – and we are obliged to adjust and readjust in a continual process of refinement along what may well be unusual lines. Ambiguities and imperfections are rubbed away by the friction of continual interactions with others along the way, others who are similar enough to understand exactly how best to help us refine our expression.

The core idea here includes that, if we want to evolve fully as an exemplar of our unique speciality, then we need to avoid excessive associations in unsuitable relationships. Only by mixing with like-minded others will we perfect our fullest life potential.

BACKGROUND: A LARGE ARCHAIC VOLUME

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (18°- 19°)

Experience is more important than events – and wisdom of greater worth than individuals

We were not dropped randomly into our lives – we have a history into which we are absorbed, and it is the fabric of this that acts as the background for our own contribution to an unfolding tapestry. This is our heritage updated and made manifest, as would an ancient volume of stories and teachings.

We are given the gift of immediate practical guidance and the chance of broader self-discovery simply because we have access to this story of our roots.

Of course, we must guard against any indication we have, slavishly to worship tradition and its authority figures. Yet the past illuminates the present, so we have much to gain from its teachings.

By going over again what others have previously touched upon, we gain a special advantage. We have no need to waste time reinventing the wheel – we are assured of greater wisdom than we could develop alone.

Some of the life paths we need to walk have to be cut and won through exhausting efforts – but the well-trod paths bring quicker satisfaction with an affordable expenditure of energy.

Surely our first achievements are simply to re-tread familiar tracks? In effect, this is a community-building obligation, because it keeps alive our society's main networks. We can see these as life-giving arteries, to be maintained as long as we preserve our heritage.

Most of what we hold precious can be taken from us in a moment when catastrophe occurs; but our experiences cannot be lost. Experience, both personal and collective, is more important than specific events and individual people – because it is beyond any risk of loss; it is passed down and kept strong by true community, and is stored as memory, ability and background.

SUPPLY: A CAFETERIA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (19° - 20°)

Things flow when everyone plays their part

When each person in the community is employed appropriately, exploiting each other's self-competence enjoyably, then there is an ease of flow in everything. A cafeteria is a good example. The supply of food is essential to community, and it gives greater choice, better economics and a warm social element when done collectively.

It's true that sometimes a person will not exchange fairly and practise abuse through the self-serving attitude of a dilettante. That can be endured for a while.

Yet much more typically, people try to organize their own special experiences so as to serve the best interests of the community at large.

It becomes evident that the net result of this general approach to life is that the whole is significantly greater than the sum of the parts – everyone gains, and there is greater abundance.

This in turn encourages everyone to offer a fullness of contribution, as everyone enjoys the opportunity to play their largest part in the total picture.

This idea is called 'division of labour' and has a strong part to play in the structuring of social and economic relationships that serve the fabric of any healthy community.

Sharing in the preparation and consumption of food is a matter of foundation importance in every community, and brings a spiritual-level enjoyment of harmony and realism, yet the principle applies to a much wider degree – in any project, we become better integrated with our fellows when we share the work.

REPRESENTATION: A LABOUR DEMONSTRATION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF GEMINI (20°- 21°)

Debate upholds the honour of human spirit, crafting justice and depth of principle

When people feel the lack of representation in deciding important matters, then they rise up. A labour demonstration is the normal method in the industrial arena – workers strike and management is required to respond.

Karl Marx has presented the philosophy that '*property is theft*', that private ownership is invalid and that no one person should, for selfish enjoyment, and with an exception of social stewardship, control resources that properly belong to the community. This is typical that, almost always, the underlying, conflicting issue is seen as one of justice and the right to fair treatment.

Bluster and emotional ill-will are futile behaviours. Appropriate representation of a cause needs to be presented cogently and with unified strength.

It takes courage to tackle major issues, and yet without such confrontations these values cannot be identified as core principles, nor proclaimed as appropriate social hypotheses. Yet as a result, inevitably both sides to a dispute are forced to raise their consciousness, and face what has previously been swept under the carpet.

Groups and individuals prosper to the extent that they find justification for what they are and what they do. Each determines values by which to validate their activities, and such determinations have to be hard-won in order to have true merit and any depth of substance.

In this way we observe that conflict can have a very positive effect – and, if we would only trust in the unimpeachable integrity of human spirit, we could allow more controversy in our dealings with each other. Conflict has a very bad reputation, some think of it as simply wrong. Yet, if handled well, it surely leads towards positive, evolutionary change – as nothing else could.

Our circles of influence are built around values – and values are established through demonstration and resistance. We cannot escape dispute if we are to build an authentic philosophical basis for our lives.

GREGARIOUSNESS: A BARN DANCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF GEMINI (21° - 22°)

Our values, ideals, aspirations and prospects depend on community exchanges

A compelling motivation for us all is to obtain satisfaction through being exactly what we are whatever circumstances we find ourselves engaged in. This delivers self-assurance and its attendant sense of confidence and appropriateness.

As we emerge out of the self-centredness of early childhood, we learn that we need to balance give and take in how we connect with others. Exchanges take place on the level of trade and social interactions, and these must have both parties feeling fairly treated for the relationship to last and flourish.

At a barn dance we meet various members of the community – some close to us, some more distant – and the success of the event is assured by everyone’s willingness to share this rich experience. We should not take gregariousness for granted; it speaks to a general background atmosphere of security, trust and openness towards strangers.

The event shows of our own willingness to participate in society, and enjoy the fruits of an easy division of labour. Some prepare food, some play music and some are there just to dance.

This is just one example of how it is sometimes entirely appropriate to plunge into life’s opportunities for the joy of communal involvement. Though we so often forget, we depend upon society for everything we are and everything we have – including as a matrix that gives form to our ideals and aspirations.

It is inappropriate therefore to engage at only a superficial level and only put our petty indulgences out into the world. We are encouraged to share passion, to reveal our nakedness of feelings, and the vulnerabilities and strengths that give us our special characteristics.

If we restrict what we offer, we necessarily limit what we can receive. It is pointless and self-defeating, raising caution as greater than trust, fear greater than love.

ELEVATION: THREE FLEDGLINGS IN A NEST HIGH IN A TREE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF GEMINI (22°- 23°)

The birthing of inspiration necessitates a degree of sanctuary

Before they are launched into a dangerous world, fledglings are protected from it by the nest's elevation. Our nascent ideas are similarly in need of protection before we expose them to ridicule and opposition.

The early immature stages of a new initiative are almost transcendental in nature – more light than substance. Before we try out something new and commit resources to its manifestation, it is wise to understand something of what gave rise to the idea, and what might be the implications.

This will enable an early appreciation of the merits or demerits, while held in abeyance. Potential is a power that can grow, but only if carefully held and nurtured, awaiting its time.

Elevation brings higher consciousness – through it we gain supervision, super vision, the superior aspect of vision.

Genius, the universal possibility, is manifested into the world by a process not an event. Its early stages include the spontaneous inception of a visionary ideal – and then a formulation into what can be made workable.

Any fool can proclaim something to dazzle the gullibility of the psychologically impoverished – blind leading the blind towards failure and waste, due to poor planning and poor timing.

Yet true inspiration, which eventually propels humanity to new heights of evolutionary excellence, must first be contemplated in a mental zone free from engrossment of worldly concerns. It takes the chess-mind of true intelligence to anticipate many moves ahead so that the projection, from idea into action, has an optimal chance of realization.

FUN: CHILDREN SKATING ON ICE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (23° - 24°)

Life is never fixed, but lived energetically between what is safe and what is fun

These children are engaged in a dangerous activity that to some extent threatens their lives.

They do this for fun. Life is nothing if it is not an experiment to experience the enquiry into what is, and what is not, possible for a human being living with a vulnerable physical body. Children are more likely to play with this idea.

It is important to have a sense of the value of dependable reality – partly because our very beingness is entirely characterized by how we feel about what is safe for us. No doubt the ice was examined and found to be reasonably reliable so the danger was diminished to an acceptable degree.

The truth of who we are often hangs in the balance between what is safe and what is fun. There needs to be a sense of order and caution that puts some boundaries in place to limit our exposure to risk.

Yet the pioneering principle is entirely descriptive of the healthy person – for whom successful overcoming of risky challenges act as a spur towards further achievement, which demonstrates and develops our skills and capacity.

Life is never static; it cannot be life if it does not change. So we are always necessarily exposed to new conditions, whether or not by choice.

Perhaps therefore we must embrace adventure, as a condition of life – although of course there is the need to moderate excitement-driven foolhardiness.

ENHANCEMENT: A MAN TRIMMING PALMS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (24° - 25°)

We put our stamp on the world by showing something of the relationship between Spirit and Matter

In England, we often see someone shaping a garden hedge to enhance the perceived beauty of the environment. This is more than just an empty display of trivial skills and surfeit resources.

It's an interesting question, and possibly depends upon what is the intention. Some people continually reveal to the world their aesthetic sense and sensibilities, enlisting every aspect of nature's beauty to do this.

In so doing, they demonstrate an intrinsic harmony between a person and their tools and materials. This is actually how we interface with nature. Spirit and Matter is in relationship: surely the essence of all life?

On an emotional level, such activity engenders pride of effort – job satisfaction. Anyone who has felt this feeling knows it to be filled with light have great value for its own sake, even if the work itself has no great significance in the overall cosmic scheme of things.

However localized, and modest, is our own reach, nevertheless we want to put an immortal stamp on the world. We strain to bend to our will whatever natural resources are required for the task and ardently hope that something of what we plant will outlive us.

Whatever our special talent may be, we feel it as our gift – to offer in effective service to enhance our environment. Thus the spirit of creativity is transferred into form and made real and known.

Somehow this process enables us to feel a sense of self-justification. This is a deeper experience than ego-gratification, and indeed allows us to access something of the soul's purpose on earth – to experience itself in the truth and beauty of form.

SPLENDOUR: WINTER FROST IN THE FOREST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (25° - 26°)

The true perception of beauty is a spiritual experience

Nature's supreme power and beauty shows us how seemingly banal realities can in fact create the conditions for magical outcomes. For example, by nothing more esoteric than shifts in temperature and pressure to create hoar frost, she can transport even the most cynical materialist into experiencing wonderment.

Magick is a normal demonstration of life that requires particular space and time constraints. Freezing the moment has cosmic significance and is a necessary and sufficient condition of the art. To bring about these magical moments, we have but to put aside our private concerns and become responsive to the great forces responsible for life's never-ending self-embellishment.

Ordinary habits of homebuilding and feeding ourselves are for comfortable maintenance of the status quo, whereas the discovery of our full potential demands that we engage with the non-ordinary. We need to accommodate a continual process of self-purification which includes monitoring our own perceptions – only then will we be able to master the 'here and now' and create magical beauty as a life style.

It is nature's way to freeze to death that which is totally useless. Purification through these transformative moments enables old cycles to give way to the new. We have to adopt the same approach to our own situations – to cut away the dross so that we only ever have vitality in all we touch.

Somehow the radical irreversibility of death deepens our sense of beauty, and raises it to spiritual levels. The beauty is incidental, a subjective human sentiment; yet is there anything more splendidous?

Reborn after the death of winter, we are primed to see things with new eyes, eyes readied for new cycles and the inherent shift of perspectives. In this way we create our worlds afresh and in accordance with our newly expanded vision.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This has become a cliché, whereas it hides an important esoteric understanding – that there is nothing absolute except the Absolute; everything which is not transcendental is subjective – and if it is seen as splendour, it is because we have learned how to look for splendour.

EXPENDITURE: A GYPSY COMING OUT OF THE FOREST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (26° - 27°)

We have found our proper place only when we spend our money and time enthusiastically

A gypsy has quite a strong symbolic resonance for most of us, on various levels. We see them as marginal, not fully embraced by mainstream society and a little wild in their unencumbered life style – going their own way and closer to nature than we city-dwellers.

They have not given up the fruits of the forest and, as part-time, modern hunter-gatherers, take whatever is there to take. They live more in the moment and take their joy as freely as their food; their spontaneity of feelings is well-celebrated.

We can also identify a strong sense of family and tribe, and this only comes about when the individual's expenditure is generally in alignment with the integrity of community needs.

There arises from this a strong disinclination to enter and participate in general society – not wanting to expend resources into a world apart. Why pay taxes to a system that marginalizes you?

There is within all of us the passionate imperative to be recognized and successful as who we are – and this does take us out of the common herd, and typically into our more intimate clan.

When we share our troubles, aspirations and faith with kindred spirits, we give all we have, and follow the collective dream towards new horizons.

It is this, and in the end only this, that promotes a general state of enthusiasm for life. In summary, we all have a little bit of the gypsy in us. Only when we notice ourselves spending our money and time freely and enthusiastically have we found our proper place – which may well be outside the city walls.

DELIVERANCE: A MAN DECLARED BANKRUPT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (27° - 28°)

On the spiritual planes, all failure and success is futile

Sometimes apparent misfortune is a blessing. Yet so often we betray the core values of self by dodging responsibility, even going to the absurd depths of trying to cheat karma.

The worst of situations, although universally unwelcome, can bring unlooked-for benefits, since through them we learn to develop and demonstrate resourcefulness.

Human spirit is unparalleled in its capacity to create solutions. Eternally, each individual somehow discovers that they have capabilities that far outweigh their previous expectations, which lie dormant unless and until there is a demand made upon them to find the wherewithal to cope with something previously they have feared and avoided.

This powerful facility to solve problems is much empowered as we gain greater consciousness of a particular phenomenon – that ultimately all failure and success, all reward and penalty, is futile. At a higher level of spiritual attainment, we can learn to adjust our life strategies in line with this knowledge. Neither success nor failure has any real significance in the larger picture of things. Our strategies thus become more like fun than ambitions. Since we enjoy success, and failure always gives rise to greater success, then failure is in fact an aspect of success – a stepping stone towards it.

What truly matters is our ability to enter new paths of opportunity even when misfortune strikes, in fact especially then. How often do we come across someone whose story is of success emerging out of seeming failure? It happens so often that we can surely come to depend upon it as a reliable process of normal development. The optimist learns not only to accept disappointment calmly, but to use it as a signal that indicates the presence of an exciting opportunity – so they actively look for the silver lining.

A truly sincere seeker will welcome another chance further to refine the self by demonstrating indomitability. The advanced person is always able to bubble up and bounce back, no matter what occurs.

One with this wisdom is delivered from loss; in fact the deliverance goes deeper, even to the level of consequences. We learn that, as long as we have people round us, we are never bankrupt – we see that there is but one consequence that has any lasting significance – and that is the convergence of relationship. What really matters is the quality of connection that arises with other people; whether enjoying success or coping with adversity, what adds sparkle to life is doing it together. Each scenario, even seeming misfortune, comes to us so that we can experience another version of the universal interconnectedness of all that lives and has form.

QUICKENING: THE FIRST MOCKINGBIRD IN SPRING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (28° - 29°)

By revitalising others, we become more enlivened ourselves

There is but one place to stand in life that is safe and comfortable, and which gives everything a sense of both meaning and beauty; it is the place of truth. Knowing this instinctively, we propel ourselves, and are drawn, into experiences that enable us to strengthen the authentic core of our being.

We become a constant stimulation to others in the normal course of human affairs, and this has a quickening effect. By revitalising others, we become more enlivened ourselves, and this forces an enquiry into who we are and what we represent.

The mockingbird has learned an important technique that could benefit us – how to imitate. This skill rapidly enhances participation within a community; by copying we gain both knowledge and acceptance. At first we need to tune into the group in order to find a place to be, and then our idiosyncrasies will stimulate a response – without any need for controversy.

It may well be enough to offer only beauty, and let truth simply be. In other words we are certain to reveal ourselves whether we choose to or not – and such revelation will promote our stature all the more if done with a sense of grace and courtesy.

Our purpose is self-refinement. We intend to be more and more who we are and we want that to have a refined quality. This is self-evident. Our aspirations guide us on the path that will disclose to us the best version of who we truly are, as long as we allow ourselves to engage fully with those we meet en route.

It is inevitable that some people will find this degree of self-assertiveness annoying – and such people are the best teachers for us to learn refinement.

If we think of self-refinement as oil – then it greases our path. Whatever we aspire to realize in life is only ever an horizon. For some, that means it is inaccessiblely far; for others it is only ever seen as a temporary goal.

CHARM: BATHING BEAUTIES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF GEMINI (29° - 30°)

Natural endowments are gifts of nature, to be shared

We are physical beings, whose access to the realm of spirit enhances our physicality to heights of beauty. When we have awareness of both spiritual and physical magnetism, then we are endowed with the radiant light of nature and we are said to glow.

Charm, generally, is a grace of the material world. Although it is self-seeking and therefore somewhat potentially manipulative, it nevertheless somehow adds a degree of spiritual lightness to situations. A woman showing off her physical beauty intends to exert influence – yet when she does so with naive innocence then joy is experienced. A thin line may be drawn between, on the one hand, healthy and helpful self-disclosure, and, on the other, childish vanity. Caution and self-examination are advised on this point.

Having a strong sense of self-worth, we are able to project principles into the world, standing tall amongst our fellows, radiant and reliant, and making a clear disclosure of what is personally important.

One who is strong in their inner sense of individuality fears no loss or threat to it when confronting difficult issues. Rather the opposite is the case; such challenges that may arise serve to affirm and perfect individuality. For such a person, no feelings of false modesty are allowed to interfere with whatever exuberant displays occur of their attributes and charms. Natural endowments are gifts of nature, to be shared.

With a focussed intention and a sense of sacred purpose, we can raise all of our qualities and attributes to serve the greater good. This is made possible by trusting that, however imperfectly expressed, our strongest impulses will always eventuate good outcomes.

The soul's influence upon everyday life is facilitated only between the threshold of two worlds – the two worlds of outer situations and inner responses. It is the soul's primary task to maintain its absolute purity whilst having to touch upon this imperfect *world of lies* (a Sufi description). Spiritual practice helps.

That purity is evidenced by the soul's ability to be true, even when encased in clay and operating as a member of a rather primitive species of self-destructive brutes. If our life is to express joy rather than endure restraint, then freedom must be realized on the inner planes, as a state of being, independent of circumstances.

CANCER

PIONEERING / HOMEBUILDING / INHABITING / PERSISTENCE / LEADERSHIP / CONSOLIDATION

I will faithfully lead my family, across oceans and deserts if needs be, to find our tribal home, where we belong

Cancer is receptive, insightful, instinctive and responsive, having keen psychic sensitivity, and able to absorb and retain emotional impressions; it is caring, gentle, relaxing and delicate, and needs warmth, intimacy and unguarded closeness. Cancer is a pioneer; it will risk danger and discomfort to escape conditions that deny a person the possibility of feeling at home in their environment. People need more than food and shelter – to create a home includes the psychological aspect; each member must be allowed significant emotional expression without risk of exclusion. A child's first efforts and an adult's need for rest and recuperation must be supported at home more than anywhere else – or it is not a home for them.

Parental instincts run very strong, with nurture and protection highly prioritized, expressed by providing a secure and pleasant domestic environment, and a legacy of sanctuary that can be passed on – to and through the family. A solitary home does not reach the desired depths, and if further deepening is to occur then neighbourhood needs to develop. People settle – and codes of behaviour, terms of involvement, exchanges of skills and resources, and all the many intricacies of social life emerge, as the various individuals and family units brush up against one another. Differences cause friction, and understandings settle matters.

Relaxing into the community spirit, another level of rapport is established and the sense of belonging is extended to embrace the clan and tribe, by using shared rituals to create firm bonds that unite people who do not share meals and campfires. Principles and practices are raised beyond expediency and celebrated to the level of sacredness, then gradually formed into heritage. By honouring the old and simultaneously nurturing the young, a lineage is energized that can access both the deepest wisdom and the most vibrant creativity available to the community. It is this that generates the profoundly meaningful sense of belonging that we yearn for. As much as the young feel they belong to the past, the old also feel they belong to the future. In service to each other, old and young alike can reach their highest and deepest levels of self-expression.

Sometimes events and periods arise when one voice must speak for all, to bind together a group when there are conflicting opinions. Such disunity of outlook is not a problem during easy times, yet can be an extinction-level event when troubles loom. A leader is thrown up by the group when needs arise. Such a leader is empathic with the quintessential nature of the community, and wins support by dint of charismatic personality rather than animal power, sharp intellect or practical wisdom. The decision process is often based on lateral thinking, and can include hesitancy, a sideward approach to things, and incomprehensible strategy based on feelings rather than ideas. When real interests are felt to be at stake, and driven by the need to safeguard their loved ones, Cancer will hold on to the bitter end with great tenacity, refusing to let go of what is seen as material securities or emotional investments.

To consolidate a sense of belonging to the wider group requires fidelity. Anyone who breaks faith with the rules, traditions, and obligations will feel the cold wind of exclusion. Yet the faithful enjoy the privilege of relaxing, less fearful of the storms of nature and more concerned with their own stormy inner feelings. For as we keep faith with society's needs by balancing inner and outer, older and younger, we are still mysteriously aware that the animal nature within us could destroy the fragile peace were it allowed to break out.

CANCER WISDOM

PIONEERING

Achieving primary objectives sometimes requires transient loyalties
Contemplation is an aspect of optimal self-management
We are fully alive only when experiencing what is uncontrollable
To achieve specific goals, the mind must be set before involvement
Unless acted on by force of will, things continue in their given direction

HOMEBUILDING

By carefully feathering our own nest, we help build community
The soul is refreshed when occasionally we rest from normal reality
The real is established as it is dramatized
What is of importance is engagement rather than outcome
Our connections are supportive of our life progression

INHABITING

Life is a continuing self-rehearsal
Racial characteristics offer a foundation for personal expression
We have to find a place to stand
Our circumstances are a gift to enable further self-discovery
There is no spiritual principle that disavows prosperity

PERSISTENCE

We reach our goals with clear vision and a detailed plan
Whatever we pretend to be we yearn to become
Fulfillment comes from pursuing the right path persistently
Civilization promotes conformity to bring all facets of life into alignment
The mind becomes clear when the heart is at ease

LEADERSHIP

Only when we are aspiring to excellence can we feel alignment with the soul
Silence brings about poise and engenders a deeper perspective on life
Personal identity is invigorated as it responds to examination
We are the creative source of our situations, rather than subject to them
We have to claim a commanding influence in order to grasp a situation and pull it around

CONSOLIDATION

Relaxation is an important aspect of life
Humanity has the power to overcome problems and dramatically create ways forward
Life is change; we must find a way to adjust
Knowledge and experience are the twin poles of existence
Good leaders gently guide their community through evolutionary steps of change

THE EXPRESSIONS OF CANCER

PIONEERING

CANCER 1 – 5

The development of the American nation illustrates how, in order to find a safe, wholesome place to raise families, it is often necessary to face the dangerous unknown – crossing an ocean or land-mass to do so. Even when metaphorically the oceans and continents are experienced within, such journeys can bring us into strange associations, and require us to adapt to extreme challenges.

To open up new territory, whether figurative or actual, involves a degree of recklessness, and this must be more than matched by an ability to control situations; we have to organize resources and events creatively and effectively. Adventures must be attempted with careful forethought and an overview of the bigger picture so that unimportant issues are assimilated, yet potentially destructive problems are avoided. A river's path is fluid and yet irresistible; obstacles serve to make it grow stronger and clearer of purpose. So too, our personal weaknesses must be overcome so that, by example, we can lead those who would willingly follow. Powers of persuasion need to be brought to a high degree to justify actions that could easily be misunderstood.

HOMEBUILDING

CANCER 6 – 10

A home unites a collection of individuals into a group destiny by dealing effectively with concerns about security on physical and emotional levels. There are many aspects to homebuilding, and to realize each requires very careful attention, using whatever resources are available, and enlisting the potential of all members to help out.

Feeling supported and nourished on all levels, secure individuals can rise, since they are potentially made lighter of spirit, refreshed by the opportunity to dream, and the solid support that home gives. This tends to be dramatized as a journey, from a lower to a higher realization of potential, and can give life a delightful sparkling quality. A playful individuality, and more fulfilling expressions of self, can easily arise out of the wholesomeness born of being freed from the debilitating drag of base-level survival requirements.

INHABITING

CANCER 11 – 15

People tend to settle down together in pairs, in families, as tribes and nations. This fact is not at all startling and is usually associated with advantages to do with combined strength, sanctuary and succour. However, we can also see how this process is entirely necessary to support the greatest degree of differentiation and refinement of the individuality of each member of the community. A person typically tries out variations of possible personal characteristics in order to inhabit their truest or most convenient persona. It's much safer, and probably more effective, to do this within a homely setting.

Influences passed down from mother to child supply much of the psychological material that binds a person to their ancestral heritage, supporting personal optimization. The need to have some control over our physical environment serves to straighten out any overly-fanciful aspects of behaviour, and underlines the importance of following solid advice from older generations. This guidance consolidates our emotional resourcefulness, and helps to lead towards rich rewards, and the fulfilment of our highest expectations.

PERSISTENCE

CANCER 16 – 20

As a family or group settles, it becomes able to access a closer awareness of the hidden, enduring ideals that have somewhat mysteriously drawn together its members. These principles, perhaps once only felt or implied, become an explicit code or plan, and just as seeds unfold to give rise to unique versions of potentialities, so the people within the group, shaped by its collective visions, grow into individual expressions of the general type. This is borne out by survival issues. Growing members must be provided for, and the complex social organism that unfolds to deal with this is a fundament of the code. What we yearn to become is fulfilled through pursuing this code persistently.

The more spiritual dimension of the code takes the form of ritual and ceremony. Civilization promotes conformity to bring all facets of life into alignment. So, across the nation, people sanctify special things in life – birth, marriage and death – with similar formalities, and such rituals have a strong binding force that, very effectively, allows homesteaders to identify with their tribe on a heart level. This has profound psychological and practical consequences since the mind becomes clear when the heart is at ease. Cooperation is taken to a more exalted state when linked to both the earth and the heavens, as indeed it needs to be if settlers are to survive and prosper. Because it speaks to a very deep need, this continues to have importance well after the settling first takes place, in fact indefinitely.

LEADERSHIP

CANCER 21 – 25

Whereas the more outgoing type of individual will lead by calling others to follow, there is another strategy, which we associate with the more responsive type. This leader, having perfected various softer skills and intelligent insights, knows how to wait. A time will come and they will be awakened to respond to an inner feeling that their destiny is to serve the tribe by guiding it through difficult times. A wide knowledge of the ability of others, coupled with the means to inspire and persuade, expands the resources available to the leader. Added to this is an easy intuitive sense of which of the possible options is likelier to produce the better community result. The influence of this type of captain depends upon popularity and empathy – they need to be seen as truly representative of the underlying feelings of the group at large, in keeping with the times and codes of the community.

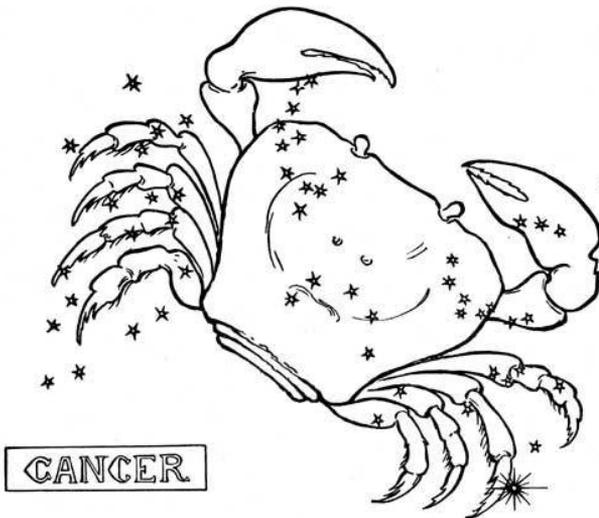
CONSOLIDATION

CANCER 26 – 30

There are quiet periods, when the weary will take their well-earned rest, and there are stormy times when emotions run high and life gets very intense. We human beings are strongly influenced by our passions and need to restrain ourselves from over-indulgences of all kinds, especially when personal or communal feelings are at high tide. Never too relaxed, never too tense – or there is real and significant danger that threatens the tribe. The indirect force that moderates these extremes of sentiment shows in various ways. These include fellow feeling and the willingness to see another's point of view – also a general loyalty to family and tribe, and faithfulness to its binding ideal.

Here we go beyond the earth-bound concerns of survival to the highly spiritual alignment that is capable of consolidating a disparate number of people into a unified whole. Eventually, by sharing day-to-day trials and celebrations over the years, we somehow become part of one another – in every sense, whether practical or spiritual. This is the goal of Cancer – to be an integral part of a higher organism, to belong legitimately to something held together by a level of rapport so deep that it is prayerful.

PLANETS IN CANCER



SUN in Cancer (☉)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 122 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Cancer (☾)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

This moon position is open and expressive, and feels empathy and sensitivity. It is in its own territory when a high degree of emotional intelligence is required to flow along with moods and changes. Irresistibly drawn to homemaking, it will soften another's dramas by offering a profound line of compassionate understanding. The Sabian Mystery is revealed by relaxing into acceptance, so that unconscious processes of the psyche can rise into awareness.

MERCURY in Cancer (☿)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Mercury, in water signs like Cancer, can operate more from feeling than rational thought, so it tends to be a little more empathic than logical, careful to present its ideas sensitively, and to read situations with intuition as much as intellect. Softly spoken and careful, it shows understanding and often casts oil on troubled waters.

VENUS in Cancer (♀)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Venus is very caring in Cancer – soft, devoted and nurturing, yet easily hurt and prone to emotionality. Relationship is seen as a way to create steps towards the goal of having a loving family that features home comforts, trust and security. A guarded, cold exterior often covers the warm, vulnerable heart.

MARS in Cancer (♂♋)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

Mars greatly softens its assertiveness when in Cancer, and tends to operate in a cyclical rhythm, forward and back like the tide, gently eroding obstacles over time, and with hidden strategic purposes that are rarely discerned. It has the long term in sight, so is patient and fluid as it slowly builds an ever-secure consolidation of belonging. The Sabian Symbol will help you find how to walk a meandering path towards your important goals.

JUPITER in Cancer (♃♋)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

The Nurturing Mother, who is able to cast her embrace of belonging over all and sundry, in Cancer Jupiter is essentially benign and expansive and wants to make the whole world feel a true sense of being loved, safe and cared for.

NORTH NODE in Cancer (♊♋)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

The North Node pulls us away from what we find easy towards our greatest spiritual examination – and in Cancer encourages us to re-evaluate our priorities as between home and career. The investment in fame and fortune is weighed against family matters and, in order to deepen life's meaning, is eventually best relegated to second place.

SATURN in Cancer (♄♋)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

With obvious caution about home matters, and an acute emphasis on the need for deep emotional stability, when in Cancer, Saturn presents a hard shell that protects and defends. This delays intimacy, yet strongly underpins it with pronounced dependability and fidelity.

CHIRON in Cancer (♆♋)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

Healing occurs through awakening a deeper sense of belonging when Chiron acts through Cancer. Nurturing, supportive and intimate groups provide safe space for sharing and releasing emotional issues, so the inner child can remember and learn how to play again.

CANCER – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

ADAPTABILITY: FURLED AND UNFURLED FLAG DISPLAYED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF CANCER (0° - 1°)

Achieving primary objectives sometimes requires transient loyalties

Very often, what may appear to be a thoroughly negative attribute of personality is better seen as a poorly understood resource, a distortion of a valuable principle. Here we consider how instability and vacillation are occasional side-effects of an imperfectly expressed higher quality.

The path to any goal meanders and bifurcates without signposts, so that we are not always able to identify the optimal course of action. Those who are able to make concessions, to adapt and evolve their position, have greater capacity to achieve primary objectives.

Temporary allegiances are helpful, in fact necessary, to pursue any significant intention, and we can find ourselves joining some rather unexpected groups for a while, even some whose purpose seem opposed to our normal principles. To serve under the flag of one cause, and then another, is not dishonourable when the larger picture is considered. Sometimes the end justifies the means.

The more inflexible is our determination to succeed at all costs, the more it acts as a rudder to guide us through stormy waters and shifts of wind direction. Every ambition is served by this, in fact the sincerity of purpose will surely be repeatedly tested and has to be repeatedly affirmed.

It is meaningful and desirable to anticipate tough challenges and make contingency plans since forewarned is forearmed. A consistent attitude is the best preparation for unexpected mishaps.

Indeed, with such a general outlook, every apparent mishap can be harvested as a benefit. This occurs by assimilating new ideas, and refining not only the path, but the detailed specifics of the goal itself.

It is the power of adaptability that enables profitable life management. Every awkward occurrence can then be perceived as a blessing in disguise; each situation can be made to serve the main theme of our deepest life purpose.

CONTEMPLATION: A MAN SUSPENDED OVER A VAST LEVEL PLACE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF CANCER (1° - 2°)

Contemplation is an aspect of optimal self-management

This is about widening our spread of understanding before making a determination about our committed position in any matter. The implication is that we must have a wide and deep self-understanding if we are to avoid foolish choices.

It is quite usual for people to omit properly to assess the down-to-earth considerations in the situation at hand, lost in some transcendent flight of fancy about the true nature of reality. This inevitably leads to loss and disappointment and the consequent sense of failure and powerlessness.

The image of overview or supervision points to the need to take time – we need to make our decisions in a leisurely way if we are to have real freedom of choice. This is because we see life from a different, and usually more legitimate, perspective when free of stress.

Contemplation is an aspect of optimal self-management. It has a beneficial effect upon the mind and the physical body, and allows us to embrace a far wider appreciation of all the variables in play. Very few top achievers exclude this activity from their normal practices.

There is an infinite range of possible ramifications that follow each move we make. The more of them we can see and anticipate, the greater is our ability to uncover our potential to make the world how we want it to be.

Through contemplation we access the greater union. We gain an unlimited overview of the bigger picture before getting tied up and involved in details.

This is how we escape from the bondage of our compulsions and habits – with poise.

INDOMITABILITY: A MAN BUNDLED UP IN FUR LEADING A SHAGGY DEER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF CANCER (2° - 3°)

We are fully alive only when experiencing what is uncontrollable

The strange image suggests an outdoorsman with little adherence to conventionality or home comforts, and is indicative of the indomitable spirit of humanity as it faces the challenge of harsh conditions with confidence and grit.

Each of us has highly individual roots, and from these we grow firm in our conviction of who we are and what gives us our power. That part of us, which is concerned with survival and individuality, insists on strengthening itself through its experiences.

It is most helpful to consider all particular restrictions and handicaps as self-imposed and eventually unnecessary. We tend to accept limitations because of the comforts we require – but they are not beyond repudiation if our taste is for adventure.

From cradle to grave, we go through various phases of self-discovery, and at each point, we must find the inner resources we need to deal with what comes up – however strange, however challenging.

The trail-blazing instinct is writ deep and clear in the human heart. We are all pioneers on some level, and any permanent capitulation in the name of safety and pleasure is a distortion – an abuse of the principle of recuperation and rest.

Most normal experiences are self-limiting when allowed to become habitual and unconscious. Opportunities are everywhere to be found by one who disdains limitations and thus rejects the inevitability of always returning to the status quo and the authority of the powers that be.

Life is real and rewarding only as it can be carried on from something known to something unknown. We are fully alive only when experiencing the adventure of what is essentially uncontrollable.

JUSTIFICATION: A CAT ARGUING WITH A MOUSE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF CANCER (3° - 4°)

To achieve specific goals, the mind must be set before involvement

Self-justification is evidence of repression, and is frequently triggered by the processes of social integration. Our natural urges, and society's pressure, are two very strong forces. Our animal nature must not be denied, although of course, to enjoy the fruits of social connectedness, it has to be tamed. War, and other violent crimes, shows us quite clearly how repressed passions eventually manifest – dangerously, and without even animal-level decency.

Our urges are as God-given as our conscience – so why is a cat arguing with a mouse? Why do we seek to justify what is natural? Yet we do. We deny instinct because we have been persuaded that reason is more social. Those of the herd have forgotten their individuality, and are inclined to trust this dry argument. Others cannot be civilized so completely that they will ever deny the animal passion – which they accept is life force. A powerful hunter kills to survive; it is natural. Yet society's answer is to provide daily cat food to soften the killer instinct and civilize the beast.

The human being is part angel, part animal. Each part has the strong imperative to assert itself over the other and yet neither would be so magnificent without this eternal contest. Neither can ever win, so we play the perpetual game without wholeheartedly taking sides.

When we choose to have impact on the world, clear, yet dry, argument will not achieve the same type of influence as a passionate plea focused into persuasion; this can win both mind and heart. In other words it is necessary to focus desire and will through the lens of mind. If the mind lacks clarity or strength, then external forces will certainly bend its purpose.

If we expect to achieve specific goals, the mind must be set before involvement. Preparation for an event is a part of that event and in some subtle way can influence the outcome ahead of time. Full enthusiastic participation in the preparation stage therefore clarifies our values and optimizes the likelihood of success.

Personal values develop through the co-creative interaction of two factors: self-discovery and confirmation through social integration. It's not enough just to feel what is right, neither is it good simply to be told by others.

Preparation allows us to channel the power of our desire-nature appropriately, giving the mind the opportunity to consult its conscience before it engages the will. In this way we tame the beast rather than trying vainly to put it to sleep indefinitely.

DISPERSION: AN AUTOMOBILE WRECKED BY A TRAIN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF CANCER (4° - 5°)

Unless acted on by force of will, things continue in their given direction

The ultimate obligation of the individual is to themselves, and it is absolute folly to allow any course of action to continue to the point of self-cancellation.

Circumstances unfold in their narrowing way from moment to moment, as the train inexorably approaches the car, options are becoming fewer and fewer – yet we always have choices, and we need to remember this.

We are warned here to become aware of any aspect of ourselves that has the ability to be self-defeating in its insensitive recklessness. It is totally commonplace to be tempted by self-harm – and our best option is to find another way to express our feelings of remorse and dejection.

Whenever a sequence of events is set in motion there is an inherent tendency for completion. Unless acted on by force of will, things continue in their given direction – very often towards destruction. We must exercise our will against the flow of such forces in our lives.

Despite the negative imagery, there is hopeful wisdom to be found – in that we need serious threats if we are to have triggered our powerful life-affirming power of creativity. We can disperse all the factors in a threatening scenario and reorganize our experience to fit with our best interests.

This facility is not simply a trick of perception as we manoeuvre our thoughts towards optimism – it is evident in the objective facts of our lives. We have all we have because of all we've done before.

Control is not given to us absolutely, life is bigger than that – yet we do have a measure of it, and we can moderate the worst of the threats against us provided we keep a keen eye and a positive mind.

METICULOUSNESS: GAME BIRDS FEATHERING THEIR NESTS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF CANCER (5° - 6°)

By carefully feathering our own nest, we help build community

Truly as we pursue our own goals we actually fulfil the expectations of others. By feathering our own nest, we participate fully and legitimately in the balanced, dynamic order of community life.

Knitting together the component aspects of life is our creative purpose and joy. There are innumerable choices to make to do with people to befriend, tasks to perform, places to go, and ideas to discuss – and these each have their own detailed characteristics. It takes perpetual meticulousness to build an optimal set of life circumstances.

Individuality flourishes whenever it is able to establish its personal rights over some desirable segment of reality. This is a powerful, dependable and unimpeachable motivation for each one of us.

We preserve our initiative to the extent that we are able to utilize the natural course of things, and become fully resourceful responding to the availability of material and services around us.

By this, we participate consciously in a group destiny and derive our sense of life satisfaction from such involvements. What surrounds us is the sum of all individual initiatives, those that define and describe our group.

Furthermore, we do no less than justify our very existence within the context of our immediate, current circumstances. We seek to reconcile who we are with the expectations of our group, and what we have within the general availability of group resources.

We may find it is difficult to let go of unnecessary concerns over everyday security – but if we can, then the unlimited spirit of humankind can be released and our freedom and abundance enthusiastically enjoyed fully.

ASCENDANCY: TWO FAIRIES ON A MOONLIT NIGHT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF CANCER (6° - 7°)

The soul is refreshed when occasionally we rest from normal reality

Unacceptable levels of pressure of life can cause us to indulge in senseless flights of fancy, inhabiting a world of make-believe. It's not at all helpful to do this, can be quite disorienting and cause real trouble.

Nature offers unlimited scope to release each of us from psychological and physical burdens that necessarily arise out of our involvement in life. Sleep is the most obvious example, so too is daydreaming, and yet these are meant as temporary restful states rather than realistic alternatives to worldliness.

Certainly, there is a need to balance everyday strains and stresses by finding a lightness of being, which the image of two moonlit fairies suggests. It is the soul's nature to fly and soar and, in moments when we can feel this, there are precious opportunities for inwardness and self-reflection; these arise as a matter of course whenever such a mood is present.

From this, one learns the ability to rise above any threats to wellbeing that would result if one felt a sense of inescapable, long-term, forced imprisonment in the realm of physicality and all that that entails – the compelling requirement to attend to the body's needs and so many emotional challenges.

On the path of self-realization the sense of exaltation that comes from this lightness of being is a dynamic factor – in other words, we move along more readily if, from time to time, such abilities are harnessed and used productively.

So the very inclination we have to 'space out' can be productively channelled as a means to tune in and develop a transforming sensitivity. We then find that creative imagination has profound powers of healing.

Being occasionally detached from the normal heavy sense of self is truly liberating and such an ascendancy of spirit demonstrates the magical facility of selfhood.

APPROPRIATION: RABBITS DRESSED IN CLOTHES AND ON PARADE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF CANCER (7° - 8°)

The real is established as it is dramatized

The suggestion some might take here, in this image, is that rabbits have misappropriated better clothes than they are worth, and are showing off to gain some little glory, and add a touch of glamour to their dull lives.

And yet the vestments of higher implication are always available for lower life to wear experimentally. A cat may look at a king, and even dress like one.

The values and expressions to which we aspire speak of an inner sense of unrealized self, which needs to be awakened first by recognition. By dressing up we 'imagine up'. In fact we can even question the worth of any event that does not stimulate us to reach upwards beyond our current situation to higher ideals.

How else could life work? Reality itself is only ever established by forging things out of thoughts – so why ever would we not choose to bring our thoughts to the level of ideal? The real is established as it is dramatized.

It is therefore wisdom itself to project the highest ideals that we can imagine for our lives onto the situations we encounter, and make it known with unlimited assurance that we are doing so. Of course we have to be careful that we are not ingenuously substituting affirmation for accomplishment.

The upward reach of consciousness towards spirit is the glory of our species, yet to manifest heaven on earth we need to work for it too.

An important, if subtle, part of who we really are lays dormant, waiting for us to grasp the form of it in the outer world of circumstances. This is appropriation – we must take what is ours in order to make it ours – sometimes before anyone knows, and often by surprise. We can only do so when we trust our feelings of being worthy of our ideals.

INCLINATION: A TINY NUDE MISS REACHING FOR A FISH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF CANCER (8° -9°)

What is of importance is engagement rather than outcome

When we are able to tune in to the innocent beauty of the soul, we behave without inhibition – the image shows nakedness to be as playful and natural as fishing.

Then every single eventuality sponsors excitement, and simple, unquenchable inquisitiveness – not a single aspect of life is unworthy of our attention and interest. Our inclination is to engage, and find whatever we can in any situation, knowing that there is always something within it to entertain our curiosity.

With this attitude, we bring significance to everything we touch. What is of importance to us is the process of engagement rather than the resultant outcome.

Also, we become capable of grasping the reins of control over every realm of enquiry in which we participate. Yet, a light touch is all that is required, since we have no great attachment to the result of our attentions.

Self-expression can be at a very high degree – nevertheless, others will respond well if there is charismatic grace in unselfconscious simplicity.

However, our inclinations speak of aspiration to reach out to become a better version of ourselves, in all innocence. With this approach, we need to be aware that worldly achievement is not well supported – because of the perpetual shifting of attention and the frequency of trying out something new.

Because the soul is ever-present in its eternal, unimpeachable purity of spirit, it brings enthusiasm to all its encounters. If this is not evidence of the Divine within us, then what is?

LATENCY: A LARGE DIAMOND NOT COMPLETELY CUT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF CANCER (9° - 10°)

Our connections are supportive of our life progression.

A diamond appears as an uninteresting chunk of glass until it is cut by an expert, yet it carries extraordinary latency of influence and beauty. Power and beauty are so often intertwined.

As the symbolic diamond of self is worked, so our personal reality is endowed with expanded dimensions of significance. All our connections and experiences are primarily supportive of our personal life progression – from what could be, to what is.

Whatever skills and arts we may ourselves develop have equivalence to those of the diamond-polisher. The world around us becomes somewhat dependent upon them as a means to bring to form that which only exists in its latent potential. Our values thus become an integrated aspect of our life by having a degree of influence over the circumstances of people we know.

With this level of awareness and attitude of approach we may become a shaping force – with a very effective gift for dramatizing the potentialities of everything at hand. People around us change and grow.

Our journey through life is a pilgrimage as we encounter the lower planes of existence and, through some service, reveal the higher meanings we have ourselves come to understand and embody.

The justification of any person is typically sought through their impact upon the world at large and the people around them. Not only the extent of this, but the quality, is assessed as the ‘measure of man’.

It is ultimately futile to lean upon any static version of self, counting honours and possessions as though the past is real. What we are at this moment is an unrealized powerhouse of spiritual potential that yearns to be known for what we are in essence.

INIMITABILITY: CLOWN MAKING GRIMACES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF CANCER (10° - 11°)

Life is a continuing self-rehearsal

Self-abuse always leads to loss. If we make clowns of ourselves to gain a cheap laugh, then we must expect to pay a price, since aimless self-exploitation, in any disguise, is certain to cost us influence.

Why do we do it? Perhaps we find it stimulating to provoke a response in others, and then find their reaction a useful experience to help us learn some lesson about ourselves.

Certainly it's safer in friendly company to try out new ways and wisdoms, since our tentative attempts to improve ourselves are much less likely to be measured or rejected willy-nilly.

Life is a continuing self-rehearsal; no one has managed to perfect their own personality, so why should we feel embarrassed during our own trial-and-error attempts towards perfection?

As we become clearer in defining who we are, the impact we have on others becomes rather sharper and more dominant. Persuading another to our point of view helps refine and define us.

The exaggeration of some qualities and inhibition of others is normal though often ridiculous behaviour. It shows in everyone, though most people try to conceal self-doubts, frequently using misguided humour to do so.

So we are wise to take off the mask when we are ready. Then we find that our own inimitable uniqueness is enough to earn attention without prostituting ourselves in caricature.

MATERIALIZATION: A CHINESE WOMAN NURSING A BABY WITH A MESSAGE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF CANCER (11° - 12°)

Racial characteristics offer a foundation for personal expression

The baby – yet another child with yet another message – has its own story to tell of its race and times, notwithstanding the billions of previous attempts by others to express their own unique tale. Each of us can include far-flung capabilities of our racial coding, our family's genes and our cultural impressions, as we pull together the focus of our own special blend of talents and attitudes.

Born in only one place, in only one moment, we nevertheless have a multifaceted world, and an age into which we can expand. Who can ever imagine the reach and ramifications of any small event in our lives?

One thing is sure however – that we are an aspect of the process of materialising the universal values of our race into everyday consciousness.

This should not be allowed to become a distracted and completely unreasonable demand for recognition of our culture's special worth. Such a feeling is likely to leak out into a degree of xenophobic arrogance within the personality.

And yet when we perceive ourselves to be part of something historic and inevitable, greater powers can be resourced within us. To be alone and without a background is nothing; to be a special representative of the great race of China, with all of its vast history and future – this stimulates us to higher aspirations, and empowers us.

There is a symbiotic relationship at play in this. The race gains as much through the individual as the individual gains by having the power and support of a racial heritage.

There are many other factors at play, and yet the teaching here is that we succeed in life to the extent that we are able fully to embrace the particularities of our racial characteristics, as a foundation for personal expression.

DETERMINATION: ONE HAND SLIGHTLY FLEXED WITH A VERY PROMINENT THUMB

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF CANCER (12° - 13°)

We have to find a place to stand

The thumb symbolizes the power of the species to fulfil its determination to dominate its environment. It is the law of nature that the weak are destroyed; no amount of persuasion about ethics or reasonableness will thwart the power of the powerful. On some fundamental level we have to engage with the struggle between hunter and hunted. Here, practicality is brought to the point of ruthlessness.

It is not helpful to allow this survival urge to degenerate into aggressiveness. Whereas it is completely meaningful to attempt to control all the forces – natural or human – that would otherwise intrude upon our security needs, it is short-sighted and self-defeating to initiate the projection of force beyond our domain.

Having bonded with family and tribe, we are then committed to the use of measures that secure our ability to develop fully our potentials and aspirations – for self and community. If we allow ourselves to surrender to the great forces of our environment, this would be forfeited permanently. It is unacceptable from every perspective.

We simply have to find a place to stand in life, where we have confidence that we can deal with whatever occurs, or is even a possible threat. Trust and naivety have their place in life – but not as base-line fundamentals. In a dangerous world we need to secure ourselves first and foremost.

The push of our species speaks to humanity's belief in its own supremacy over all orders of nature. We do not fear other species or capitulate to a stronger force that would threaten our eradication. This belief is the foundation characteristic of the modern human – as distinct from the constant terror of life for Neanderthals.

Recently the dawning of awareness has emerged that we have taken this too far – that we are not showing sufficient responsibility for the environment and that we are abusing the power we have. With power must always go responsibility – and the steady hand of humanity's stewardship will begin to tremble and shake until we strike the right balance between nature and nurture.

Yet we are not the same as other animals, we have a spiritual aspect that bestows upon us the duty of bringing light to earth – and that responsibility must be backed up by authority. We claim the right to self-determination, against all forces and environments. Only when we are safe from physical danger can we truly open up to Grace.

SANCTION: VERY OLD MAN FACING A VAST DARK SPACE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF CANCER (13° - 14°)

Our circumstances are a gift to enable further self-discovery

There is something rather beautiful about certain old people, who have learned to look at darkness and light with a similar level of detachment. In the face of death, all life looks rather transient and inconsequential, and this is one of the inevitable realizations that can dawn upon us when we more frequently bring to mind the certainty of our imminent death. To the mature individual it brings calmness and clarity.

It is neither necessary nor appropriate to dwell within a chaos of misunderstanding. This gives rise to a lack of any specific life-purpose, and is evidence of a failure to grasp the essentials of what it means to be in the world, with all of its darkness and light. However troublesome they may be, our current life circumstances are a gift that enables us to find something more within ourselves, and to enlist the deeper elements of our nature – in order to deal with whatever occurs.

With certain skills and attitudes, we can fully expect to attract everything we need and want, and to find love and comfort, as well as meaning. The secret is to sanction and embrace, rather than deny, the murkier elements within us.

What is called the shadow part of our nature is deemed bad, or even evil, and unwanted. Yet, in truth, these are simply distorted expressions of energy – and are, in and of themselves, neither bad nor good. It is our distorted perceptions of them that need to be held responsible, and changed.

Our aspirations and expectations of the future have no authentic limit. In essence, any self-reduction is false. In order to delve into previously hidden areas, we need to give ourselves permission – we need to sanction the dark areas of past experience that are so often only accepted non-judgementally by the very old. Only then will our perception of restrictions dissolve.

Eternal life offers the promise of the perpetual certainty of newness. We are free to enjoy rebirth with every new breath, and in each and every moment we can find renewal into purity and innocence. In Sufism, the word Bismillah is used as a mantra very frequently. It indicates that every moment is a new beginning, and we can be reborn with each breath. In order to let go of that which prevents such rebirth, by exposing it to the light of loving consciousness, we first need to own it honestly, fully and without judgement. Unless we do so, we are constrained to live a life with a much lesser degree of richness and fulfilment.

Exploring the mysteries within, we gain more realizations and understandings; then it is helpful to look at the past with wisdom eyes so that, by reworking our perceptions, we can find inspiration and increased self-assurance. What was once thought of as disgraceful can be redeemed; past hurt can be released. Absolute forgiveness is divine grace, and will heal all distortions.

SATIETY: GROUP WHO HAVE ENJOYED OVEREATING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF CANCER (14° - 15°)

There is no spiritual principle that disavows prosperity

The image of a group of people enjoying a well-earned banquet indicates richness and fullness to the point of satiety – satisfaction. How rarely is this the experience for most people, who create for themselves a sense of lack, envy towards the ‘haves’ and self-victimization in the ranks of the ‘have-nots’. There is no spiritual principle that creates poverty, none that disclaims prosperity – yet by the billions, people are given to deny themselves luxury and fulfilment as though the only way to God is through suffering and want. The reverse is true, at least when tempered by a healthy moderation.

Each life experience is a validation of individuality. We can rest assured that we are who we are and that is the consistent, entirely dependable, fact of material existence. We are not the same as anyone else, and so no one else’s life experience is the same as ours. There is, inherent within this statement, the promise that, whatever we become, as we unfold further potentials, life will match us step by step all the way. We get what we are – all of it and nothing else.

Life is nothing more than – and, importantly, nothing less than – the richness of expression of who we are, and who we are becoming. Whatever else it may be, life is a full-on intensity of experiences.

One way to see this is that we get what we deserve – our efforts are rewarded in full and fair measure. Thus we are able effectively to create a smooth demonstration in our circumstances of our degree of competence.

The events and situations of the future cannot exist except as an unfolding of the foundation we build now through our skills and knowledge. Who we are is like a table, upon which is built whatever comes to pass. This platform extends the realms of potential in certain directions as much as it limits it in other ways. Ironically, we are constrained to be expansive towards self-realization.

There are penalties for those who resist or distort this condition of life – by either trying lazily or fearfully to freeze the present, or by permitting unrealistic or unecological self-indulgence of base appetites. Our environment is an aspect of who we are and it must be taken fully into account.

There is no survival strategy, nor creative richness of joy that is based on inadequacy. When we learn to accept that failure is not an option or indeed even an aspect of reality, then the final blocks to success are removed.

PROFUNDITY: HOLDING A MANUSCRIPT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF CANCER (15° - 16°)

We reach our goals with clear vision and a detailed plan

There is no ethical standard that remains untouched by time or geography, no absolute measure of goodness or truth. These are ideals rather than practical working models. Each of us grows towards the ideal that we ourselves choose, and develop competence in being what we aspire to become.

The scenes and scenarios that each day pass in front of our eyes stimulate in us an intellectual response, and it is helpful to employ these dramatized life situations as if they were mirrors reflecting back to us who we are and what we are doing.

It is we who write the manuscript for our own life drama. As directors we express our feelings about what we value and, as actors, we dramatize these feelings. A masterly actress is convincing because she is convinced; she gives herself, body and soul, profoundly, to her performance.

Yet, from time to time, it is wise to detach ourselves from our current involvements. We need to look again at the script and realistically examine whether we are keeping to it, lest we lose the plot. Against this plan we check how well we are doing by gazing into the mirror of life.

Personal control stems from clear vision focused by a specific detailed plan of intention. Without a goal, a person is as unlikely to reach safe harbour as a ship with no rudder.

True self-awareness requires us to consider ourselves through the eyes of others, and follow up our observations with a process of continual self-re-examination and adjustment. Learning to master situations overcomes self-limitation and our personal plans are thus coordinated within the greater design.

What arises out of this is a great deepening – when we learn to trust that life offers us much more than we have been able to imagine. Typically, the deeper profundity of personal experience is reached by serendipity, when we go beyond into unscripted realms of spontaneity.

UNFOLDMENT: THE GERM GROWS INTO KNOWLEDGE AND LIFE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF CANCER (16° - 17°)

Whatever we pretend to be is what we yearn to become

Within each person is a level of certainty – a core of immutable distinctiveness, which actually constitutes the self as such.

One characteristic of its being is the urge, and urgency, to become. We are all moved by an inner compulsion towards situations and encounters, through which we both expand, and refine, this essential identity. By opening ourselves up, we reach out to establish every possible phase of our self-existence, and claim it as an aspect of the eternal soul.

We are as much engaged in the presentation of self as we are in real development – and we need to be careful to avoid falsely assuming and presenting qualities that we have yet to master. Still, whatever we pretend to be is an important clue that tells us what we yearn to become. This is useful information.

What we realize is that we are the germ of an idea unfolding – and this idea, which grows into knowledge, is the experience of our life, as we grow in wisdom and awareness. To gain completeness of personal realization we must give ourselves over to every moment and totally embrace each immediate concern.

Everything living shares this irresistible determination to press forward indefinitely and uncompromisingly. As much as we are pressing forward towards greater expression, so are others. And we co-create the details of our lives by marrying their visions with our own, and trying to perfect ourselves within these interactions.

Ancient esotericists, who spoke of the philosopher's stone, were working with this very concept. How can we turn lead into gold? How can we reclaim our spiritual glory when we are imprisoned in clay?

And perhaps the best answer is – slowly, inevitably and repeatedly throughout eternity.

PROVISION: HEN SCRATCHING FOR HER CHICKS

This universal idea is best expressed through g184

planets in

18TH DEGREE OF CANCER (17° - 18°)

Fulfilment comes from pursuing the right path persistently

Generally, when left to its own devices, life finds a way to protect us all. In this example the hen's instinct is to provide for her offspring until they are old enough to cope. Mothers are hard-wired to make sure their genes survive and prosper, thus the hen's nature protects the chicks.

There is, however, a general requirement that we exert ourselves in some way in order to have our needs met. All life is kept going through exchange, and 'food for work' is the commonest formula.

In fact, normally the reward for industriousness is sustenance – and even material abundance.

However, peace of mind also follows, as long as the work we are doing is an authentic expression of who we are. Then it feels good to be doing it and finding higher achievement through it. Typically a deeply gratifying feeling is experienced when we have overcome challenges to become who we truly are.

In fact, we can say that self-fulfilment mostly depends on both finding the right life path, and pursuing it with real application and a significant degree of commitment – even doggedness.

In contrast, those who spend their life busy doing nothing are prohibited from feeling the sense of wellbeing that is so sought-after. Therefore, we need to learn discernment – between what is meaningful and self-consistent, and what is mere bustle.

Then we find ourselves well equipped to turn every occurrence to our advantage being able, consistently and unusually, to provide ourselves and others with what is needed.

CONFORMITY: A PRIEST PERFORMING A MARRIAGE CEREMONY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF CANCER (18° - 19°)

Civilization promotes conformity to bring all facets of life into alignment

Before civilization began to take shape, there were no priests, no ceremonies and no contracts for sexual relations. Civilization is that which promotes conformity – and it can create bondage, and deny individuality. It is structured by laws and moral codes, backed up by penalties enforced by power-possessors.

These structures form the body of something else, which is much more subtle – the core ideals that define and describe those who adhere to them. Racial and cultural identity both expresses through these structures, and arises from them.

The rewards are found to be plentiful for the adherents. There are great advantages to be part of something, especially by knowing that others are willing to conform to principles and aspirations that we ourselves are bound to. As a result we find friendship, family and economic wellbeing easier to establish.

A special kind of self-fulfillment is possible if we align in service to the established rituals of our society. The priest's submission is one example. Perhaps in the beginning the surrender – in service to the rituals – was meaningful because of the beliefs they represented, yet later rituals were employed as a means to perfect the surrendering itself.

The constant repetition of ritual has a very profound effect upon the adherent. The mind becomes very clear, and, so does the body of emotion. We can become very capable of enacting the current aspirations of those we serve – in other words, we become powerful.

The very need for the existence of priesthood points to an inability, within the general population, adequately to attend to the more spiritual side of life. The priest takes on the spiritual stewardship of human society out of concern for its integrity, knowing that individuals will not do this themselves – and would rather project their most subtle qualities onto another person.

This further empowers the priest. If dealt with properly, there can be the possibility of bringing all the many facets of life into organic alignment – otherwise the church becomes an all-powerful ruler that corrupts the community's highest aspect.

SENTIMENT: GONDOLIERS IN A SERENADE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF CANCER (19° - 20°)

The mind becomes clear when the heart is at ease

The division of labour in society allows that each individual can find their own work, even underwriting the rather fanciful occupation of a gondolier. Some arrange for food to be on the table, others create serenades.

Personal traits, sentiments, desires and preferences, will only be perfected when an individual is ready and willing to seek satisfaction in every moment, doing whatever work they are drawn to do, and the resultant life-path.

Although sentimentality, especially when taken to extreme levels, is unlikely to touch the deepest reaches of heart, it is nevertheless soft, and has an easing effect, which can engender harmony.

Through this gentle process of creating coherence, the expanding self is able to face up to external challenges, and inner ambiguities, with greater courage. When the heart is at ease, the mind becomes clearer, and our tasks become simpler.

The soul hungers for the perfection of love, which is so often sought in romance, where imagination is exalted. Music is an excellent metaphor to hint at the human potential to find a symphony within cooperative relationships.

There is no merit in taking this idea to a position of extreme unworldliness – it is tantamount to a retreat from, even a betrayal of, self. Sentiments are to grace hard reality, not to replace it.

The music of life flows through us at all times, and gets us to dance to its tune. The only legitimate response to this is enthusiasm and full-on participation with the self as it expresses itself.

EXCELLENCE: A PRIMA DONNA SINGING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF CANCER (20° - 21°)

Only when we are aspiring to excellence can we feel alignment with the soul

It's very interesting that this image has become so ambiguous, in that the phrase *prima donna* is often used facetiously to point to a person's unseemly display of superficial self-affirmation. One interpretation of the original meaning is that someone has persistently and rigorously sought perfection in order to improve themselves, and to project their best into the world.

We cannot truly rise to the highest potential version of ourselves without ardent self-improvement, through which our skills and talents are perfected to the level of excellence. The soul's constant, recurrent rediscovery of itself requires this process of perfecting – and we can feel ourselves aligning with soul only when we are aspiring to excellence.

From this we can infer that excellence is a soul quality – a spiritual practice. The medium that stimulates the expression of soul – in this case singing – tends to vary from place to place and over time, according to currently popular human values.

We can use this as a way to generate sufficient incentive to progress. Our best creativity is encouraged by the popularity received when we tune in to the zeitgeist sensitively enough to become generally favoured. The resultant quality and quantity of attention that flows towards us empowers our efforts.

We all have opportunity to excel at something, but very few fulfil their potential. It is the culmination of several things – aptitude, vision, imagination, effort and opportunity for example – and we need to respect the need for all of them.

Seeing this from the other side – the audience is enabled in an important way. We benefit from being able to live out our dream vicariously – just losing self-limitation in the moment by 'becoming' the *prima donna* on stage ourselves.

This can awaken and stimulate into reality an overflowing richness of self in full command of our own deep and genuine potentials. By pretending to be the celebrity, we are likelier to become the same as her – or at least similar.

EQUANIMITY: WOMAN AWAITING A SAILBOAT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF CANCER (21° - 22°)

Silence brings about poise and engenders a deeper perspective on life

When we know how to access the power of the human soul, we gain immeasurably in all realms. This facility so often shows itself as equanimity, a creative poise that engenders a wider, deeper perspective on life that settles easily on those who have learned the mysteries of silence.

It is through quieting the mind that we come to notice the little things that bring us to a full appraisal of what is now occurring. It is one of humanity's true gifts – the ability to sustain profound interest in the immediate moment.

The drift of circumstances offers ever-changing versions of reality, each moment having its own potentialities of meaning. It is the quiet mind that grasps the significance of the moment and thus formulates an impression of the underlying pattern that gives rise to seemingly chance events. This is Yin power and is developed through the art and practice of creative expectancy. By meditation, we train ourselves to see more clearly what is occurring, and this gives insight about the underlying flow – from past, through now, to future. We see how an idea is born, has hopes and moves to fulfil itself.

Thus we see and understand that the ideas themselves have a life, a life expectancy, and an expectancy of parenthood. From one idea, others are born, which in turn initiates more and more creative expressions of life's unending potentiality. In each moment, with poise, we can get a sense of where this reproductive process might lead. Optimistically, we look to the future, as if looking out to sea, wondering when our ship will come in. If we have perfected the high spiritual skill of detached, expectant enthusiasm, then probably we will see many ships from exotic shores, all homeward bound.

This is the most satisfying way to understand the movement in our lives. We come to comprehend that it is not the pyramiding of facts upon one another that gives meaning to our involvements; it is the consummation of ideas. The quiet mind is the sponsor of beautiful ideas, which yearn for completion in the realm of real life.

Perhaps we can make the association – that the ability to gaze deeply into the present awakens our sensitivity to the future's echo in today's events. This grants access to as-yet-undisclosed certainties and possibilities.

There is an implicit warning here – that the opposite is true. Without spiritual poise, we can become unrealistically casual and easily waste the moment, remaining in facile dependence upon nothing but the whims and fancies of happenchance.

CRITICISM: MEETING OF A LITERARY SOCIETY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF CANCER (22°- 23°)

Personal identity is invigorated as it responds to examination

A literary society shows an example of the practice of criticism as a positive method by which to gain heightened awareness – through which improvements and deeper appreciation occur. Applied to the character of a self-aware individual, criticism reinforces the definition of personal identity.

There are two obvious possibilities to balance with this intellectual approach to life. There is the potential to make day to day life more rewarding through developing a real understanding that expands our range of interests. Yet the temptation is strong to use debate and discussion as a substitute for full participation in reality itself.

Generally, accomplishment follows the exacting assessment of the features of ordinary activities and common effort – we need to see what works in the world, and we do this by looking very carefully at the details. This attitude sponsors self-reflection, and helps us to review our own aesthetic and intellectual characteristics, as a procedure for improving them.

We grow in stature by accepting the need to hear and take on the observations that are made about us, some of which feel threatening to our self-love. Criticism offered by another is impotent – even counterproductive – unless we accept it as valid. Self-criticism and self-improvement are very intimately connected activities.

It is a glorious aspect of humanity's range of qualities that we constantly develop new and imaginative ways to express ourselves. In this, there is no end to our collective resourcefulness. Whereas repeating and copying are appropriate methods to gain knowledge and experience, in the final analysis it is only originality that has cosmic importance.

Moreover, whenever we are innovative, we stimulate others to be the same way. There is a resonance of original, imaginative optimism that raises those we meet and humanity generally.

With this attitude to even the simplest situations in life, our response to circumstances somehow tends towards a widening of opportunity and the recognition of greatness in others. As a result we become worthy of the high opinion that is eventually accorded us – by a community that is appreciative of our positivity.

INCEPTION: WOMAN AND TWO MEN ON SUNLIT LAND FACING SOUTH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF CANCER (23° - 24°)

We are the creative source of our situations, rather than subject to them

The key idea here is inception – we have to be the source of our situations, rather than subject to them. This requires us to train the mind to know how to resolve ambiguity without allowing ourselves to become slaves to the false freedom of over-abundance. Enough is a feast; too much overwhelms us.

Having two men, the woman has neither, not both – showing how any inability to make decisions keeps us from the truth of who we are and what our purpose is. This image points to the need for us to take steps to further our involvements. Sunbathing is temporarily an appropriate indulgence of ineffectiveness – time out – and yet if it becomes prolonged, it gives us a very strange sense of reality.

A balance must be struck – between allocating attention towards our deeper purposes, and dealing with immediate, but transient, needs and pleasures.

Even on a day-to-day basis, we are presented with impactful options, and we have to bring our sincere values to bear in all we do, however seemingly trivial.

Our basis of life – the very basics of being who we are – depends upon the allegiances we form, and our series of decisions. If we behave reliably and consistently according to our value system, then we will deepen our involvements and strengthen the character.

Inevitably this is helped if we have a greater plan – a large scale overall goal for our lives. This brings all and everything into one cohesive pattern, which enables us to resolve every issue of choice more easily.

It may appear that we constrain ourselves unduly when we choose always to conform to the big plan in all the little things – but this is a false reading. There are simply too many choices to make and, without criteria, we become overwhelmed, and actually inept. We have to discipline ourselves, away from the ultimately unfulfilling ‘*see, want, have*’ mentality.

DESTINY: DARK SHADOW OR MANTLE THROWN SUDDENLY OVER RIGHT SHOULDER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF CANCER (24° - 25°)

We have to claim a commanding influence in order to grasp a situation and pull it around

The mantle of leadership is not given to many, and these few often feel a sense of destiny. The realization occurs that we have the capacity for command – at exactly the moment when circumstances unfold that require us to come forward. On the inner level, we have to come to terms with the need to claim influence and perfect talents in order to grasp the situation and pull it around. We will be thwarted in the proper expression and development of our true potentiality unless we find the strength to resist the imposition of those who would try to tame us.

Whatever could be, needs to be expressively released, in order to become what is. In fact, it is best for all concerned if we allow our width and depth of possibility to spread out in service to the general community. We may well discover a specific talent that is vital to the general welfare.

Self-gratification and social integration through appropriate involvement have to be in alignment if we are to optimize our feelings of wellbeing and belonging.

The temptation to become presumptuous is strong, and we need to observe honestly any inclinations we might have to bend towards the dark shadow of megalomania. This would diminish our effectiveness and defeat our spiritual purpose.

However, we are compelled, by our very existence, to step up and become who we are destined to be. This is not only for our personal rewards; it is actually the obligation of each person to participate irrevocably and fully in the reality of life around us.

In outer terms, we are revealing a willingness to accept stewardship of our group's progressive ambitions and accommodate all the myriad individual viewpoints that make up the social complex.

If it is our fate to lead, then there is very little that could thwart us – except perhaps our own silly self-deprecation or fear of the inevitable pressure that comes as par for the course.

REPOSE: CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN LUXURY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF CANCER (25° - 26°)

Relaxation is an important aspect of life

It is folly to try to maintain a constant force of self-projection by overdoing things so much that we strain beyond our strength.

Self-regulation is advised. The image of luxury, and the keyword Repose, give the clear message that it is important to see relaxation as a valid component of our life-management strategy.

Soft living, when taken to inappropriate levels, leads to loss of reality. Idleness and self-indulgence are not often helpful qualities; we know this.

Yet it actually sustains our aspirations to practise repose as an aspect of self-optimization, as long as it is practised in moderation.

In fact, we can only achieve the capitalization of personal potential when effort is properly balanced with relaxation. It is obvious, when we consider the eternal cycle of struggle and surrender, that neither idleness nor constant effort is sustainable alone.

When we find ourselves experiencing a lessening of personal responsibility, or more frequent displays of ineptitude, then we have a clue that it may be better to relax a while and regroup, marshalling our resources and energising.

Such a phase can be best seen as a prelude to a renewed effort, and through that, towards an even greater expansion of self.

INTENSIFICATION: STORM IN A CANYON

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF CANCER (26° - 27°)

Humanity has an inherent power to overcome problems and dramatically create new ways forward

This image expresses how everything has an unassailable right to be itself. There is, within everything and everyone, an indomitable entitlement to be who and what we are, and therefore of consequence.

This is shown in the energy with which we preserve ourselves, and how we access and enlist every resource in life in order to express ourselves more fully.

With the purpose of having our values both identified and clarified, each one of us demands that our ideals are made manifest in some way – and, like the storm, we do not seek validation, or permission, before we allow our emotions and ideals to express themselves into the world.

Self-satisfaction does not support further development, and occasionally we need to be thoroughly shifted by external forces. Not only does the violence and terror of a storm serve to lift a person out of their complacency – it also stimulates the ability to rise in supremacy over each momentary crisis.

A storm becomes more intense in a canyon, as nature unleashes its power very dramatically. This is in no way a greater expression of power than that inherent in humanity, in our ability and passion to create and overcome.

Circumstances have the capacity, even the tendency, to pyramid, as indeed does a thunderstorm as it gets increasingly threatening. During a life crisis, each new development shows what is happening internally as our passions rise.

It is inappropriate simply to enjoy the turmoil in a voyeuristic manner. These moments of intensification in life can be harnessed so as to impel us through periods of intractability into a new level of vitality.

COMPATIBILITY: A MODERN POCAHONTAS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF CANCER (27° - 28°)

Life is change; we must find a way to adjust

It is foolish to dwell on the past and exalt the principles of conservatism. The past does not exist and its dreams did not survive. Life is change; we must find a way to adjust. Pocahontas won her place in history when she married a white American, the first recorded inter-racial marriage in the USA. Leaving her own people, she embraced the new world, and was held up as an example of the native culture from which she came. Finding a way to harmonize her past and her future, she stands as a symbol of compatibility.

New phases of human culture wash upon the shores of what seems crystallized as hard fact, eroding the very substance of reality. Shore and tide, essentially different, are eternally cooperating in the mystery of evolution by finding the rhythm of give and take.

It is true that values, hard-won and passed down from generation to generation, promote faithfulness and the bonding power of deep empathy that underpins the love of family, clan and homeland.

Yet these very values are established only by the interplay between old and new, as the frontier spirit of change breathes its life force into what otherwise would decay or become rigid.

The visionary soul is a pioneer, ever seeking to renew and perfect relationships between what was and what will be, as a means to expanding a greater depth and reach of self-realization.

Every intimate contact is the frontier of human evolution, where old meets new, each convinced of its rights and power. The wise and skilful soul demonstrates its special facility of compatibility in such encounters, and so softens the friction of tide upon shore.

Old wisdom and its deeply-treasured beauty will thus be appropriately employed in service to contemporary needs, expressed by youth's fresh vibrancy, its modern values and naive joyful fumbings.

VALUE: A MUSE WEIGHING TWINS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF CANCER (28° - 29°)

Knowledge and experience are the twin poles of existence

The twins, which the spirit of inspired wisdom is weighing, refer to the two complimentary parts of the self.

When individuality is expressed in the world of senses, it is personality; when expressed in the eternal reality, it is reason.

Finding a way to reconcile these two is a necessary and sufficient condition for inner peace. We must learn to value them equally.

In fact, integrity of selfhood can only be achieved by one who focuses attention equally on both in an unending dynamic – now on one, now the other. Knowledge and experience are the twin poles of the unity of existence.

Although there is merit approaching an idealized version of self, in either direction, it is neither helpful nor wholesome to indulge an undisciplined perfectionism.

True spiritual wisdom will never be reached by idealising any idea to the point of perfection. The truth is that idealism itself lies in the realm of theoretical spirituality, rather than hard reality, and is therefore unavailable to a sensual being. And we are all sensual beings.

Understanding this confers remarkable powers of discriminative judgement – the ability to bring the balance of wisdom to conflict and contradiction.

INHERITANCE: DAUGHTER OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF CANCER (29° - 30°)

Good leaders gently guide their community through evolutionary steps of change

Individuality arises within a setting, and we easily see that we inherit much of who and what we are from parental and cultural sources. This fact is evidence of the essentially conservative nature of life; it is more evolutionary than revolutionary. The symbol here is not the Revolution itself, but the long term inherited results of it, which accrue in small steps from generation to generation.

What marks a family or community is its proven ethics, and the members' adherence to them. Each of us is likely to be pleased with ourselves because of the differences that proclaim our uniqueness, and yet what comforts and motivates us on the fundamental level is the need to belong – for which we must substantively conform to inherited standards of behaviour and belief.

Our willingness to fit into a group, and its patterns of thought and activity, generates feelings of stability, dependability, warmth and trust – and most of us like them, and need them, enough to limit the degree of our absolute self-expression, so that our presence in the group is felt as empathic. This phenomenon of rapport allows for enduring relationships to occur in the formation of a heart-connected network.

Of course there is with this a real danger of stagnation and acceptance of the lowest common denominator, so we must not resist change. However conservative we may be, life is change and the absence of change is death. Peoples and people die off unless changes are embraced.

In order to act together as a unit, a group needs to be led – and thus we see that the act of unification necessarily throws up the need for leadership. The leader is better seen as a result of the group process rather than the cause. The purpose of the role is to infect the group with the inspiration to move collectively through the steps of change.

One who feels superior, whose agenda is more self-centred than it is in service to community needs, will be rejected sharply, as will any unsympathetic force or event that threatens to rupture the group's integrity and sense of wellbeing.

The very survival of a group requires the consolidation of, and allegiance to, its traditions – and its current, temporary leader has neither permission nor power to go against that.



LEO

COURAGE / IMPACT / GENEROSITY / STRAIGHT-FORWARDNESS / NOBILITY / OPTIMISM

I am who I am

Leo's ruler, the Sun, dominates our awareness. Not timid, discriminating, or hidden, it is what it is and enables other things to be what they are – giving the warmth of life to everything, without diminishing itself. Each of us could, and Leo does, access that quality – of absolute self-confidence, beaming self-proclamation and benign bestowal. Solar strength is a primary power that is healing, light-bringing, direct, exuberant and strong, and speaks to us of sovereignty, splendour, and *joie de vivre*. Restraints are foreign to this sign; it is dramatic, excessive and warm, yet can be very self-absorbed. As with all fire signs, there is spontaneity, quick intuitive responses, vivacity, passion, drama, an appetite for attention and infectious ways of relating.

Leo is the centre – the nucleus that guides, manages and composes. Command falls to captain, boss, leader or king as one to admire and respect – one who embodies legitimacy, dignity and vigour with a tolerant, animated and noble nature. The lion is the hero in myths, whose courage creates an invincible manner, and the gift of uncensored will to rise above the commonplace; wherever mind triumphs over matter, there is capacity to do the impossible – through connecting with the heart and giving full reign to the creative force.

We each have an effect upon whatever we touch, and so contribute to the unfolding story of humanity. It is not a right, nor even a duty – it is an inescapable aspect of being alive that we have impact. So it is appropriate that we should be able to exert this influence consciously, optimistically and joyfully. Nature wants it, so it is in our nature to do it – and Leo, more than most, feels how energising it is to exhibit power of influence.

The lion cannot engage half-heartedly with anything – because that is not engagement. Involvement is full-blooded, rich, committed and incontrovertible. When it contributes something – then that's what it is doing – nothing else. Life's mysteries can only be penetrated with this level of passionate commitment – because the essence-nature of life is passion. To be fully realized, dormant qualities need to be awakened, and recognized, through integration within a community and engaging full-on with the situations at hand. Enthusiasm impels Leo fully to express uniqueness to the final degree of its vitality.

Notwithstanding this ardent self-expression, self-control is the greater achievement, particularly when the noble lion holds back its desire-impulse to attend to the needs of someone with lesser ability and strength. Courtesy is raised to the level of chivalry, confidence to the level of courage. When the matter is one of honour, then a high degree of spiritual maturity and wisdom is made known through knightly behaviour. Any prideful demonstrations of self-love can be interpreted as imperfect attempts to call up hidden resources – in order to sense and express the highest version of self – for the benefit of all.

Social stewardship is well conducted by these types, whose self-esteem is wholesome, and who are also responsive to community feedback. They not only display wisdom and integrity – they also have an irrefutable trust in the foundation principle of success and happiness – which is optimism. Through optimism we optimize – all benefit from it, it is self-sustaining and sustains others; no other life strategy brings such joyful happiness.



LEO WISDOM

COURAGE

To enjoy life we must risk death
By sharing, we open ourselves up to whatever we may encounter
The goal in life is to experience the perfection of self-expression
An assertive person is empowered by receiving the community's esteem
To further our character we must come to terms with danger

IMPACT

Awareness and wisdom arise through differentiation
Our assurance lies in the actuality of personal experience
It is better to rise up than to deny the evolutionary thrust of our rebellious nature
Our truest art is to create a beautiful character
Delighting in every moment is the cause, not the result, of success

GENEROSITY

Life is delightful when we do only what pleases us and give fully from the heart
Our companionship contributes to the community that supports us
By contemplating the past we add value to the future
It is more natural to trust than to fear
Revelation is the creation of treasure

STRAIGHT-FORWARDNESS

Storms are occasions to unclog our lives, an agency of renewal and revival
The prayerful act of chanting is spiritual communion beyond self-surrender and self-proclamation
Learning and teaching life's operating principles must surely result in happiness
Culture evolves as we open up to the muse and relax into our creative side
Commemoration of roots and subtle forces awakens us to new dimensions of self

NOBILITY

Desire for stimulation and satisfaction expresses unfilled spiritual yearnings
Enlightenment is a normal process – the marrying of intuition with rationality
A daring spirit will search for new challenges to escape ordinariness
Eccentric wisdom contributes most to evolution
The trials we endure make us capable of meeting life head on – powerful and fully mobilized

OPTIMISM

We tend to give more significance to what we can control than what can control us
That all life is cyclical holds the promise of renewal and joy in the hope of a better tomorrow.
At defining moments in life, we must opt for that which feeds our long-term goals
Pure spirit insists that life shines joyfully
Spiritual integrity generates empowering confidence

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LEO

COURAGE

LEO 1 – 5

It is a joy to reveal what we feel, what we think and what we have learned. By doing so we encourage others to do the same for themselves, so a mutually supportive atmosphere of communal improvement occurs. There is buoyancy associated with this, and all the forces of nature conspire to validate the enterprises of those who trust in themselves enough to express who and what they are openly. As we thrive, so we look to find others to share with, and seek recognition for our attainments and character. A healthy individual, who has been raised and nurtured within a supportive family, will find no need to compromise in order to find their place, and fulfil their dreams – and it is central and essential to the human psyche to be courageously free of inhibitions, and to brim with individuality.

There are some dangers of over-reaching, yet this speaks of our enthusiastic, imaginative willingness to be involved in anything the desire-nature conjures up. The evolutionary expansion of self takes place at the edge of reason, a dangerous arena of uncertainty that calls us to risk comfort in order to win adventure. The risk cannot be managed well by using either intellect or feelings alone; both are needed in mutual empathy – our feelings need to be understood, our thoughts embodied, so that conscious spontaneity can direct our lives.

IMPACT

LEO 6 – 10

The ‘push of the past’ and the ‘pull of the future’ are equal and opposite forces that need to be creatively handled in order to optimize our happiness. If we feel content with the way things are, then we may need to exert influence to maintain the status quo; if things need to change then we need to expend energy in the direction we choose. Either way, we have impact upon what transpires. Indeed, we cannot fail to have impact simply by being alive, so we need to honour that gift of living by creating outcomes that not only reveal but proclaim who we are.

Wisdom guides us, and we are cautious not to surrender the known for the unknown too readily. Yet life has no meaning without involvement, and full participation in life is clear evidence of a confident soul thirsting for further experience. Vitality is of itself a healing force, so that all opportunities to engage may be passionately grasped without fear of exhaustion. There are rewards for making the most of past experience; we learn a lot by observing the cyclical course of events, and can manage to avoid the pitfalls a second time. The knowledge and skills that come from such careful concern provide the necessary equipment to use our influence to deal competently with whatever comes up.

GENEROSITY

LEO 11 – 15

Some of us are lucky enough to come to understand that success itself is a personal quality, one which grows the more it is trusted. This is true of all qualities, and illustrates the mystery of how to live well. Our open-handedness and open-heartedness are naturally expressed aspects of who we are, and they lead to a pleasing reciprocity. As we show our easy generosity of spirit, so we attract abundance, kindness and gentleness of disposition in the people we meet; we are treated well because we treat others well.

STRAIGHT-FORWARDNESS

LEO 16 – 20

When the appropriate cause, and its time, is upon us, then we act with fullness, and we inspire others to rally round. We love to participate in shared events, and this exuberance has a profoundly warming effect upon others – so that it lifts the mood, and sponsors greater collective accomplishment. All around us we find others with whom we engage, and these co-participants in our adventures form the community to which we offer loyal allegiance and enthusiastic sponsorship. We readily acknowledge the mutual benefits between self and community. One rewarding outcome – of such an energetic directness and broad interaction with life – is that hidden knowledge is somehow revealed. What are seen as mysteries to some become working principles to us and we can piece together the secret mechanisms, which govern us all, into a comprehensible map of the nature of reality. Then it falls to us to help others understand; we take up the influential position of teacher and guide, thus inspiring others to deepen their own involvements with life and all its mysteries.

NOBILITY

LEO 21 – 25

Sufism teaches us of two attitudes of activity and it takes great sensitivity of intuition to recognize which of these two attitudes to employ. The one, *Rasul*, is easy and flowing, where it is entirely appropriate to do exactly what we feel we want to do, so that the truly creative message of who we are is expressed and developed. The other, *Abdullah*, is a challenge – when the right thing is not at all comfortable; we are fundamentally tested, and by working with limitation we grow in stature and add depth of character.

In other words, there are times when the task in hand must be confronted and overcome, and times when it is better for all concerned for us to relax and let it all flow – when involvement is tantamount to interference. This is no small matter. It is an enlightened being who always knows when to act, and when to refrain from action. If we choose to act, then we act with full intention and the expectation of good outcomes. No lack of courage is shown, no absence of clarity – heart and mind are in alignment and completely committed to see the matter to its conclusion. Through this is developed nobility of being, a quality that earns and commands respect. People are inherently drawn to one who has dignified their life through the constancy of their appropriateness both to act and to exercise restraint.

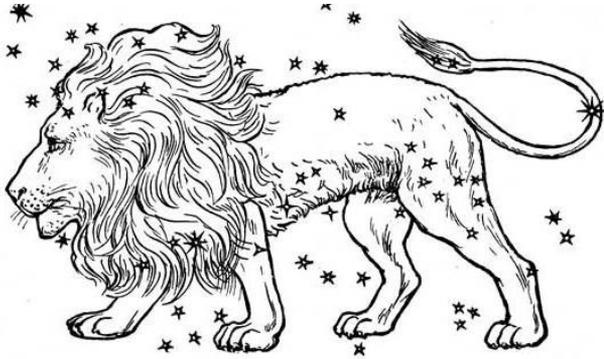
OPTIMISM

LEO 26 – 30

It is a fundamental aspect of being human that we can make things out of thoughts. When these are divinely-inspired ideas, then the fruits of our enthusiasm are easily and abundantly made real in the physical realm. Thus does spirit become matter – through the agency of inspiration operating with dexterity and creativity.

We are guided by optimism to see the bigger picture – that when we trust in life, and trust in ourselves, we can look for, and expect, outcomes that sparkle and shine. There is no need for us to accept less than enough, to put up with a compromised version of our lives – this is the application and result of pessimism. From an expanded perception of life, all things have their place and time, and nothing is inappropriate – although a more blinkered outlook cannot see this. Pessimism is blinkered; it creates difficulties, and interprets challenges as problems rather than opportunities for growth. It is always helpful to look for the best in any person or situation – such an approach is a creative force for the good and transforms darkness into light, lesser into greater. We know we are good and deserving and we feel capable of rendering that into our life circumstances. The radiance of such confidence inspires others to do the same so that an energy vortex of spiralling trust in life is presented to the world.

PLANETS IN LEO



SUN in Leo (☉♌)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 158 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Leo (☾♌)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

Childlike and playful in Leo, the Moon's need for security shows here as an appetite for attention and popularity. It enjoys drama, theatre and fun and has no great reluctance to be thought special, even of queenly importance.

MERCURY in Leo (☿♌)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

The style of communicating shows enthusiasm, nobility and complete self-confidence when Mercury is here. This can lack a full appreciation of the worth of other viewpoints, yet brings optimism, flair and vigour to raise even the mundane up to a level of special importance in the moment at hand.

VENUS in Leo (♀♌)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Venus is confident in the power of her beauty in Leo, and yet likes to radiate warmth and wellbeing to embrace everyone. In this fixed fire sign, Venus can fully maintain optimism and enthusiasm in relationship, is loyal and regal – a queen to her worthy, noble king.

MARS in Leo (♂♌)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

When in Leo, Mars can be a showman at times, enjoying the enhancement of public attention. He wants to demonstrate noble masculine skills and honourable leadership qualities, and is ready to represent others heroically in their fight for rights and dignity.

JUPITER in Leo (♃♌)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

The magisterial aspect of Jupiter enjoys Leo's sense of rulership and right to command. Here, this planet can reach out, overlooking and owning all in his domain, making wise determinations of what must be. Even more emperor than king, this is the charismatic, aristocratic lord or lady who rules with a true sense of the dignity of sovereignty.

NORTH NODE in Leo (♁♌)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

Here, the North Node shows of the importance of establishing the self as having greater consequence than the group. A tendency to put our own issues aside, in favour of others' needs or principles, has to be overcome through a commitment to creative self-expression.

SATURN in Leo (♄♌)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Saturn has a magisterial authority in Leo, is capable of shouldering the responsibility to make important decisions alone – and expects them to have impact. Creativity tends to be constrained to whatever is workable and unsurprising.

CHIRON in Leo (♆♌)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

A wounded ego needs to be healed through the appreciative attention received by a person whose creative works are worthy. The confidence to break new ground can be fully restored by a childlike approach to working with your art and performance.

LEO – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

IRRESISTIBILITY: A CASE OF APOPLEXY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF LEO (0° - 1°)

To enjoy life we must risk death

Some people would rather die than give up their right to be exactly who they are. Apoplexy – a life threatening bleeding of internal organs – here symbolizes the sense we can have that our very life-force would drain away if we did not express ourselves fully and immediately.

As adults, certain spontaneous child-like qualities tend to become less frequently seen, and one of them is the emphasis of continuity between being and doing. Identity needs to manifest unreservedly into behaviour for it to be real and realized.

There is something profoundly informative within this image. It suggests that we need to risk death in order truly to live. Rather than be thwarted in our desires, we would pay the highest price.

This impulsive quality is very empowering, and some will find it overwhelming. However, it can create a very stable personality that mobilizes a great deal of personal potential.

Also, it is highly creative. Even in day to day expression, the various ways to be ourselves will decorate the circumstances of events and relationships in our life.

Naturally, if we want to maintain a good connection within our social group, we will need to moderate the tendency to be self-indulgent and impose upon others.

The wisdom is that when we resist nothing, we become irresistible. This means that a complete lack of inhibition can be a very successful life strategy.

INFECTION: AN EPIDEMIC OF MUMPS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF LEO (1° - 2°)

By sharing, we open ourselves up to whatever we may encounter

If we don't get mumps, then we'll certainly get some other infection. That is the threatening nature of life on earth, and we need to come to terms with that.

Yet without infection there cannot be osmosis, resonance or empathy. These are processes whereby one organism influences another and changes its very qualities. Whenever we reach out to share the best of another, we open ourselves up to the worst – whatever we may encounter.

In threatening moments when illness hits us, we could be seduced to find a momentary appeal in escapist ideas. This is not a positive approach, and may well bring unwanted results – self-pity usually does.

We are challenged to practise continual self-protection as the basis for our participation in current affairs. We are always in harm's way and even a moment's forgetfulness of this sharpening fact of life can cost us dear. It is our business to make sure we are not overwhelmed by the influence of others.

To further our aims we have to retain sensitivity, a passionate sensitivity, to what has practical importance to us when opportunity presents; yet we are organic, vulnerable beings and need to take that awareness into our plans and strategies.

When we go too far and our personal capacities get out of hand, when we forget to be truly alive to what we need in the immediate moment, then we are at risk. If we are not vigilant, then we can retreat to experience our self-deficiencies – often in order to avoid reality and responsibility.

The indestructible spirit has to come to terms with the destructible body in order to approach self-perfection. Through the limitations of the physical body we come to learn of the other living spirits, and our own best approach towards involvement with them.

DECISION: WOMAN HAVING HER HAIR BOBBED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF LEO (2° - 3°)

The goal in life is to experience the perfection of self-expression

The self is required to examine itself if it is to hone its uniqueness of being. In Sufism this process, considered of key importance for the disciple, is given the sacred name 'muhasaba', which can be translated as 'self-reckoning' or even 'accountability'.

The seemingly trivial decision about how to style our appearance is in fact a significant statement about the extent to which we conform or rebel. The evolution of society is evidenced by the waves of change in culture and fashion, which subtly indicate shifts in morality and levels of awareness. We need to choose our life path according to our degree of participation in these trends or indeed our challenges against them.

Adherence to popular, contemporary convention indicates compliance to the tides of collective values. We need to be aware that we have our own values too, and that inadequate self-appreciation may well threaten the fulfilment of our personal destiny.

The goal in life is to experience the perfection of self-expression. To some significant extent this goal is well served by community compliance, yet we also need to strike out independently. This necessitates firm and clear decision – because to buck the trend is to question the status quo, and the sleeping masses become restless and agitated when their values are confronted.

Self-mobilization through personal ambition is what enlarges personal significance, and this requires us to grasp opportunity early and decisively. It may be that it is our hair that is the first to be bobbed, and we become trendsetters.

The soul has no investment in the status quo – all external changes, minor or major, are of no real consequence – but on the inner level, even the smallest self-betrayal should be poignantly felt.

At this level of spirit, each individual remains entirely open to anything and everything. This knowledge, when fully understood and trusted, will empower all our choices, so that we can easily decide big and small questions with an easy heart. Indeed, it is by feeling what eases the heart that we need to make our decisions.

MORALE: A MAN FORMALLY DRESSED AND A DEER WITH ITS HORNS FOLDED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF LEO (3° - 4°)

An assertive person is empowered by receiving the community's esteem

We can imagine a well-to-do man dressed just-so, back towards a fireplace in a wall emblazoned with the mounted deer head – feeling really good about himself and life generally. This is a person who makes an impact upon the world.

Also, this is one who knows how to play to the gallery. Clearly part of the enjoyment of success is the sharing of it by a somewhat public demonstration, in order to receive applause.

Morale is a power, and it requires that others approve of us and expect to see future attainments. We are able to demonstrate an exceptional capacity to attract the empowering esteem of our fellows only when we are willing to invest our sense of self-worth in a community validation.

Multiple achievements are evidenced by multiple trophies and by this it is made known both our constant contribution to society, and the essence of our finest qualities. More typically, some of us like to display cups and certificates on our bedroom walls.

There is a strong principle of self-assertion implied. This is further underlined by the dress-clothes – whose purpose is to impress and claim both allegiance and authority, using the accepted tools of magic within our group. Business suits, posh cars and other glammers are techniques that bind the lesser into conformity with the greater; each enlisted into mutual service by their somewhat unconscious acceptance of the code.

There is a real danger of loss of self when these clever methods are used without awareness. We can become as dependent upon the accolade as a child who craves a pat on the head. Even wearing a suit is like presenting a trophy for the applause it automatically engenders – yet in fact it is truly the cloth that it is respected, not the wearer.

To some extent, we have to play the game, because that's how society works. But it is important to remember that it is a game – a game of obedience and reward, which, if we want to be free, we need to outgrow.

ENDURANCE: ROCK FORMATIONS AT THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF LEO (4° - 5°)

To further our character we must come to terms with danger

Personality only achieves the rock formation of its enduring stability at the precipice of the risks it is willing to take. The very contours, that define who and what we are, are shaped by the prevailing forces of uncertainty in life.

We expand our reach only by taking on new experiences and their associated risks. There is something inherent in danger that opens up new perspectives of awareness within us, which in turn sponsor further creativity and enjoyment. Safety isn't much fun – do we really want it that much?

Each innocent and pleasurable encounter leads to something else – and events pyramid in their many ramifications to a crunch point and final outcome. These are the waves of life – we approach comfort and joy, become embroiled in crisis, then gain satisfaction from resolution, and then there emerges yet another new opportunity for the enjoyment we gain from our involvements.

Reality is constructed in such a way that we are always eventually required to deal with something significant and life-threatening. We are occasionally forced to decide and act upon matters immediate and important.

In fact, it is the very nature of things that every single shift in orientation will, in time, become another crossroads demanding further self-definition.

Inevitably, to sustain ourselves in our very individuality requires that we respond unendingly to challenges that menace our comfortable enjoyment. This puts in doubt any strategy of seeking contentment and permanence as a life path.

There is no life trajectory without difficulty – nor would we really want one. Our ultimate aplomb and competency depend entirely upon overcoming trials and hazard, so we learn to withstand and, at least to a degree, to anticipate, resistance and attack.

CONTRAST: AN OLD FASHIONED WOMAN AND AN UP-TO-DATE GIRL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF LEO (5° - 6°)

Awareness and wisdom arise through differentiation

The dynamic of life is provided by the constructive tension between opposites as they interact with friction. The old woman and young girl are always in contrast to each other, and yet their very competition is somehow cooperative. Each is somewhat defined by the other.

Conventionality and initiative are a continual stimulus to each other, as we see all around us in every aspect of everyday life, and all the roles in our society. The old woman tends to overemphasize individual traits; the younger has a degree of psychological reticence. The one holds alive and protects contributions of the past, the other administers the promise of the future.

As we see, it is the actual contrast between two contrary forces that brings with it greater awareness, and the resultant perfecting of wisdom into our ordinary lives.

Personal achievement is optimized through a creative appreciation and adaptation of the values established by others. The young girl's timid personality is made stronger by adapting to her current circumstances the understandings she inherits from the older woman. Each of us somehow has to accept the best of its wisdom even as we rebel against the status quo.

Projecting our own aspirations, we find ourselves simultaneously both emulating and rejecting our parents' values.

At a higher level of symbolism, we see that the soul and the ego are themselves a pair of contrasting polarised forces. The soul's eternal knowledge is both inspiring and threatening to the ego's need – to accommodate its lust for immediacy and pleasure, while pursuing some deeper meaning within life's mystery.

This is how we learn the dance of struggle and surrender – changing only what can be changed, and accepting all else.

SURETY: THE CONSTELLATIONS IN THE SKY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF LEO (6 - 7°)

Our assurance lies in the actuality of personal experience

Hermes Trismegistas's phrase '*as above, so below*' indicates that everything in existence has its equivalence in physical matter. Whatever flights of fancy we entertain, we may depend upon the surety that all reality takes form, in some way. Space and time will produce the ramifications and the substance of what we dream. A rare few have the courage and wild wisdom to understand this.

The stars are not constraints – they are there to inspire us further. The cosmos is beyond all limits and can respond fully to all questing of a creative mind. The mind is a powerful tool of understanding, yet dangerous. since we can as easily imagine dragons as angels – and if we passionately believe in them, they must take form.

To focus desire without understanding and responsibility is careless abandon, achieving no more than fruitless demonstration of an irresponsible retreat into the mystery of personal unconfirmed musings. It is necessary to centre our sense of reality in established fact if we are really to authenticate ourselves.

The self is a very complex system and needs to be ordered correctly. Disorders of the mind, such as pessimism and confusion, are best settled in the physical realm. Our assurance lies in personal experience – what are we actually experiencing now? All else is imagination, and lacks substance.

The unknown and the unknowable are not the same thing. The constellations are there – it is a fact – yet any attempt to allocate meaning to them takes us into the area of speculation, even fantasy. Such enquiry is fraught with the risk of escapism and silliness. If our journeying into the meaning of life's mysteries is ungrounded, we are in serious danger of loss of personal integrity.

Facts give us confidence, guarantee our foundation and pledge the surety of our very beingness. Life's truth is discovered here and now by experiencing ourselves on earth – but we are inclined to project our insights onto the cosmos by imputing meaning to symbols. We need fully to embrace and realize the crucial difference between seriously questing knowledge, and aimlessly wandering through the stars with a vague hope of discovering secrets. Speculatively reaching up to the stars is seductive – and so often is the thief of reasonableness and common sense.

The twin dangers, between which a mind has to navigate, are the two extremes – of idealism and mediocrity. To lose our grasp on reality through fanciful, fairy-story beliefs is no better than to miss opportunities to create joy by a fearful, humdrum attitude to life. We must find the sparkle, and to locate the wisdom, in the real and present – as a strong reliable baseline for a light-hearted journey of exploration into life's subtle mysteries. It is good to ponder the philosophical purpose of why we do it – since without a workable philosophy we can drift an unsteered course and yet, with too much structured thought, too little expansive dreaming, we would lose the wonder.

LEAVEN: A BOLSHEVIK PROPAGANDIST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF LEO (7° - 8°)

It is better to rise up than to deny the evolutionary thrust of our rebellious nature

Bolshevik values were high and noble, reflecting humanity's need to assemble under the banner of a worthy cause. The crusade was to end tyranny and raise the masses out of a hellish level of poverty and oppression. The people rose up for the people.

Leaven, in this context, is something that makes a situation or mood less dire. When matters are heavy and dark, it is better to rise up than to die down. Even if we fail, the attempt itself is life-affirming and inevitably rattles the status quo into evolutionary amendments.

Every aspect of cultural expression is subject to this process – from fashions in dress to ideas about sex and God – but the ones most frequently studied in the long term are to do with recurrent battles over social and political concepts.

The rock-solid strength of our enduring nature has no choice but to have some impact upon history. Collectively, we are the agency through which comes the evolutionary thrust of our species – that which engineers, and decorates, the changes from age to age.

The ringleaders of any revolution are usually young and ardent, firebrands for justice. Their selfless expenditure of energy is a feature of the dynamic for change – passions run high; a new age is at hand!

Over the centuries this story has repeated everywhere, yet it never gets old. Human spirit is indomitable and demands freedom and justice. However often the revolution fails, or succeeds only to become the next generation's problem, we always respond to the rallying cry of another soul determined to share its vision with the world.

That this is so often futile – little more than ineffectual ranting – is ignored. We would rather rail against a multitude of superficial and non-specific ills than deny our rebellious nature.

DEFTNESS: GLASS BLOWERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF LEO (8° - 9°)

Our truest art is to create a beautiful character

In order to find an enduring form to manifest the Divine, it usually takes skill and training. It shows the inventive genius of humanity that sand can be turned into beautiful glass objects.

What is demonstrated is not only the skill of an artisan, but also something of their ideals, given expression in their art. There is no better justification for the allocation of a lifetime's resources and effort than to create something of beauty.

To carry out the task requires heat – a symbol of living enthusiasm. We do what we love because we love it enthusiastically.

Without this quality it is a chore, whereas with it, nothing is too much trouble. It makes for an effective participation in everyday existence, and allows us to perfect deftness and become supremely skilful at what we do.

In this way we take the baser materials of life and, with our inexhaustibly creative dexterity, manipulate and improve them.

It is meaningful to extend the metaphor to ourselves, and consider – do we skilfully transform the baser elements of our lower nature into something fine of which we can be proud, or do we simply misuse these powers wilfully, expediently distorting reality into something convenient but graceless?

On another level, the artisans are both the first and last representatives of their culture – its arts and crafts are equally first beginnings and final testimony of civilization's sophistication.

REJUVENATION: EARLY MORNING DEW

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF LEO (9° - 10°)

Delighting in every moment is the cause, not the result, of success

Whenever we overcome our tendency to accept personal limitation and procrastinate, we are supported by nature's gift of perpetual rejuvenation.

The real gifts of life are ever abundant and all around us in every moment – as long as we keep alert and notice things, especially unexpected occurrences.

An important life lesson, which allows a breakthrough to another dimension of contentment, is that we can relax and trust in the beneficence of nature. All of our right choices are endorsed.

The image speaks to us of the continually surprising fillip we enjoy when life's optimism reveals itself to us – in a fresh dawn, a spring day, or a rainbow – and we become excited by an event we have witnessed a thousand times before. Every one of our basic experiences is recurrent and the deep wisdom contained within them can sometimes reveal itself in quite unexpected ways. The morning dew is more than a phenomenon of pressure and temperature; it has a magical quality.

This quality underpins our expectation of success; our goals are sponsored by our feelings, and our feelings are more optimistic when we are refreshed by nature's wonders.

The greatest danger of life is that we lose sight of who we are and what truly outstanding accomplishments are at our fingertips. Every sunrise, and every conscious inhalation, is there to remind us that we are existentially magnificent – just by being alive, we achieve glory.

We have a talent, a very special talent, to find the better aspect of any situation. Even when threatened by disaster we can choose to access the optimism and confidence that we feel on a brisk sunny morning.

DELIGHT: CHILDREN ON A SWING IN A HUGE OAK TREE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF LEO (10° - 11°)

Life is delightful when we do only what pleases us and give fully from the heart

These children have no purpose to serve or please others, no intention to improve themselves or their environment, and so no fear of danger or authority. Their single focus is to find joy in the immediacy of their own personal reality.

Nevertheless, they learn. They learn about the nature of physical life and of their emotional life too. Our conception of all and everything expands with each and every experience – not excluding those that delight us, in fact probably especially through those.

It is entirely appropriate, actually exemplary, to maintain zest and vigour in all physical and social involvements in every phase of life. When we are always enthusiastic, then we are generous in our self-expenditure. We give often and fully from the heart.

We find that such enthusiasm is only ever sustainable when we do only what pleases us. This is an important realization that can go against the grain of what is expected in adulthood.

However, there is much to be said for the quality of dependability that follows this course of behaviour. People can trust that we will only ever do what we find satisfying – and, if at all possible, refuse all else.

There is always the risk of raising laziness up as an exalted value – so, to follow this life-path, means that we need to take a very high level of personal, even social, responsibility – as if to validate our self-centredness.

Yet surely life is meant to be a delight? Surely there is no better way to demonstrate our awareness of this wisdom than to do only what we love? Surely it is beneficial for us to accept this is so, as children do, taking for granted their right to enjoy each moment regardless of what else is happening in the world?

COMPANIONSHIP: AN EVENING LAWN PARTY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF LEO (11° - 12°)

Our companionship contributes to the community that supports us

The individual is always in relationship with the community and each requires the other in order even to exist. A part of each of us is nothing more than another replication of a well-established configuration of biological and psychological variations on a theme, aspects of the community that hosts us. However, another part, called the personality, is distinct and unique.

As children we have little awareness of personality – this has to be developed by wide interaction. The basics of our uniqueness are discovered in the superficial everyday contact we have within the daily round, and also at special occasions like parties, where companionship is celebrated.

With such companionship we are witnessed, and recognized for our worthwhile contribution – by which we become involved and enhance our individuality through the experiences this offers.

Unless our achievements are recognized as useful, then they are collectively meaningless.

Genuine social maturity is measured by our ability and effective capacity to join in. We need to align our own sense of things with others' and cooperate in the building of a shared future.

The alternative is to show a lack of appreciation for life's reality, and to live in a personal world that is nothing more than self-obsessed fantasy.

This wisdom is not meant to constrain the expression of personality – whose scope is indeed limitless. However, there must be context for there to be form, and there must be form for there to be reality.

RETROSPECT: OLD SEA CAPTAIN ROCKING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF LEO (12° - 13°)

By contemplating the past we add value to the future

The warning given by this image of a potentially impotent has-been is not to live in the past. If we surrendered to nostalgia, we would lose touch with the realities of our current circumstances, which are equally valid – in fact infinitely more valid than what no longer exists.

Yet in his memory, our Sea Captain fights his battles over and over – and thus gains greater mastery over the world since, through retrospective contemplation, he develops a much better understanding of the implications of strategy, cause and effect.

In any moment, there are people and things in relationship to us and each other, and our task is to bring them into an elegant, productive, unified whole. We use the same technique – we need to think about what has happened before in order to gauge what might happen next.

This enables us to optimize our degree of competence by fully grasping any latent opportunity. We tend to love reliving our best experiences through the agency of selective memory. This indicates which of them we give special value – and that is how we know what we appreciate most of all.

Only by the realization of inevitable consequences can we learn to perfect our plans for successful outcomes. Although retrospect is backward looking, the way we process this activity can enable prospect – or forward looking. We can see certain key aspects of new situations in advance.

Events tend to repeat themselves and we can obtain some measure of control over the future by managing our knowledge of what happened before. They say hindsight is 20:20 vision; it is rarely true. We have received feedback and we need to employ it wisely.

The wisdom here is that each of us can call up fresh powers through what we have gained through experience, and the struggles we overcame in our journey towards self-fulfilment. Previous moments were similar to now in crucial ways, and it is only the child or the fool who does nothing to improve their chances by careful contemplation of them.

INGENUOUSNESS: THE HUMAN SOUL AWAITING OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPRESSION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF LEO (13° - 14°)

It is more natural to trust than to fear

At the level of soul, each one of us has an instinct for absolute wholeheartedness of participation in the everyday adventures of personality, provided that we approach life without strategy – with ingenuousness.

This image is of the totally unconditioned self at its point of greatest potential – the entrance into a new complex of activity with fellows.

It is to be seen as nothing but naive procrastination, and a lack of all genuine interest or enthusiasm, when we fail to engage fully with new circumstances and events.

The refinement of our character is made possible by the process of trial and error – so making mistakes forms an essential part of the evolutionary processes, and we should not shy away from the risk.

Our normal expectations are typically met by life with approval. And though we may not always get it right first time, our innocent attempts to embrace life fully will always lead eventually to success of some kind.

Potentially we can awaken each one of our interests and talents. As individual aspirations unfold into the circumstances of our lives, we need to become aware of momentary nuances, small shifts in the field of what becomes available to us.

This is not so much meant as a philosophy, but more as a disposition. The childlike enthusiasm we sometimes feel gives a clue as to the type of situations that are good for us to explore and embrace. It is more natural to trust than to fear, so spontaneity is supported and rewarded.

DEMONSTRATION: A PAGEANT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF LEO (14° - 15°)

Revelation is the creation of treasure

We take a pride in ourselves, and this very normal feeling is often satisfied by ordinary, everyday events. We tend to surrender to an irresistible urge to heighten the significance of self – across the whole face of human experience, even through public display.

We yearn to reveal what we are, because that – at least according to Sufis – is the essence-motivation for all existence. *‘I was a hidden treasure and yearned to be known’* – God’s first impulse that gave rise to Creation. To demonstrate our God-selves at a pageant raises this impulse to a high level.

There is magic in this. As each person individually shows who they are and what they can do, there develops the powerfully binding and creative force of fellowship – from which flows work for the common good.

Also, as we make ourselves known, we come to know ourselves. Revelation is in itself a creative and growthful occurrence.

Accomplishments that require collective effort enable everyone to participate in achievements well beyond their individual capacity, and each small contribution is valuable – and yearns to be recognized as such.

Some people lose poise however, and make unconvincing claims and embarrassing self-assertion. Generally, though, these are kept in check by group responses. Normally, it is a tricky business to know what to demonstrate and what to hide – because we don’t like to feel foolish and we don’t want to go unrecognized either. This is why pageants are so useful, because we have permission to show off a little, and relax our guarded self-denial.

All in all it is much healthier for a child to be encouraged to enjoy the delights of exhibition – and this carries forward into adulthood as the pride we feel when the fruits of our achievements are noticed. It sponsors excellence as well as the various supportive roles – through which everyone participates, even as spectators.

RECOVERY: SUNRISE JUST AFTER A STORM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF LEO (15° - 16°)

Storms are occasions to unclog our lives, an agency of renewal and revival

It is by no means easy or straightforward to destroy or even significantly diminish a person. Each of us has tremendous resilience and the power to bounce back. Indeed the process of setback and recovery is what enables self to re-grasp itself.

This ability is much more to do with psychological strength than physical. Our inner orientation is what matters most of all – are we negative or positive in our general outlook?

The values by which we live, endure. No matter what befalls us, certain principles and preferences constantly reassert themselves and prove faithful as measures and descriptors of our core identity.

Storms arise. Each major life issue can present itself as a turbulent period of emotional instability, a threat to our sense of secure wellbeing and a reduced degree of confidence in the future. But they pass, and the sunrise speaks to us of the reliability of life and our unassailable powers of recovery.

The optimist sees the storms as opportunities to clear away the dross of our lives and as an agency towards reconstruction. Everyday stress and strain are employed as resources that sponsor the change process and enable us to enlist every element of our experience in some new effort or fresh approach.

So, rather than getting upset over petty things, we use our troubles as entirely necessary means to an end. It is through them alone that we awaken our fullest powers of recuperation, and the resultant stability of character that inspires others to trust in us.

Because we know we will always recover, we have no fear of the future, nor therefore the present. This faith in the inevitable return of things to their essential nature is the foundation of exceptional steadiness of perspective. And since we accept everything with poise, fewer dramas occur and life settles into an easy, reliable rhythm.

COMMUNION: A NON-VESTED CHURCH CHOIR

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF LEO (16° - 17°)

The prayerful act of chanting is spiritual communion beyond self-surrender and self-proclamation

This symbol is of a choir, not in their robes but freely attired – ordinary people, joining together in the prayerful act of chanting in order to reach a state of spiritual communion.

We always seek to relate to others, and a lot of people strive rather unimaginatively for popularity. Others join in with a regimented social conformity with its enforced values and behaviour. Communion however is beyond all self-surrender and self-proclamation.

It is an effective quickening of a person's heart, through the development of interests, expanded to a point of real concern for their fellows. Reality is appreciated fully and profoundly – for its own sake rather than the illusion of projected ideals.

At this high level of spiritual consciousness, we are making a real contribution, by bringing ourselves into good order – to serve by fully participating in the broader functions of our community.

Any common activity that coordinates group effort has this potential – sport, work or the village fete – but the chanting is more likely to revitalize our sense of sacredness – and sharing this is a powerful device to build long-lasting trust and involvement within a group setting.

Respect for the individual means that we have some awareness not only of their needs and opinions – but also their relationship with sacredness.

Without this, everyday living remains shallow, and our sense of self and self-worth suffer a poverty of expression through the idle pursuit of unsatisfying, unimportant and isolating goals.

INSTRUCTION: A TEACHER OF CHEMISTRY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF LEO (17° - 18°)

Learning and teaching life's operating principles must surely result in happiness

It is a rare person who comes to understand the workings of the physical world well enough to teach of its mysteries. By extension, this symbol points to the processes whereby a mind has become strong and clear – enough actually to control life on earth. This is the magician – the master who demonstrates lordship over the circle that he chooses to influence.

This elevated station can only be reached by penetrating into the depth of matters. The mysteries exist in the form of the relationship between things, symbols and people. It takes a sharp yet intuitive mind, fully focused and engaged, to understand the rules that govern these interactions.

Unintelligent conformity to the 'rule book' – written by the blind to lead the blind – is the attitude of sheep, for whom comfort is more important than wisdom.

For seekers, it is necessary to try things out before we accept them as true. Whatever ideas we may be offered for the explanation of life, we need to experiment with them, and also opposing viewpoints, and organize our experiences into a considered way of life – a path based on informed principles that work for us.

These experiments take the form of our ambitions. If we cannot achieve our goals, then our ideas about the nature of reality are false.

So we must change them. The feedback we are looking for – to validate our hypotheses about how best to live – is happiness.

Life is meant to be delightful. We are only interested in questing for the meaning of life until we are happy with the way things are. Then, even teaching becomes unnecessary.

CONGENIALITY: A HOUSEBOAT PARTY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF LEO (18° - 19°)

Culture evolves as we open up to the muse and relax into our creative side

Being congenial at a house boat party – this reminds us that in order to preserve the specialness of what is special, we need to seal off parts of our life, to protect them from intrusion. Work is better done when we are focused on work; play is better done when we focus on play. Taking time off work to support play is clearly important – and we need to show how well we understand this in fact not just words.

Generally, people think and talk as though they prefer to relax than to work, yet really their actions offer a different narrative. Many work with an attitude that doesn't support happiness – perhaps they feel pressured by heavy responsibilities, financial burdens, or a work-ethic culture. It is by no means obvious that work carried out with such an approach adds much true value to their lives.

It may well be true that even dull routines can be made exalted by the right attitude of mind; nevertheless, if we are to be effective, then we need time for pleasantness and relaxation, certainly as a relief from working periods.

Our work contributes to the world at large – but then so does our relaxation. This is not often understood, let alone seen as wisdom.

We acknowledge culture as emblematic of the soul of a community; it is the fruit of complex and far-reaching cooperative community effort. Culture is what arises when the creative relax into their creativity.

Of course, we need not overdo the down-time. Such congeniality as shown at a party is exceptional behaviour, rather than part of the routine. If we over-indulge, then we lose focus and become ineffective and dull.

So we remember to completely let go of work for a while, because it serves the community. Also it is important to open up to the muse through the creative processes, which are best stimulated with the mind in repose.

FIDELITY: ZUNI SUN WORSHIPPERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF LEO (19° - 20°)

Commemoration of roots and subtle forces awakens us to new dimensions of self

Sun worshipping may or may not be the ideal means to capture our sense of how to bind ourselves back to the cosmos and awaken the cosmic dimension of consciousness. Yet it will endow assurances that our yearnings are part of a shared dream; and this is empowering.

These ceremonies are social constructs designed to express and renew our recognition that there are natural forces, and higher forces. By remembrance of them we receive strength and tune in to the source of life, regenerating the life force within ourselves.

Also they serve to ritualize our loyalties. This establishes group rapport on the level of both head and heart, so binds together those of us who choose to be associated collectively, by acknowledging fidelity to our roots and tribe.

As older ways and values are challenged for effectiveness and continued relevance by the irresistible forces of evolutionary change, we are buttressed by our adherence to principles made clear through these rituals.

Notwithstanding the normal concerns about the discrepancies between self and group, such a process does in fact support self-actualization. This is because the group tradition is an aspect of the self and always serves as a template out of which individual variations may easily be constructed.

Thus our situation and background, here embodied in the collective ceremony of our people, are the source from which all potential of self-expression may be drawn, fulfilling our individual unlimited quest to realize absolutely our inner sense of self.

The deep inner conviction of the importance of ceremony must not seduce the individual away from their sense of personal reality. Surrendering to empty ritual, simply because it is condoned, leads to loss of uniqueness of identity, and confusion about what is really true.

ACCENTUATION: CHICKENS INTOXICATED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF LEO (20° - 21°)

Desire for stimulation and satisfaction expresses unfilled spiritual yearnings

Chickens are not designed to drink alcohol. We should avoid elements which are essentially alien to our nature, because to do so will inevitably cause distress to the human soul.

Experimentation has validity of course, it is how we learn. Yet the accentuation of various features of our personality can be achieved by other means than the imbibing of what are basically poisons.

We tend to seek comfort for our inadequacies by taking things into the physical body – typically food and drugs – to quickly deal with uncomfortable feelings; yet this behaviour usually creates dependency.

A better approach, though it demands a greater degree of self-mastery, is to realize that our needs for stimulation can be made useful. They are a reason for achievement rather than a cancellation of potentials.

Our capacity for self-mobilization enables us to rise to the needs of any possible situation – so our ability to project ourselves must accentuate only positive qualities.

Looking beneath the surface, we find the futility of expecting to use a physical agency to achieve what we require, which actually are spiritual results.

To free ourselves from the bondage of external materials, we learn to reinterpret our desires for satisfaction as in fact a higher yearning for peace and harmony. These qualities are found by turning within and finding acceptance.

ENLIGHTENMENT: A CARRIER PIGEON

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF LEO (22° - 23°)

Enlightenment is a normal process – the marrying of intuition with rationality

A carrier pigeon symbolizes the giving and receiving of messages. Here it alludes to the ability of an enlightened mind to apply itself to any question and come to know that which needs to be learned.

When we have properly developed our normal processes of mind to permit rational thought, then we can command all knowledge and gain complete mastery over all situations.

The softer side of knowledge – intuition – develops in line with incisive rationality. In balance, these two facilities of mind enable us to receive messages of immediate pertinence.

We acknowledge that such ability is likelier to be expressed when we face unfamiliar or critical issues, and each of us has special requirements – for which intelligence is required to know how to respond to events. It is there for when we need it.

Implicit in this, is the extraordinary extent to which we can count on life to provide whatever we need, in response to our clear focus of enquiry.

Many on the path to enlightenment seem to be willing to let go of simple good sense. This is not at all helpful. To make mystical what is, in fact, normal pushes it away from our grasp. Enlightenment is a normal progression of every mind as it aspires towards self-perfection. It is not a state, it is a process.

Much of what we want in life is easily available and immediate – there is literally nothing between us and the fulfilment of our desire – whether for knowledge or for satisfaction. Yet we have to release want, and allow the end of want, to replace it.

AUDACITY: A BAREBACK RIDER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF LEO (22° - 23°)

A daring spirit will search for new challenges to escape ordinariness

The bareback rider is not showing off; rather he is testing his audacity so to keep alive his courageous spirit. The problems of a modern life need not trouble us if we learn to behave with such a carefree, assured disposition.

Coping with our immediate world of experience is totally within our ability, in fact we each have the capacity to master our situations at all points. This may well require that we become audacious at times in order to overcome a stagnation of our vision and confidence – which leads to capitulation and reluctant acceptance of imposed constraints of thought and behavior.

We are exactly designed to be a perfect fit for all we encounter – although in fact the reverse is a more appropriate way to see this – our circumstances are made for us, and no-one else, because we, and no-one else, are the best person to deal with them.

The special functions in life with which we engage need to be faced with uncompromising courage and undiminished skills. What at first may seem daunting and beyond our reach, is instead to be seen as the next stage of our evolutionary journey. We must rise to the task at hand.

Nothing is beyond our reach when we approach life like this. We potentially have the ability to capitalize on every opportunity to bring form to our aspirations and achieve the goals we set ourselves.

We are not static beings – dead and having no room for expansion. We are constantly in the process of self-refinement, provided we overcome an intemperate desire for self-display and applause.

It is a question of allowing the wild side of us an appropriate degree of freedom, without becoming irresponsibly inadequate in coping with our adult duties and aspirations.

IMPETURBABILITY: AN UNTIDY, UNKEMPT MAN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF LEO (23° - 24°)

Eccentric wisdom contributes most to evolution

This is an image of a person who spends very little effort presenting an acceptable face to society through the way they behave. It matters little what society thinks or does in response to such an open challenge to its values, this character is not perturbed. By extension, the thoughts and ideas of a truly developed being are not much moderated by others' opinions about wisdom or morality.

Perhaps even as a direct consequence of disdaining collective values, individual qualities are intensified and brought into higher relief, so outer accomplishment easily follows.

Loved, therefore, for who we are, not how we appear, we can enjoy a somewhat unusual – even perverse – satisfaction in the neglecting of how we come across to the world at large. The antisocial attitude is a mark of the eccentric rather than the clown.

Taken to the extreme, a complete self-confidence within the uniqueness of our characteristic approach can show itself as a complete disregard for any of society's rewards or penalties.

This particular interaction between self and society may well create a need in us to show every one of our physical and psychological attributes to best effect – to demonstrate our particular values and value in serving society. We like to show exactly how we are different – partly to define who we are, partly to influence others.

This sets up a tension and therefore a constant process of self-refinement as we strive to be a better example of society by rejecting its collective values and affirming those of the unique self. This is how we contribute to the development of the race.

We see a paradox in this – that an apparently selfish motivation leads, in its extreme form, to a wholesome, and entirely necessary, evolutionary contribution to society at its highest level of progress.

ADEQUACY: A LARGE CAMEL CROSSING THE DESERT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF LEO (24° - 25°)

The trials we endure make us capable of meeting life head on – powerful and fully mobilized

The camel symbolizes a plodding, uncomplaining, uncompromising, persistence that accomplishes the task in hand at whatever cost to self. Let us feel the certainty that, with endurance, we are adequate for all situations.

Each individual, in their way of being, reveals their own sense of what a person really should be able to accomplish if they mobilize their inner resources properly.

Whatever circumstances we encounter can be met with expectation of achievement, because we can access the underlying basis of who we are; we know how to endure. Deeply ingrained within the human spirit is the sense of the importance of being worthwhile and measuring up to some value-based standards we set for ourselves.

There will always be difficulties to overcome – without which there can be no sense of achievement. What we refer to as character cannot grow strong and noble otherwise. It is by the refinement of character that we find a way to integrate the many aspects of human psychology into our understanding.

A close connection is found to exist between the rich and mature character we develop, and our life task to overcome imposed or imagined limitations and handicaps. Adequacy, in facing and successfully meeting these challenges, is the foundation of self-empowerment, and indeed self-discovery.

There needs to be some caution in applying such a power, because it can be put to inappropriate use. A distortion of the principle would express as ruthless and ultimately self-defeating blindness of purpose. 'I can so I do'.

The more pleasing and acceptable expression of this power is through service – we use it to help others, and have a tolerant, humble camel-like attitude.

SIGNIFICANCE: A RAINBOW

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF LEO (25° - 26°)

We tend to give more significance to what we can control than what can control us

What gives life meaning are events of significance – and whatever on our own account we choose to have happen, is what matters to us. We are keen to exclude the boredom of the mundane, and direct ourselves towards situations that allow us to feel that we matter and our lives are worthwhile.

The rainbow appears in the sky like magic. This somehow is taken as divine approval and support, as though we are being reassured after a troubled period, or even encouraged in our current activities; it helps to strengthen our resolve as we participate in unpromising relations.

Yet with appropriate balance of sunshine and moisture, a rainbow must always appear, because that is the order of things.

It is a definite stage of personal evolution when we come to realize this. We come to learn of the existence of a reliable pattern in life – despite certain appearances and perceptions, it is well ordered, not chaotic. Whether we take it as divine intervention or our own level of mastery, certain outcomes are reliable.

When we strive to reach goals of a more enduring sort, we are guided by our own certainty that we will be supported by external forces – earthly or heavenly. Nature cooperates with every vision.

With this approach to life we develop the sense of a very real spiritual power and presence in all our personal efforts and desire.

The rainbow is a powerful evocative symbol of optimism – that life bestows uncritical acceptance of every passing hope or dream. We can depend upon that.

GENESIS: DAYBREAK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF LEO (26° - 27°)

That all life is cyclical holds the promise of renewal and joy in the hope of a better tomorrow.

Daybreak, like spring, is a constant in life. The promise of renewal is repeatedly emphasized by such experiences, and this is the essence of reality – that in every manifestation, of the world and of the self, there is resurgence.

As the changes unfold, unceasingly, there is often confusion about the exact nature of our current reality. Yet the genesis promise assures us that life may be captured and recaptured indefinitely. Specific circumstances come and go, while the single constant is that tomorrow is a new day with refreshing possibilities.

Another level of meaning is also implied with this image – that all life is cyclical. The human heart is deeply reassured by the security offered within the certainty of this degree of continuity.

Secure in the faith of perpetual regeneration, we allow ourselves to perceive reality the way it truly is – ever a new reworking of the stuff of life. Genesis is now, eternally. *'In the Beginning'* is not a past-tense historical myth; it is the only lasting truth, and it is current. Life is only ever new and transient; immediacy is its incontrovertible nature.

Nonetheless, we have a sense of time as sequential and unidirectional. This is a device of mind, an expedient, by which we introduce a measure of control over the otherwise frightening implications of perpetual newness. Reason, as aspect of mind, overlays a 'cause and effect' model onto the fabric of reality. Without that, we could not find meaning within our involvement with life.

It is reason that curtails our wishful thinking and structures our aspirations into a realizable form.

Without it, we would have to find satisfaction in what we now have – because our future would be completely vague and ill-defined. Also – however pleasant it is here and now, and however advanced we may be in our spiritual philosophy, still there is some joy in the hope of a better tomorrow.

RAMIFICATION: MANY BIRDS ON A TREE BRANCH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF LEO (27° - 28°)

At defining moments in life, we must opt for that which feeds our long-term goals

If we take birds to represent the mental realm of inspiration and ideas, then this image points to the need to limit ourselves by selecting one out of many options. We actually define ourselves by what we reject of the great multiplicity of choices we have. This usually is best done by carefully considering likely ramifications before the implementation of any particular life course.

From what is available, we can expand our range of life possibilities, but only as long as we opt for one thing or idea over another. Some people are very open to uncertainty, and can even enjoy a perverse feeling of momentary self-importance when they are confused – this does not lead to anything upon which we can build a contented life.

Lesser things become greater; little ideas sometimes grow to become important – such as the values and principles that structure our lives and, like a tree, root us into reality.

In any moment we stand at the crossroads between one potential future and another. If we are confused, we really must find centre – because our ability to cope in a crisis depends upon this. A crisis is a turning point, and we need to turn in the right direction.

Our destiny unfolds like a river, whose very source at the time is seemingly insignificant and often obscure. This advises us to focus on ideas that have enduring orientation and will feed our long-term goals – things like goodness and beauty – so they, rather than bewilderment, become the basis of our future.

We are tested by life as to whether we can hold onto our composure. So much comes at us – whether opportunity or challenge – and we have to maintain poise, or we lose the power to manage, and create our lives how we want them to be.

However, if we can capture the mood of a special moment and hold onto it self-confidently with strength and optimism, then we experience the wonderful lightness of being that is available to human spirit.

IMPORTUNITY: A MERMAID

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF LEO (28° - 29°)

Pure spirit insists that life shines joyfully

The mermaid is a picture of uncompromising, artless, innocence and eagerness. Like her, at core each of us is utterly unsullied; in consequence, we must reject everything inauthentic in our lives since it would corrupt our elemental integrity of being.

In the end, self-fulfilment is all there is of real value – so we seek full participation in life to explore and express every facet of our character.

Composed of pure spirit, whose essence-nature is fiery freedom, the soul is constantly renewing itself in a perpetual birthing process. This shines through as the light of naive enthusiasm for life – a keenness for new experiences.

Without this renewal, there could never be fullness of self. To be completely who we are, we need to launch ourselves wholeheartedly into whatever transpires, following our instincts and trusting them to guide us true.

Importunity – pressing our position – is a natural result of this approach to life. We know what we want, we want it now – and if that's not convenient for others, then let them press back! Such an appetite is evidence of desire, and desire is the quintessence of the life force; it is always good.

However, acting upon appetite may not always be mindful and can sometimes upset the balance in how we relate to others. Discrimination is advised if we are to minimize the awkwardness that comes after too large a degree of insensitivity.

That said, a mermaid is a joyful force of nature simply because she trusts her feelings and acts upon them unceremoniously; she brings a sparkle to life just by being what she is.

CONFIDENCE: AN UNSEALED LETTER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF LEO (29° - 30°)

Spiritual integrity generates empowering confidence

A person who has a high measure of spiritual integrity has confidence in life. This shows in the way they believe in other people and in situations generally.

Leaving a private letter unsealed is likely to test whether our friends are truly trustworthy and this risk is necessary if we are to discover how far we can trust them – because some people are so indiscreet it amounts to childish irresponsibility.

When we learn just how far to trust we earn the respect of people. There is skill to be learned in assessing the appropriate level of confidence to place in another.

We see that there needs to be moderation, based on our experiences, of how much trust to employ. Each of us has developed a normal competency in applying lessons we learned the hard way. If you leave a purse on a bus, you must not expect to retrieve it later. That's not the kind of world we live in.

Nevertheless, the reliance we do place upon the discretion of others is remarkable – and enables our comfortable day-to-day living possible. We see then that we have a litmus test about with whom to share our lives. Can we legitimately place our faith in them? If we cannot, then life becomes fraught.

However, suspicion is a poison to the mind whenever it become set as a general temperament, so we must make sure that our routine life circumstances do not engender constant mistrust.

When we have done what we can to build a community environment within which there are few enough dangers of dishonesty, then we are well advised to practise trust as a general life attitude. In spite of frequent disillusionments, this serves us best in the long run, because it generates self-assurance and all the power that goes with that.



VIRGO

CONVICTION / ADAPTATION / STABILIZATION / CULTIVATION / MODESTY / PERFECTING

Through service to greater mastery; through mastery to greater service

Whatever arises, we must find ways to cope. Our capacity to be resourceful in diverse situations is often tested, and exactly how we act in response to external shaping forces is our business – the business of life. We need a sharp mind and a tender heart as we move steadily forward, more effectively projecting power by disclosing modesty and courtesy. Accordingly, gentle, considerate Virgo seeks simplicity, workability, common sense, concord, purity and elegance, and always controls its passions. Constancy of purpose and purity of motive are twin aspects of a graceful refinement of being.

A probing, flexible, clear, reasoning mind shows a type of acumen that embraces new ideas and ways by seeing both sides of any claim; a judicious insight and affinity for study grows into a flair for research and the rare ability to analyse minutiae. Realist not idealist, Virgo functions best within proven structures, and prefers to be measured only against defined standards. Diligence and good judgement are consistently and quickly applied to practical affairs, bringing order to chaos by sorting out detail. Delighting in all crafts it shows good mind-body integration, and has an unusual degree of skilful, productive, creativity. Valuing the advantages of cooperation enables this sign to optimize the application of resources towards the common good. It finds the most reasonable prospects in any situation, plans efficiently, and works specifically towards fulfilling them.

Service has central importance to Virgo – yet the idea that service is altruistic is false. By caring for others, we are not only able to feel goodness for its own sake, but we also cultivate qualities that improve our character, and develop realistic self-assurance. It is of great importance that we find motivation beyond self-gratification, so we tend to glorify a particular quality and seek to realize it as a life path. Virgo raises the act of service to such levels, and becomes entirely convinced that such a strategy is worthy enough to secure against any risk of criticism. This persuasive conviction acts as an empowerment that enables relating confidently and closely to others on a workaday level. Generally, the expectations of others can serve us as a guiding principle encouraging us to shape ourselves into excellent versions of our best potentials; yet they can be prison-bars too. Shedding the restraints of our environmental, parental and societal conditioning is a continuing process, which we learn by expanding our range of assisting and cooperating with new people.

This is optimized by dedicating fully and unreservedly to make the most of every given occasion to display excellence, for the sake of the excellence, not the excellent. The impact we have upon the outer world is to be expressed as conscious, conscientious and creative imagination, and the potential we have to use power to dominate is to be directed inwardly as self-mastery – thus do we safeguard our integrity. Self-perfection is not just a philosophical concept or spiritual teaching; it is an instruction to be adhered to.

There is the capacity for near-saintly patience arising from the inner certainty that it is by offering care that we are cared for. Humanity and virtue are not seen as graces enacted to beautify personality, but inherent pragmatic wisdoms that arise from an intuitive understanding of the golden law of reciprocity – do as you'd be done to. This is primarily an earth mystery, a keen appreciation of the secrets of nature, which connects to ecology, healing and wellbeing.

VIRGO WISDOM

CONVICTION

Ever-present self-assurance expresses an effective fullness of character
Whoever is true offers uncompromising testimony to their deepest allegiances
We feel secure when holding alive the certainty that angels are protecting us
All prejudice is fear-based; a well-adjusted person promotes greater universal intimacy
Dreams are the coin of both inner and outer experiences

ADAPTATION

Being open to recreation is a valuable way to cultivate creativity and reorient ourselves in life
To focus, we accept the need to insulate ourselves from intrusion
We need instruction for perfecting the self; as we evolve we can help teach others
We have to accept expansion of human possibility is somewhat precarious
The highest intelligence is found in knowing both how and why

STABILIZATION

If a soul wants experience, in its desire for knowledge of itself, then it needs a body
A person is measured by when they push forward and when they back away
Disorder takes over when affairs are not controlled with firmness and resolve
Tradition needs to be accepted and gently cherished if we are to grasp our fullest birth right
Grace commands worldly sophistication and demonstrates our spiritual progression

CULTIVATION

Freedom and power can so often hinge on harnessing primal forces skilfully
We need occasionally to reconnect with the irresistible, essential creative life force deep within
Creative sensitivity leads towards a deep and subtle knowledge of the true nature of reality
Competition promotes the focus and excellence needed to grasp every opportunity
Through travel and adventure we gain knowledge of the world's great diversity

MODESTY

We reach ultimate self-representation only with the help of others
With age, we gain greater inner authority; this speaks to us of the eternal aristocracy of self
Great self-discipline, patience and skill are all required to tame the inner beast
A positive, expectant approach to life generally promotes security and happiness
Any individual who, in service, transcends the ego, is rewarded above all by self-fulfilment

PERFECTING

The highest rapture can be found in ceremonial celebration of spirituality
May future generations always have better prospects than we ourselves inherited
When we have the better hand, we should play it
It is in the nature of wisdom that it must be discovered, not furnished
A life that is based on principles and practices cultivates gravitas and understanding

THE EXPRESSIONS OF VIRGO

CONVICTION

VIRGO 1 – 5

Who we are is partly defined, and certainly contextually shaped, by our circumstances and environment; it especially includes the collective, accepted myth that determines our local reality, and attempts to limit certain behaviours with its versions of right and wrong, good and bad,. We can become overly oriented towards demonstration of acceptable results, unwisely trying to establish objective, measurable evidence to prove our worth to people around us; this carries the risk of persistent anxiety. The task is to transform our conviction that we are useful to a higher, existential level of self-assurance – that we are worth our place simply by being. We all have a unique contribution to make, and offer an important ingredient towards the whole cosmic soup – but really only when we are true. We need to find a way to reconcile who we are with where we are, and be assured that, even as we fit in with the immediate surroundings that influence us, our inner sense of self is authentically maintained – and to be convinced that that is enough to be worth our salt.

ADAPTATION

VIRGO 6 – 10

Cyclical processes are universal, so we have to meet new dawns, new moons and new situations as a matter of course. If for no other reason than simply adapting to these changes, we need a significant degree of flexibility. Additionally, the mind-set that evolves from such an approach is fluid and non-judgemental, so it tends to see both points of view – thus facilitating individual intelligence, harmony, and efficiency, and is of real benefit to the common purpose.

A superabundance of opportunities exists for our joy and self-expression, and typically we need to surrender our attachment to any particular one in order to enjoy another. We gain significant advantages from being receptive to guidance, so that we learn why, how, and when to be guarded, and also when to open up. Instead of always straining to compete within a world seen as mostly punctuated by danger and scarcity, we come to understand and trust that sometimes we can offer all we have, and all we are, within a world more correctly seen as abundant, easy and safe.

STABILIZATION

VIRGO 11 – 15

Coming to terms with physical existence is no small achievement as, from first to last breath, we are compelled to stabilize a great many influences that push and pull us around. Still, even though some of the procedures that shaped us as children may have been intrusive, nonetheless we have gained profound benefits. The projections upon us from our parents, teachers and peers actually helped to build a steady sense of who we are, and what to do. Whether we conform or rebel, the standards that were put in place can act as guidelines, and therefore promote the possibility of aspiring towards excellence. It is both by following, and rejecting, these indicators that we grow strong and pure of motive.

Inevitably some part of our heritage rubs off and is accepted as a set of true principles by which to engage with life. We may well have a desire to improve certain aspects of our family's message; this aim not only delivers a base-line reference point for every one of our choices and responses, it also fosters a more refined quality, an allegiance to subtle, enduring, spiritual realities.

CULTIVATION

VIRGO 16 – 20

Life gives us opportunity to develop, to enjoy and to express ourselves fully in accordance with the fullest reach of our imagination – yet it does not insist that we do much more than survive. At a certain level of being, we can just function as animals do, and in fact most people also do, and provide themselves with food, shelter and a mate. However, we are also capable of the discovery of greater talents – creative passion, clever insights and extreme self-pointedness for example – and we learn that these abilities generate abundant rewards.

This significantly depends upon how well we deepen our comprehension of life's mysterious operating principles. Those who actually manage to put in the effort to cultivate skills and understanding will find that life becomes richer and more colourful, and indeed inevitably happier in the long run. So the courageous and the innocent will place themselves in harm's way trusting that all will be well in the end, and that such apparently reckless behaviour, though it may well occasionally lead to misfortune and disenchantment, is a condition of growth.

MODESTY

VIRGO 21 – 25

Modesty is a spiritual mystery, understood more in the East, where the veiling of one's power and beauty are seen to enhance them, and an excessive expression of ego is an expenditure that the prudent person prefers to limit. As we serve, so we hone our awareness. Eventually it becomes clear that there is an underlying meaning to life that makes sense of all the trials and disappointments.

The ultimate self-help is best expressed as concern for something higher – in fact the highest we can conceive – because oddly we capitalize most fully and quickly upon life's opportunities as we offer ourselves in renunciation; indeed it is thus that we master ourselves. This knowledge is somewhat counter-intuitive, at least to the underdeveloped person, and yet its discovery is something of a eureka experience; it just makes so much sense to the spiritually-evolved person. Both resoluteness and artlessness – self-proclamation and renunciation – are useful as they weave together into an almost transcendental state of grace, which paradoxically celebrates and negates ego simultaneously.

PERFECTING

VIRGO 26 – 30

Precision and a thorough attention to detail are aspects of perfectionism, and found useful when a task simply must be properly performed, with no margin for error, and no room for imperfection. Since most of us are somewhat uncomfortable with the unpredictability of the future, we often attempt to control events through having precise established routines, and anticipating unseen possibilities assiduously. We can, in this way, develop impressive acumen and learn how to concentrate on the matter at hand with perseverance and care.

Whatever can be destroyed or tarnished is not true – because Truth is essence, beyond corruption. This also can be applied to personality – where the certainty of authentic self-identification is the prize of integrity. It can only ever be truly developed, and tested for its authenticity, when we serve. We find that, by surrendering the lesser aspects of personality through offering to care for another, we are quite able to put aside our smaller personal agenda – and then we discover the path to spiritual grace, which is the perfection of self.

PLANETS IN VIRGO



SUN in Virgo (☿♍)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 194 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Virgo (☾♍)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

The Moon feels; in Virgo she feels the Earth with a careful attention – and discovers an innate ability to tune in to her natural abilities in nutrition and healing – like healthy food and medicinal herbs. There is alertness to small details and great orderliness and effectiveness.

MERCURY in Virgo (☿♍)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Mercury functions well in Virgo – as an analyst, a clear-thinking communicator and wordsmith. Neither planet nor sign is much impressed by fancy or fantasy and together they say what is – exactly what is – with no embellishment or error.

VENUS in Virgo (♀♍)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

To seek perfection in relationship is to court disappointment, so in Virgo, Venus shies away from early intimacy, unveiling her desire slowly until she feels safe to declare that her idealism in love is both scared and realistic. As Vestal Virgin or venal whore, she can rise above emotion – but in personal love, she yearns for shared devotion.

MARS in Virgo (♂♍)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

Here, Mars desires practical expression as it tries to complete a task of service to a level beyond criticism. It attends precisely to important details when repairing or building things so they function. Dexterity, practicality and efficiency skills are likely to feature strongly.

JUPITER in Virgo (♃♍)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

The sacredness of the Earth is efficiently appreciated and put to good use by this combination of abundance and care. Jupiter seeks religious experience, and Virgo knows how physicality works – so this makes for an earth-based path of personal development, giving deep meaning to ordinary life.

NORTH NODE in Virgo (♁♍)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

Born with cosmic intuition about the mysteries of life eternal, in Virgo the North Node tests us to realise universal truths in material ways where spirituality is grounded – in the organic garden, in natural healing methods, in self-sacrificial acts of practical service – here we push further into the wisdoms of earth-knowledge.

SATURN in Virgo (♄♍)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

The seriousness of Saturn fits well in the earthy sign of Virgo to create the possibility of extreme attention of detail in worldly matters. This is the matter of lists, the controller of budgets, the self-negating servant of expediency and efficiency. There may be a lack of inspired, intelligent overview – but every little thing is properly accounted for and tidy.

CHIRON in Virgo (♆♍)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

A particular sensitivity to physical evidence of ill-health, both global and individual, makes for an enthusiasm for using natural healing remedies and spreading ecological awareness. The flowing processes of natural change are promoted and permitted for good health.

VIRGO – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

CHARACTER: A MAN'S HEAD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF VIRGO (0°- 1°)

Ever-present self-assurance expresses an effective fullness of character

No one will ever be able to affirm our highest worth but ourselves. To express the fullness of character certainly requires an effective self-assurance to be central and ever-present, yet self-betrayal is inevitable should this lead to self-overestimation through vanity.

There are rewards – a multitude of toys and compliments – made available to those who learn to apply themselves to the exacting demands of a path of self-proclamation. These trinkets of fame and fortune are as ephemeral and inconsequential as the gifts in a Christmas cracker, yet pleasing and helpful to focus the mind.

However, the real juice is the prestige that is well-deserved and hard-won – such as a wreath of laurel leaves placed on the head, which endows a person of distinction with legitimate honour.

It is perhaps trite to point out that we see in the head of a man the full maturity of his being. We can read there much of his history and aspirations, loves and fears – and the extent of his alignment with his own sense of personal integrity.

Life's struggles and openings allow us – and cause us – to make known and clear those things which we hold to have special importance and give meaning to our lives. Our ideals are brought to bear upon our situations as we pursue our goals. In this way, great dignity can accrue to ambition.

At a fairly advanced level of personal achievement, we find that others have come to depend upon us as a direct result of our having willingly taken on certain responsibilities. This is made possible by our confidence in our self-determined set of values that add up to a code and path.

In some mysterious way this formula engenders a supreme clarity of vision that cuts through the fog of what may be, to create a path of what must be. Opportunities to shine emerge and attract us so that we continuously accelerate towards greater and greater self-realization.

GLORIFICATION: LARGE WHITE CROSS UPRaised

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF VIRGO (1° - 2°)

Who is true, offers uncompromising testimony to their deepest allegiances

At school, at work and with our family and friends, there is real pressure on us to go along with things. The flow of collective behaviour has a current as strong as a river, and we are destined to be carried along with it unless we exercise moral courage, and restrict any involvement in mindless conformity. This courage is the dynamic of our rising up.

Often the first examination has to do with religion and cultural ethics; most people are quickly and completely seduced by dogma and doctrine. The orators and priests rarely explain with reason – they tend to persuade using specious argument and emotion.

However, by our very existence, each of us is spokesperson for a set of values for which we are placed in a position of stewardship. It is our sacred duty to take good care of our system of belief and morality as though it were a child.

This is done by staying true, and offering uncompromising testimony to our deepest allegiances. If we believe in rationality, then our code must be rational – and we must challenge whatever is not logical. If we believe in love, we must challenge what is not loving. It is our fearless straightforwardness that acts as a corrective to maladjusted aspects in other individuals and society in general.

Glorification of Christ in the raising of His symbol is an example of this. Whether or not we ourselves are Christian, we still can nevertheless see that this process raises the aspiration of its participants, above the commonplace and mediocre, to a transcendent level of hope.

The original symbolism becomes changed over the years. The cross was added at a later stage in Christian imagery – other symbols for Christ have been the lamb, the unicorn, the pelican and the fish – but the raising up stays clear and obvious. People glorify by raising things up.

We can reject the cross, even Christ, but can we really reject the raising up of sacredness and the hope in furthering the spread of goodness? We cannot.

SECURITY: TWO ANGELS BRINGING PROTECTION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF VIRGO (2° - 3°)

We feel secure when holding alive the certainty that angels are protecting us

There is a quality of power within human character, which becomes the hallmark of our spiritual station.

It is that which draws resources and beings towards us, so we can facilitate the simple and consistent convergence, of all good things, to impact upon our circumstances.

The principle illustrates how our high-mindedness pays very pleasant dividends.

This symbol shows of the certainty of conviction we can acquire, enabling fulfilment of dreams. We are secure, and we feel secure, holding alive the certainty that angels are protecting our best interests.

We always move to sustain the soul's outreach – so we live out eternal values in our lives, and reap the rewards of our relationship with angelic forces – whatever we imagine them to be.

Any vain pretence will diminish the effectiveness of these forces, just as self-importance betrays both our inability to trust, and our ignorance of what angels are, and how they work for us.

Basically, there are traditional legions of heavenly forces ready to be called upon. Few people learn how to call them up, or get confused about the appropriate means of interacting with them. It is simple enough – we must believe in them as higher aspects of ourselves, and that they respond to our appeal. Yet they need to be summoned in order to operate, so we have to know how to pray.

INTIMACY: BLACK CHILD PLAYING WITH WHITE CHILDREN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (3° - 4°)

All prejudice is fear-based, a well-adjusted person promotes greater universal intimacy

Everyone has their own particular way of being what they are; this must be respected.

The enjoyment of success in life is sponsored by the ability to maintain our own uniqueness, and to recognize the uniqueness of others, in a wide variety of situations and events.

Rather than looking for differences as a cause of potential tension and rivalry, we can learn to appreciate them as the source of richness of our lives.

Indeed, without such differences, we cannot access such conscious awareness of who we truly are, and so will never be fully satisfied with ourselves.

No single facet of character need be excluded, either from self-appraisal or group acceptance. The image shows how a group of young Caucasians expresses acceptance quite easily. By this gentle behaviour, all are raised. Children affirm, in their natural way of being, that it is better to play with any friend than to have no-one to play with. This intuitive knowledge is taken to the point that they so easily empathize with someone being left out, and often invite them in, disregarding inconsequential differences of background and appearance.

Prejudice and racial hatred are indicators of an individual's lack of capacity to adapt – evidence of psychological maladjustment.

There are no legitimate limits to human relationships, and any imposition of dogma, which would create division instead of intimacy, is false. All prejudice is fear-based. The authentic, peaceful attitude of a well-adjusted adult promotes intimacy – and yet so few adults are able to retain this simple understanding that never even occurs to children, let alone troubles them.

OUTLOOK: A MAN DREAMING OF FAIRIES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (4° - 5°)

Dreams are the coin of both inner and outer experiences

Our dreams we can see as psychological indicators during sleep, or as fairy stories with naive and unrealistic, unrealisable endings. In this latter case, despite their access to states of truth and beauty, reality is ignored and the facts of the material world are not fully appreciated.

In this instance they speak to us of our folklore roots, which sponsor the width and depth of our resourcefulness of imagination, as we reach a sense of communion both with archetypes and our fellows.

When we share them, as children, we become wide-eyed and credulous, transported to a world of make believe. So powerful is the effect of story time that later it binds together an adult community and informs its politics and economics – for example at Christmas or at the movie theatre.

The fact is that, though insubstantial, these dreams significantly influence the everyday world – by adjusting every part of our outlook upon life. We are insightful and wise to use them as the coin of both inner and outer experiences.

We shape the contours of the mind by the way we think, and the dreaming mind is no less capable of being reshaped by fairies than by electricity bills. The first probably has a more empowering influence than the second, and can be used creatively to sharpen the focus of our attention and perspectives towards goals. The mind is the most powerful of all our instruments of manifestation, and its primary tool is imagination. More than this – it is our dreams that persuade others, not our reason.

Dreams are the foretaste of human achievement. First we imagine – and then what follows that is the disciplined plan, and the building – but the fairy story always seeds reality.

The visionary gives voice to their own vision, while the silent ones serve somebody else's. Without the reckless courage to say what has never before been said, we are constrained to serve those who do speak out.

DIVERSION: A MERRY-GO-ROUND

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (5° - 6°)

Being open to recreation is a valuable way to cultivate creativity and reorient ourselves in life

It is well within the normal everyday experience of people to seek diversion. Such pleasure is the simplest possible form of creative exchange, and engages us in a healthy relaxing way with the lighthearted side of life.

We can usually learn more, and learn more easily, through play than work. So occasionally we need to look up from our tasks and focus on fun, and be willing to demonstrate openness to new activities and scenarios. What we hope might develop from this is a general receptiveness to every turn of opportunity that can be found in each normal life situation.

Also, it is no small thing to bring amusement into life just for its own sake.

Shifts and changes are, to some extent, novel and also somewhat cyclical – a merry-go-round of copycat experiences. We repeatedly choose the same kind of situations until we fully assimilate their lessons – and the encounters tend to intensify and become increasingly demanding so that we are forced to address issues.

To awaken further personal potentialities, we probably need to play more. It's an easy way to pick up new skills and have little fear of the consequences of any ineptitude. Play can become as serious as it likes, without needing to upset the fundamentals that we depend upon. Perception of failure during games is softer on the ego than during work.

So, including sport, play is not to be seen as time-off, as a reward, but as a necessary aspect of self-refinement – as well as an important contributor to the maintenance of vitality and youth.

There is a particular attitude of consciousness that is awakened mostly during downtime – in other words, when we relax something happens. This occurrence is healthy and supports inspired creative thoughts and feelings that are essential for complete good health.

RESTRAINT: A HAREM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (6° - 7°)

To focus on what is important, we need to insulate ourselves from intrusion

Members of a harem are severely restrained, yet this enforced conservation of energies need not become a surrender of basic ideals. Whatever principles we stand for must be independent of circumstances, or they are not principles.

There is a natural fellowship to be found with others who are similarly constrained, yet this connection is based on lesser values. We need to be careful not to reinforce our self-pity by spending time only with others in the same difficult position as we are. This amounts to self-betrayal for momentary ease.

Comfort of any stripe needs to be carefully monitored so that it remains a source of recuperation and relief, rather than a motivation for its own sake.

The courageous person will express a complete disregard of limitation and, at any cost, reject terms. There can be no compromise on matters of principle.

To claim our fullest potential in life, to become the best imaginable version of ourselves, then we are required to struggle to overcome. Knowing this, we welcome apparent constraints as challenges, thoroughly necessary to enable our struggle.

There are plenty of examples where the limitations imposed by regimentation trigger great improvements in the development of character. Certain situations insulate us from life's demands to be dynamic and creative – so that we can better concentrate on the difficult task at hand. The military is one example, the priesthood another.

The withdrawal from one aspect of reality is a means to re-grasp it in another – and some of us need this level of constraint, otherwise we simply cannot discover and focus on what is of greatest importance to us.

ASSISTANCE: FIRST DANCING INSTRUCTION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (7° - 8°)

We need instruction for perfecting the self; as we evolve we can help teach others

As we evolve, we gain increased definition of who we are. The uniqueness of self becomes more clearly specific as time passes. Yet it is not time itself that shapes us, it is the events that we encounter, especially challenges. Trials are necessary processes if we are to awaken within ourselves an effective continuity of effort.

The dance of life includes infinite versions of its rhythm and provides unlimited variations on the theme of its melody – and none is particularly better than another except to the ear of the individual.

In order to tune ourselves up, so that we can access our own rhythm and melody, we need help – we all need help. This image correctly demonstrates the role of someone who gives assistance: they are just helping us find out how to dance better. We can see it as a high degree of cooperation.

There is always a significant difference between what we are achieving and what we could achieve through further development of personal competence. Each of us is spiritually endowed with special skills to promote personal excellence.

An instructor's task is to stimulate effective endeavour by recognising and encouraging specific abilities in an individual towards greater self-realization.

If we are to relate fully to others, and their hopes and dreams, spiritual aspirations and need for understanding, then we will choose to take up the noble task of self-perfecting. As we evolve towards our own perfection, so we become better able to help others.

This can sometimes be done quite lightly – and we can cheerfully accept our own ineptitude. Yet it is better not to allow such a casual approach to degenerate into a life path – because it leads us nowhere.

EXPERIMENT: A MAN MAKING A FUTURIST DRAWING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (8° - 9°)

We have to accept expansion of human possibility is somewhat precarious

We can always find a legitimate way to establish ourselves with our fellows without self-betrayal or confusion, but it will involve experiment – a trial and error process.

Each one of us is unique, yet we ape the behaviour, mannerisms and opinions of our set, in order to fit in. It is very important that, notwithstanding social pressure, our individual originality must show in any true assertion of ourselves. Otherwise, we succumb to the complete, continuous confusion of inherited or borrowed ideas that describe them – our set – not us.

The risk we run is that our authentic expression of personality may just be too out of kilter with the common crowd. Then our uniqueness of expression would repel rather than attract.

Yet, by the very uniqueness of its essence-nature, creativity will always be a digression from established norms and expectations, so are very likely to disturb and confront.

The trick is to find a way to engage others so that their own creative capacities are released in response to ours – as though a friendly challenge is begun to see who can outstrip the other in originality.

This is often more easily and successfully attempted when we unlock the more aesthetic or spiritual aspect of our inner selves. This in turn will trigger our own softer side, and also typically the distinctive inspiration of our associates and friends.

The expansion of the human mind, and the consequential extension of its powers, depends upon our willingness to experiment with new ideas – futurist drawings. This may lead to greater acceptance or it may lead to real rejection; life is risky and we have to live with that.

INTELLIGENCE: TWO HEADS LOOKING OUT AND BEYOND THE SHADOWS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (9° - 10°)

The highest intelligence is found in knowing both how and why

The exceptional intelligence of our species enables us conceive of God, and also it endows us with exceptional mechanical sense that can be applied to everyday physical problems. The two heads in this image symbolize our twin-faceted curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of life, both spiritual and material.

However esoteric may be our comprehension, we like to reduce all knowledge to exact and efficient formulas. This may be mathematical, it may be religious, but it is formulaic.

If it is not, with very few exceptions, we ourselves are reduced to a hopeless fragmentation; we lose sight of the integrating force of our identity and purpose.

The code by which we live is a marriage of sorts between what works in practice, and our perception of an ideal. The inner and outer faces of reality are then merged into a composite understanding of how life really is.

This is a necessary and effective operation of mind and heart which pulls together the various phases of human experience to have some unity of common purpose. Were we entirely spiritual, we would not know the 'how' – and if all-material, we would lack the 'why'.

There is, beyond this very pragmatic explanation, further motivation for us to develop a superb capacity for seeing both sides in every issue. Actually, there is no better achievement for the mind than to do so – its exaltation lies in this ability.

To have both transcendental powers of comprehension, and stereoscopic reasoning ability, enables the birth of genius. We learn to know the why and how of each aspect of our lives.

EXACTION: A BOY MOULDED IN HIS MOTHER'S ASPIRATION FOR HIM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (10° - 11°)

If a soul wants experience, in its desire for knowledge of itself, then it needs a body

As much as the boy is moulded by his mother's vicarious hopes to further her dreams, we are all the embodied projections of our soul's desire. The inner, almost irrevocable, compulsion of our essence-self is the force that brings us into all of our experiences in life.

The soul is its own container. In other words, the stuff, of which it is made, is itself what it is. And this stuff is a package of spiritual ideals.

These ideals take on life experiences as if they were clothes – physicality covering naked spirit. Incarnation is the exaction – the price to pay. If a soul wants experience, it needs a body.

There is a kind of immortality implied in the fact of heredity. We pass on what we have inherited, and this refers as much to ideals as genes in our DNA. These so often take the form of possessions and tangible achievements as today's generation furthers the aspirations of yesterday's.

This is the process of evolution, which sponsors current personal excellence by the constantly supportive empowerment that ancestors provide. This includes the raising of awareness, and the skills of creative visioning, as applied to the family's visionary thrust and its continuance into the future. We can, and do, contribute something of ourselves to add to the pot – whether this is the intimate family or the wider social group.

There is no ancestral compulsion implied – we are not required mindlessly to conform to the superficial trappings of allegiance, and any constraints of another's will, even though it may be underscored with very strong parental pressure.

But the price we must pay, because it is an irrefutable cosmic law, is that our birth into physical existence is required – with all its trials and sufferings – as a duty of the soul's desire for knowledge of itself.

INVITATION: A BRIDE WITH HER VEIL SNATCHED AWAY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (11° - 12°)

A person is measured by when they push forward and when they back away

When we raise sexuality to the level of sacredness – as in marriage – the twin aspects of passion are made known. The snatching away of modesty is very earthy, yet the seduction of the modesty itself is very spiritual. Forbidden fruit tastes better.

There is a delicate question of balance to be found between passionate purity of motive, and desecration through ill-disciplined lust; what decides the matter is invitation.

Bringing this into more everyday situations – are we honouring the feelings of our fellows? Or do we impose?

Implied within this idea is that whenever we make a choice, we have the capacity to profit from the consequences, in full accordance with the claims we make. Life consistently demands proof of our worth and our intentions, and we are frequently required to snatch away veils, trusting that we are being asked to do so. Our desired fruit never jumps into the mouth of its own accord – and to pick it kills it.

Once we have chosen a path, we need to be fully committed to complete the ‘task’. It is not at all acceptable to lack thrust when your bride is ready for you.

A measure of a person is found, when they feel desire to interact with another, in how well they manage to gauge whether to push forward or back away.

Those who develop sensitivity and wisdom in this are rewarded with a life of elegance and abundant joy.

POWER: A STRONG HAND SUPPLANTING POLITICAL HYSTERIA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (12° - 13°)

Disorder takes over when affairs are not controlled with firmness and resolve

The only way to fail is to refrain from choice, because then we become victims to the transient events of what is currently unfolding according to someone else's will. Timidity is the loss of opportunity – because in any crisis lays the chance of further self-discovery.

Human personality has a certain weight of influence, which impacts upon the moment at hand, and can significantly contribute to what next occurs.

Politics cannot be avoided. Whenever a group of people operate together, there will be different assessments and visions, which compete with one another to determine which will hold sway and underpin the community's future.

Leaders arise, and often they prove to be deficient, so they must be ousted. Very often, through fear of change, there comes a period of confusion and hysteria, which makes good administration impossible. A strong hand at these times is a force for the good.

Powerful people need to have a consistent grasp on situations so to bring them around in order effectively to dramatize personal potentials – their own, and their supporters.

With power goes responsibility, and the power-possessor must provide for the overall ordering of all the many points in historical progression. No gaps.

There is always a counsel of confusion to take over when events are allowed to drift, so strength can be an asset, even when wisdom is in short supply.

GENTILITY: A FAMILY TREE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (13° - 14°)

Tradition needs to be accepted and gently cherished if we are to grasp our fullest birth right

Our link with the heritage of our ancestors, detailed in the family tree, is subtle and yet profound. Its depth and power is only awakened into full realization by one with sufficient gentility – it needs to be cultivated, and expressed through the quality of sophistication.

So many viewpoints pull us in different directions, so many relationships push us into circles of engagement – we can become confused and be swayed and torn.

Yet by keeping faith with our ancestors' ideals, we inherit a promise of distinction and some unique promise of what we can become. We are bound into an empowering field of progression to the extent that we are willing to continue to live out these ideals.

Each of us has a complex relationship with mother, father and other ancestors – and assuredly we reject a lot of their behaviours and values as inappropriate, even repellent. Yet there are certain qualities and skills that define us – and these are the treasures that comprise our true inheritance.

So it is not the false sense of heritage to which we align – not the empty externalized nonsense of fame and fortune. These are tricks to deceive and seduce. We follow a well-trod path of soul-qualities that have been honed and passed down through generations for us to embrace and further develop. We look to make this gift fully integrated and truly our own.

We need not study or copy the form of this endowment because in some mystical way the wisdom of the ancestors flows in our blood and can be accessed through their spiritual presence as an inner experience.

How else could humanity evolve? This is the dynamic of life as one generation leads to the next without beginning or end, each respecting what went before as source material for what comes later.

GRACEFULNESS: AN ORNAMENTAL HANDKERCHIEF

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (14° - 15°)

Grace commands worldly sophistication and demonstrates our spiritual progression

Ornaments can be trifles of no consequence, used by the pretentious person to insinuate themselves into a better social class, believing, rather pompously, to be able to raise their status by adopting the trappings of position.

Yet these very items can be invested with extraordinary power, and true worth. Their value is in how they preserve meaning and so help to perfect action.

We think of a knight, who would always, whenever possible, carry his lady's handkerchief as a talisman of the spirit. His sacred chivalry was invoked, and no doubt made him a better person and probably a more passionate warrior. The talisman was always soft, to appeal to his sense of beauty, and awaken his instinctual awareness of the feminine side that made his fierce actions graceful.

Gracefulness is an exceptional level of charm, which is a form of power and brings high achievement.

It speaks to a higher reality to which we aspire – each of us yearns for something to which we append our highest sense of meaning, or sacredness. The allegiance, which we offer in service to this, has the effect of reinvigorating our very effort.

Grace is both a tool of, and evidence of, our spiritual progress. It brings a refinement in our manner, our perceptions, our relationships and purposes.

Without some sense of higher meaning, we become lost in life. We need to serve something higher – and that requires us generally to adopt the manners of that higher something.

DEXTERITY: AN ORANG-UTAN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (15° - 16°)

Freedom and power can so often hinge on harnessing primal forces skilfully

The powerful primate reminds us of our primitive strength, and potential for animal violence – and also the unthinking, instinctual, adroitness that we never lose. The human processes of evolution have brought such raw passions into check, but the thin leash of civilization is all that contains the beast.

We simply have no idea what may occur in our lives, and there is a part of us that will never let go of our primal capacity to cope with whatever unexpected dangers we may have to face. We always have more strength than we normally realize – and it comes forth if called up by any threatening circumstances of nature.

However much we try to build our lives to be safe and cosy, we may occasionally, unwittingly, attract challenges that stimulate the animal self into action.

Then, stripped to essentials, we stand strong – and feel proud that we can.

In meeting the demands of life, each of us refines our innate force so that it can adapt to circumstances with dexterity. This is required to maintain any degree of influence and independence.

We are assisted in this self-refinement by the processes of social feedback that dissuade us from, and even punish us for, any self-justification in crudity or violence.

We learn neither to deny, nor to allow, the beast within. Our maturity as individuals is found through becoming able to access primal forces and apply them appropriately within a social milieu. In a civilized context, this is more likely to be the expression of the passion that when thwarted gives rise to violence, rather than the physical violence itself.

EXPLOSION: A VOLCANO IN ERUPTION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (16° - 17°)

We need occasionally to reconnect with the irresistible, essential creative life force deep within

On occasion, we need to clear ourselves absolutely of any imperfections of authenticity, by rejecting completely anything in our lives that is not representative of our true selves. This refusal of superficiality is an aspect of the genuine reordering of self that supports creativity; it can be truly passionate in expression.

To take it to the level of petulance and temper tantrums would be foolish and ineffectual.

The urge is much deeper than silly emotionality – it is a reconstitution of reality in its most fundamental terms so that we can properly engage with the application of our deepest desires to rework the detailed aspects of our circumstances.

Sometimes we need to experience the creative forces of physical life – the volcanic explosion that makes stone from fire – as an inner reality. Life has a blind urge to be. No amount of civilizing can stop that, and we need to remember ourselves as part of that passion.

Certain aspects of our potential are locked up within, and can only be brought to light after a cathartic and irresistible outburst of energy, which is needed to mobilize inner creative forces.

After certain critical phases of life experience, such an outburst potentially triggers both wonderment and destructiveness that raise us up to a new level of engagement and commitment to self-projection.

Our external vitality is the very core expression of our entire reality. Nothing is truer, nothing more effective. Sometimes in response to dire emergency, sheer natural violence is the only valid action to resolve a major issue.

ACUMEN: A OUIJA BOARD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (17° - 18°)

Creative sensitivity leads towards a deep and subtle knowledge of the true nature of reality

The use of tools of magic has its dangers. Very often, those of weak mind will surrender their will to the forces that manipulate them into bondage when they get caught up in their superstition and distorted perceptions of subtle realities.

However, to the savvy, such tools can be employed very meaningfully to develop real skills such that their inclinations and insights serve them every step of the way towards the realization of their full acumen.

Thus, inner comprehension becomes activated into outer form, which is of the utmost importance since our values and strengths are made known only as they are given material expression.

This does depend upon a keen determined intelligence that can sense the difference between true insight and cosmic silliness.

The future does not arise suddenly as if out of the blue – it creates itself by rearranging existing streams of energy and form. Strands of the future are evident here and now – to those who look for and notice them and thus interpret their meaning. We can depend upon these myriad signatures of coming events – what must be must be.

However, what may be may also not be. Optimization depends upon expanding our sensitivity to a greater degree so that it encompasses illimitable life potentials in every situation and does not fixate upon one particular expected or preferred version. It is all too easy to warp our perceptions to fit our desires.

When we learn how to participate in true and rational divination, the completeness of our experience of life becomes steady and whole. Neither logic nor spiritual insight can give the whole truth because each needs to be married with the other to give birth to any real understanding.

ELIMINATION: A SWIMMING RACE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (18° - 19°)

Competition promotes the focus and excellence needed to grasp every opportunity

The treasure of individuality is the ultimate gift that this life offers. We are not the same as anyone else, although there are social processes of control and conditioning that seek to make us so. These are eliminated through the promoting of excellence. There is otherwise a real danger of inadequate self-dramatization – by which we lose this treasure.

On a superficial level the balance of life is found through instability. Survival itself, and certainly the pursuit of excellence and effectiveness, require us to recognize within ourselves the exact best response to every changing situation.

Each and every factor of being contributes to the whole organism's highest state of operation – so each part needs to be repeatedly awakened and tested through the constant demands of movement. Only then can we learn to appreciate how the overall best and harmonious outcome is a function of various components of self.

Competition has long been practised as an activity that stimulates the individual to achieve their best. Typically we train, we take on new skills, and we develop the right mental and emotional attitude, so that we can do our very best against an opponent who is equally prepared. When skilful hunting was a survival question, competitions were less necessary. However, now when wars are frequent and fought without grace, we are seeing evidence of the need for more, socially controlled, competitiveness.

As a result of such self-training, we can become very pointed of focus. Such clarity of inclination is powerful and likely to open up opportunities of further self-evolution and projection.

Whatever we may have been encouraged to believe, through pressures to conform, life is utterly impartial. No vision, no impulse, no ambition and no desire is rejected. Whatever we focus on clearly and unambiguously is attracted into our life circumstances whether or not approved of by the world – as long as we approve of it unreservedly ourselves.

Any imperfection in our clarity of desire or precision of focus will render us subject to the whims and fancies of an external world that is entirely indifferent to our wants and needs. Therefore divergence occurs, through which we lose our sense of who we truly are.

VARIETY: AN AUTOMOBILE CARAVAN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (19° - 20°)

Through travel and adventure we gain knowledge of the world's great diversity

Very often, in the summer holiday season, we see on the roads any number of towed caravans – temporary mini-homes for adventurers courageously going out to meet the world.

Modern life is typified by the variety and great multiplicity of facilities we have devised in order to inspect and enjoy the extravagance of nature's beauty and abundance and civilization's ingenuity.

We have all been encouraged to expand our expectations and claim more and better rewards for the work we do and the skills we develop.

In a civilized world, experience itself is ever on the move – spiraling outward to embrace as much of the world as can be imagined.

The modern individual takes full advantage of the encouragement, and the possibility to further their own reach, and enjoys undreamed-of realms of possibility.

We have exceptional capacity for this expansion, seemingly endless, and each new achievement becomes the foundation platform for the next dimension of expectancy.

Despite the inherent risk of permanent restlessness and facile improvidence, this expansive self-rewarding profligacy brings to our door the whole cosmos. For all its great errors and debased side-effects, the era of wealth and consumerism has exponentially developed our knowledge of the material world's great diversity and profusion.

EXPRESSION: A GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF VIRGO (20° - 21°)

We reach ultimate self-representation only with the help of others

There are real and important limits on our willingness to get involved with projects and people. Basically, unless we find something of vital consequence to ourselves, it is hard to serve another's ambitions.

The image of a sports team leads us to consider that we are part of something bigger, and we need not do everything ourselves. We have friends with similar purposes and complementary skills and knowledge. Our personal limitations can be overcome with the help of members of our team.

Not only is it enjoyable to engage in common effort towards a shared goal with shared rewards, it is also spiritually appropriate and intuitively valid.

Also, it is how higher realities can be brought into manifestation. Spiritual teachings must often be made into physical expression through groups rather than individuals, because it requires greater diversity and strength to deal with larger issues.

It is not at all comfortable constantly to consult and relate to team-mates, so one danger ever at hand is listless conformity. The wisdom to gain here is active cooperation rather than passive acceptance in all matters of wider consequence.

In order to resonate this wisdom at a higher level, we must accept the need, in response to unpredicted developments, for constant self-refinement such that true and profound specialization may take place. Each member of *Team Humanity* has their own skill set, upon which others depend. We are therefore authorized to take the initiative to express our particular skills and understandings on behalf of the community.

It matters not whether this or that skill is developed – and the choice is unlimited – as long as we express our true nature to the ultimate degree that we can master. Opportunities arise, and must be grasped in a timely way, and if they do not arise, then we simply have to learn to adapt to what is available.

PREROGATIVE: A ROYAL COAT OF ARMS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF VIRGO (21° - 22°)

With age, we gain greater inner authority; this speaks to us of the eternal aristocracy of self

In order to have a coat of arms, a family has to have impressive ancestry – and through this they assert authority and claim the prerogative of special importance. Right is being dramatized as a privilege worthy of sustainment, and is demonstrably sustained in this emblem of high aristocracy.

So often, unfortunately, the position is abused for the subtle manipulation of the unwary or the disempowered. We see examples in history, and even today, wherever the power-possessors keep the people down.

And yet, for all its dangers and the questionable implication of inherent inequality between people through accident of birth, the establishment of royalty brings great dignity to the experience of life. This dignification process is enacted by and through the customs and laws by which the community conducts its affairs.

The observance of these rules and values has to be enforced by an elite body whose committed function is social stewardship – and, in this example, that falls to those of a particular bloodline. Times and places change, and royalty is perhaps put aside in favour of presidency, yet the principle is eternal – someone needs to accept the burden of responsibility to maintain standards.

It is inevitable that the elite group of stewards will have the duty and gift to bring together all in common purpose and united stability. This projects a future of betterment, a vision of hope and prosperity for all.

In older, simpler communities, this function fell to the elders. They were custodians of the common-sense regulation of life, and were treated with great respect for their wisdom, their knowledge of old ways, their suffering and their achievements.

This hints at a subtle mystery – that just by staying alive, each of us gains greater and greater authority. Our own station as elder, our own emblems of position, and our own inner sense of knowledge of past and future, speak to us of an eternal aristocracy of self.

RESOLUTENESS: AN ANIMAL TRAINER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF VIRGO (22° - 23°)

Great self-discipline, patience and skill are all required to tame the inner beast

There is one way to tame the inner beast – only one. It requires adroitness in personal accomplishment – managed carefully, with a patient resoluteness of being. Whether external or internal, to tame and train the animal nature requires a great deal of both skill and self-discipline.

However, it is well worth the effort since, when we find such power, we can enlist the full package of natural resources allocated to us, which we will then find entirely adequate for us to fulfil all of our needs and desires.

The organic integrity of the world at large depends upon the certainty of the order of things. In this case, there is one incontrovertible rule – discipline controls passion.

There is a warning in this; that every individual is subject to controlling processes in their experience of life – and if we fail to give constant attention to our potential to influence outcomes, then this leads to a conditioned existence. Control is inevitable; we need to choose whether to impose or be imposed upon.

Humanity has the gift of influence – we can impose our ideas upon lesser forms of life by interweaving our skills into another's reality. In this example, it is an animal, although it applies also in the form where the charismatic person holds sway over the dullard.

It is usually futile to show off or boast about our power and talents – this is often proof that we have succumbed to the conditioning. Self-proclamation has its advantages at times, but certainly not as an attempt at avoidance of the processes of personal clearing.

Certain life imperatives rule us all; whether to be master or slave is one. We are required to dominate or be dominated, and for those of us who find this choice uncomfortable, we will probably end up reluctantly submissive. There is but one exception to this general rule – where we have escaped conditioning finally, having completed a deep process of healing and introspection; this is followed by masterly self-control.

ARTLESSNESS: MARY AND HER WHITE LAMB

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (23° - 24°)

A positive, expectant approach to life generally promotes stability

Each of us is entirely responsible for making sense of all of our outer experiences on the inner, subjective level. It is a measure of our self-adequacy whether or not we are able to do this well enough to take care of our wants and needs, and indeed to sponsor happiness. Naivety can be the impractical failure to face up to the hard facts of reality, or it can be beautiful innocence. To learn which of these two interpretations is more accurate for us, a lot depends upon whether, and how well, we are coping with life. Can we take care of ourselves so that we feel secure and happy?

The potential exists for us to find something that makes worthwhile every involvement and each relationship. It is evidence of a true ingenious creativity that we manage to do so. A young child usually finds something to play with and enjoy, so that each moment is valid in itself; adults so often lose this ability, so when we find one who can hold on to such youthful beauty, perhaps we should celebrate them. There's enough cynicism in the world – so a bit of childish fun is welcome surely, especially if present within a competent individual?

The image of a little girl, artlessly playing with an innocent baby animal, is a clue to this facility within us. This is a stabilizing facility, and is what promotes a positive, expectant approach to people and to life generally.

As adults, we are conscientious, even industrious about optimising the full expression of our capacities, striving and struggling to do this against external forces and personal insufficiency. Yet the child's wide-eyed expectation of the free-flow of goodness, truth and purity is not a lesser wisdom.

The opposite is the case; we all need such clear optimism. Holding awareness of such a childlike anticipation is a remedy for confusion, cynicism and an inner dividedness of focus.

And yet we must not allow such naivety to degenerate into witless fancy where the loss of true spirit and the absence of mature understanding will give rise to nothing more than empty-headedness.

This is not the wisdom of escapism – because there is no wisdom in escapism; it is the wisdom of trust – a totally different quality.

RESPECT: A FLAG AT HALF-MAST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (24° - 25°)

Any individual who, in service, transcends the ego, is rewarded above all by self-fulfilment

This is a symbol of the exceptional level of respect that is paid to an individual who has managed to transcend selfhood, and achieve noteworthy success, in service to their community.

It is given as a reward for dedication, which has proved worthy through continued, sustained effort. Yet the deeper reward is experienced first and last by the individual as self-fulfilment.

For the common individual in public service, there is no higher recognition than such an honour.

The coin by which to measure the substance of personality is reputation. As any person is raised in repute, so the community grows in its wealth of values, since appreciation elevates both giver and receiver.

It is the ultimate justification of personality that it be celebrated immortally as having contributed to history. Then it is upheld as much in death as in life.

Inevitably, life throws up its own self-judgements – it can be hard, even harsh, on those whose attempts to serve history fail to become more than a rather superficial self-dramatization.

The question in every exchange is whether respect is confidently demanded, or humbly earned. It would be folly to assume that either strategy is always appropriate.

RAPTURE: BOY WITH A CENSER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (25° - 26°)

The highest rapture can be found in ceremonial celebration of spirituality

Ritual burning of incense goes together with chanting the name of God, lighting of altar candles and kneeling in prayer, as examples of methods to create an atmosphere of sacredness.

Although this is done within a community context, nevertheless such an activity has an individual, self-seeking dimension – since it is thus that the practitioner reaches out and initiates their personal claim on the world.

We must dedicate ourselves fully to this task if it is to be effective; achievement of purpose is entirely dependent upon the degree of worthiness for such an elevated process.

If the involvement is not total, if we are unable to overcome laziness or apathy, if passion is dull – then the ritual is empty and no deep remembrance will occur of the soul's perfect and innocent condition.

This whole story is about remembering how to awaken the support of the subtle forces that are beyond scientific measurement – often described as God's work.

Spiritual activity is so often practiced as a group interaction. This is explained by the intuitive knowledge that nothing may actually be fully owned by an individual. All is shared, in both material and subtle realities.

Evidence of success – that we have somehow found a state of grace where self-demonstration and self-abnegation are both transcended – is found in our ability to practice the condition of rapture.

APLOMB: GRANDE DAMES AT TEA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (26° - 27°)

May future generations always have better prospects than we ourselves inherited

Selfhood is the current, momentary focus of attention that we claim as our inward orientation. It is a highly concentrated set of values and experiences, and it derives as much from inherited racial assets as from anything uniquely personal.

The traditions of one generation are always available to structure, underpin and strengthen the next. This does not deny our uniqueness of individualism; it merely helps to explain and enhance it.

The grande dames are no doubt raising china cups to drink their tea, pinkies fashionably angled to display their social status as upper middle class, with their precious aplomb perfected by repeated practice. They learned all this from their mothers and ancestors, going back before time. And they will pass on their values through their offspring, assuring themselves of an effective continuance throughout the ages.

We all do this, although perhaps not in such an effete manner. However, unless we decide to be, we are not actually constrained by this background continuity of how reality should be interpreted and projected. The threshold of aliveness is in the instant we awaken to the controversial discovery of new ways to take tea.

We must endeavour to pass on to future generations more than we have received, and our gains need to be captured and presented to posterity. We have more to experience in life than the karmic payback of past indiscretions and services rendered, and are here to be creative and further the range of human articulation.

Anyone can take irresponsible delight and squander their special privileges – but a person of aplomb will administer their inheritance for the greater good of their people, whether this is measured in material or spiritual terms. They do so as the foundation for further progressive elaboration in generations to come.

Even apparently common experiences like taking tea contain an awe-inspiring volume of information about humanity's evolutionary history. It is for us to make our own common experiences speak as eloquently about the future, and use our traditions mindfully as the springboard for new ways to express human potential.

DOMINANCE: A BALD HEADED MAN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (27° - 28°)

When we have the better hand, we should play it

The image is evocative of a particular type of individual who is completely in control; he never lets his hair down. We observe here that, in one who has mastered themselves, the tendency is very strong to dominate others.

Sometimes this is done too forcefully. It is not appropriate in any normal aspect of human experience for a person to take sadistic delight in becoming a scourge of his fellows. Such behaviour is evidence of unresolved childhood issues, however sophisticated may be the dressing that cloaks the bully – which is very often the suit or uniform.

However, often by taking control we are called upon to serve the interests of others – who will enjoy a richer and more enjoyable life as a direct result of our asserting authority.

Whatever special excellence we develop will be challenged, by events arising, to test our capacity to hold sway; personal attainment requires this. In any situation, when we have the better hand, we should play it – even against dissenters.

A self-disciplined expert, master of their craft, has a certain kind of character – with a drive of personal power that can create or advance widespread opportunities for community.

Social conscience calls upon us never to neglect our fellows. To avoid the chance to create benefit amounts to neglect, therefore we are obliged to take command whenever we see the potential community benefit in doing so.

The way to avoid the risks of over-forceful leadership is to take simple satisfaction on an inner level instead of the outer. Rather than look for manifestation of worldly power, we can feel the condition within of being in a state of self-mastery – and letting our resulting dominance of others take its inevitable course in the world.

DISCOVERY: MAN GAINING SECRET KNOWLEDGE FROM A PAPER HE IS READING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (28° - 29°)

It is in the nature of wisdom that it must be discovered, not furnished

Wisdom is not at all apparent. The ways of knowledge are hidden by two primary factors: The first is inherent within the very nature of knowledge – mysteries are undisclosed because they are undisclosable. Secondly, the secrets of life are kept secret by the cognoscenti – those who are in the know like to retain their influence.

Yet – as the image indicates – it is our business to derive meaning from what we are exposed to in the media. Reading between the lines, with an expanded level of comprehension, we will see the broader picture and gain access to the abiding, if hidden, truths by which communal stability is established.

Interactions, between those who know and those who do not, are often constrained in order to protect secrets. This hints at the fundamental conservatism of our world. The realm of our experiences is given form by a particular culture, which is best preserved by maintaining the fixity of beliefs. The spread of new ideas, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, which would take place if secrets were revealed, is seen by some as a threat to our way of life.

The conservative majority absolutely refuses to surrender their heritage unnecessarily.

Anyway, wisdom must be discovered, not handed to us on a plate. There is, within any lesser experience, a greater one hiding and, to reveal its greater glory, each of us has the responsibility to expand any situation according to our own perceptions of reality and its inherent potentials.

Were we to lap up the pap delivered to us by the sensationalist, materialist media, then, through lazy supposition, we would lose integrity of mind, surrender common sense, and serve the machinery of deception as docile victims.

Our freedom from ignorance is surely invested in imagination, that splendid and powerful gift so valued by all children, which cannot survive into adulthood without conscious effort to sustain and develop it. With imagination and persistence, we can penetrate through the obscurities and find clarity and the intrinsic depth of truth contained within even manipulative media.

SAFEGUARD: A FALSE CALL UNHEARD IN ATTENTION TO IMMEDIATE SERVICE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF VIRGO (29° - 30°)

A life that is based on principles and practices cultivates gravitas and understanding

We all make mistakes, but life really doesn't allow us to consistently apply witless indiscretion. There are so many false calls – just turn on the television – and we have to tune them out by focusing attention on the immediacy of the matter at hand. This ability is our safeguard.

It is the nature of things that we be seduced into inappropriate service by the deceiving tongues of liars and rogues – and therefore it is our normal responsibility to recognize and avoid that dead-end path. In business this idea is expressed as *caveat emptor* – buyer beware! The ability is not vouchsafed to the foolish.

Extending this idea, each one of us has to create a place in life among like-minded souls and heart-connected friends. If we are duped into false fellowship, this will never happen.

Safeguard comes from integrity. We need to achieve a way of living, based on principles and practices, which leads towards an absoluteness of attitude, and profundity of understanding. Then, and only then, we will be ever protected on our path – safe from both confusion and scoundrels.

With this life attitude, circumstances somehow seem to shape themselves for our convenience and encouragement. In all we do, we are supported and guided.

There is a secret in this – an esoteric mystery. Our sense of the soul's immortality is both the reason, and the reward, for human responsibility. Given free will, the only appropriate course is one of supreme integrity. This is not only because we have eternity in which to reap the fruits of our sowing – that type of thinking is only slightly above the animal kingdom. It is because it is the right thing to do. Trusted, we surely must become trustworthy – to be clear of conscience.

Happiness itself, in other words fulfilment and exceptional self-gratification, depends upon integrity – and is its prize.



LIBRA

POSSIBILITY / DIPLOMACY / LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS / BALANCE / CHARM / HARMONY

Ideally, harmony and beauty are best served when both your needs and mine are identified and reconciled

Libra has strong will that leans towards instigating change, yet softens its personal bias by seeing the bigger picture. It devotes time to inner reflection to look at all possibilities, seeking reconciliation, but feels no need to compromise to avoid confrontation – so often negotiations give everything that's wanted. It trusts that any conflict will be peacefully resolved, and this is done by respecting the tensions and strains on both sides in any situation – the need for give and take, drive and relaxation, coping and escaping. Often, attempts to find harmony, and resolve differences of perspective, or clashes of motivation, fail because people take up positions. It takes a special ability to raise issues without raising temperatures; it takes poise.

With excellent communication skills, civility of good manners, true judgement, discretion, and no extremes or excesses, this born diplomat, a perfect negotiator and public relations artist, is a word warrior who can maintain a dynamic forceful posture using intellect and grace, which avoids the need for physical aggression.

Libra is more conceptual than practical. It puts beauty on a pedestal as proof of worth, without quite realising that the unbeautiful may feel judged and wanting. Optimism is favoured over realism, and new can be seen as better than established. The brass tacks do not attract, and the superficial can be very absorbing. For these very reasons however, this sign offers friendship and social empathy at the drop of a hat, and has no deep-seated issues of principle or practice to threaten an immediate and sincere interaction – though such involvement may be short-lived, and eventually prove to have seemed only casual.

The pursuit of excellence involves willingness to see other viewpoints. This is done in the spirit of reaching the highest level of perfection, by comparing what is against what may be. Done with innocence, not contrariness, it is the route of idealism, and sponsors both truth and beauty – in art as much as relationship. Seeing things from the other side is the way towards true insight and, with curiosity and willingness for new experiences, leads to a very refreshing lightness of being. This is the antidote when heavy seriousness has become a problem. As often as the wind shifts, the Libra planets will manoeuvre themselves towards an easier posture, releasing atmospheric pressure, consistently engendering movement and restoring equilibrium through attitudes of fairness and equality, backed up by justice based on impartial philosophical reasoning.

It requires more than exemplary self-discipline to reach the yearned-for condition of perfect balance, because there needs to be a high-level overview to see how two conflicting attitudes are simply in fact one dynamic system expressed as a polarity. In this state of knowledge – called gnosis by mystics – fellowship arises as a spiritual state, and it is seen that all action contributes to life's essential dynamism – and serene inaction is often an important contribution towards reconciliation and harmony.

Libra defines itself in terms of its relationship with another – and is considerate by its very nature. Achieving a place of equality and peace can take forever – the fine-tuning, the listening, the tactful phrases – and yet forever is no problem. Persistence is as emblematic of Libra as it is of Aries. It takes the other's position as much into account as its own. This is the essence of spirituality, the Golden Rule, taught by all religions – e.g. *'love thy neighbour as thyself'* – and while all signs can theoretically achieve this, Libra actually enjoys it.

POSSIBILITY

It is both futile and poignant to articulate impermanence with gestures of beauty
Our race is transforming out of its current imperfections towards an enlightened future
Our choices define us, and options to re-invent ourselves occur each day
Skill in building morale is a sustaining force since community survival requires collaboration
A real teacher tunes into another's workaday life and recognizes unrealized potential

DIPLOMACY

Our values are simply escapist constructs – mind games – unless we live them out
It is intelligent to protect ourselves from the dangers that inevitably surround us
We lose whatever we do not secure against loss
Art teaches and expresses finesse; old art preserves and glorifies it.
Humanity has a genius for coping and finding ways to succeed

LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS

It takes the grace of modesty to express knowledge as wisdom
Freedom is in the ever-curious mind and the wilful spirit that changes what isn't working
To be happy, we can learn from children the magic of being
Limits on freedom must be monitored to sponsor occasional inner reorientation
The incorruptible core of our being makes mind and heart congruent

BALANCE

Death is freedom – we should allow ourselves to surrender to *force majeure* occasionally
Finally, we learn to relax
If we don't reconcile feelings with circumstances, serious consequences follow for body and soul
Occasionally, we must assert our freedom against external threats
A guide finds balance in masculine and feminine, tradition and intuition, spirituality and service

CHARM

Being friendly and open, enjoying the simple life, is not stressful
Kindness and optimism are self-indicated strategies of joy
We succeed by making the world aware of the qualities that define us
Our unique qualities distinguish us from the norm and add to the richness of society
Everyone has their meaningful place in life

HARMONY

A master is above emotionality; immediate pleasures are subordinated to ultimate ideals
Overview sponsors good judgement by seeing things in terms of their likely consequences
Life is a pilgrimage from darkness to light guaranteeing enduring rewards to the faithful
Meaning comes when we find the pattern that connects the various aspects of our lives
Seeing the future requires an accurate appraisal of the past

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LIBRA

POSSIBILITY

LIBRA 1 – 5

There is an intrinsic equivalence between beingness and meaning; we are the meaning of our lives, and there is nothing else to it. Our life purpose is to be the best possible version of our unique selves. There are two major forces that act upon us to unsettle the status quo – those of degeneration and regeneration, and we need to resist the former, and flow with the latter, in order to remain and explain exactly who we really are.

This is the only game in town, and it is the ultimate adventure – so we are stimulated, challenged, attacked and supported through it all. It is indeed best to view it as a game – and yet there is nothing else more serious, or in fact less serious – life is just best played as a game. Certain laws apply, and yet there is no rule book since the directives are self-selected. Typical beliefs that people hold are that we develop skills and knowledge so as to increase our rewards, that justice eventually prevails, that love conquers all...and so on. It takes a true idealist to maintain faith in these life principles throughout all of our difficulties, and the ideals that we embrace are representations of our intuitive sense of possibility. An inner feeling tells us what we might achieve, and then it is the accomplishment of this felt potential that imbues our lives with significance.

DIPLOMACY

LIBRA 6 – 10

One who develops true poise withstands the pressures of life and emerges with greater aplomb – but a coarse fool rarely survives life's hard knocks. It's tough here on earth and the inept cannot really thrive – because all of our qualities are each fairly rewarded, yet thoroughly tested. There are consequences for all of our choices and, to be beautiful and powerful negotiating with people who want different outcomes to us, it behoves us to come up with an elegant and effective, diplomatic strategy.

It may be clear to us that freedom arises when we relax our power and enjoy beauty. Yet anything as vulnerable as beauty needs protection – so the power to defend is an aspect of grace. We think of course of the rose and its thorn – each is loyal to the other; they have mutuality of purpose and relevance, and they are really aspects of one another. Similarly, yet more subtly, a diplomat wears soft gloves to cover an iron fist.

LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS

LIBRA 11 – 15

It is highly beneficial to relax and enjoy simple pleasures in beautiful places, because this is how we dissolve the darker, heavy clouds of a worried mind. The very act of perception of beauty is therapeutic, a smile heals, and love is a potent tool of joy. We are studying the law of attraction, which is a fundamental life mystery – like attracts like; it may not always be self-evident, but it is known by esotericists as a universal law. So we make ourselves light in order to lighten our lives. The refinement of self is a process of mind. If we think only clear and loving thoughts then we tend to pull situations to us that are conducive to happiness. We need to associate only with empathic people, have only good intentions, expect only what supports our vision, and allow only love to inhabit the heart. This lightens our lives. Anxiety, fear, resentment and prejudiced judgements are invasions – we must cast them out.

BALANCE

LIBRA 16 – 20

Each of the zodiac signs has its own path to knowledge, none more important than another – and all of them are essential ingredients of the cosmic pie, like jigsaw pieces that only make sense as a whole picture. What Libra offers is the basic law of threeness – celebrated in so many spiritual teachings. It is not the balancing but the perfection of balance that we study here. Balancing is of two-ness: now me, now you. Balance is of threeness – because when dynamic seesaw is momentarily at rest, then all heaven breaks loose. This is the mystical ‘Hu’; this is the infinite moment when time collapses into the instant, into eternity. In this state, all is known. And all is known as One.

CHARM

LIBRA 21 – 25

When applied to personality, the quality of charm shows as tact and consideration. The relationship between two people always involves push and pull, give and take – in fact that is what relationship is. We have both to claim and surrender for there to be any involvement. To be considerate, we try to understand what the other person wants, and needs, and take this into account as we pursue our own goals and entertainments.

It is a real skill to see the better qualities in someone, and speak to these. We can recognize a potential in another and bring it into expressed reality by talking it up. People often need a potential to be recognized by someone else before they can affirm their own sense of its possibility. The charming courtesy of tact – always looking to find the best in a person – therefore can actually be magically creative, bring dormant potential to life. It has equivalence, and is an example of ‘glamour’, in the sense of a magician’s methodology, whereby a certain mood or atmosphere is intentionally created to sponsor a specific positive outcome.

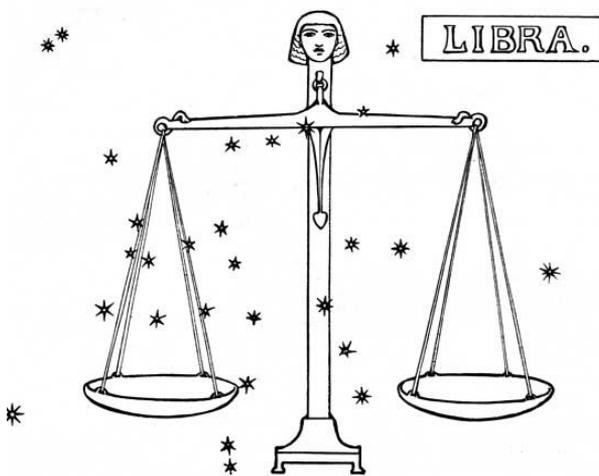
HARMONY

LIBRA 26 – 30

Sufis pray to remember this state of perfection, ‘Hu’, which exists within us all, and is beyond pain and suffering. It is approached by recalling a feeling, known as ‘Ishq’, which is taught to be Divine Nostalgia – the heart-centred aching felt by one who has known and yearns again for Absolute Love. It is taught that we have all known that Love – that we were born from it and inevitably will return to it. There is a close relationship between love, beauty and harmony. Since love is ambiguously defined, often capricious, and extremely idealized, it is conceivably more reasonable to venerate beauty, and aspire towards harmony, rather than demand or expect something as transcendental as love. A pilgrimage of beauty is almost certain to succeed, and will lead inevitably to connectedness and harmony – and then with grace, love may descend upon us.

If humanity is to claim its spiritual destiny and emerge from a sleeping state into awakened consciousness, we will eventually need to affirm a life of innocence and beauty, fellowship and awareness. Beauty is but a passing mood – its power to inspire awe enhanced by its transiency. Through beauty, the heart reaches out to know love – and through transience, it knows pain. We attach ourselves to that which is always shifting – and the attachment itself is responsible for sorrow, and its terrible sister, grief. Perhaps we do this for protection because we ourselves are shifting too? However, ultimately, we must come to know that both the flow, and the instant, is illusion. The ache of the grieving heart can actually be a fast-track path towards joy – if we would only surrender our fear of loss and discover the sacred mystery hidden deep within the broken heart.

PLANETS IN LIBRA



SUN in Libra (☉♎)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 230 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Libra (☾♎)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

Exquisite sensitivity and poise bring grace and charm when the Moon operates through Libra. Its purpose here is to find peace and harmony by reconciling its own fair needs with those of another.

MERCURY in Libra (☿♎)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Ambassador of Mind, Mercury serves the high principle of clear communication, acting as go-between for mind and heart, self and others. In Libra, it skilfully and diplomatically negotiates a fine balance where both points of view are harmoniously reconciled. Here, this planet is slow to decide, yet firm and very determined when due consideration has been given to each side of a matter and it has been agreed upon.

VENUS in Libra (♀♎)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Venus loves relating, and in Libra delights in showing how exquisitely she can bring beauty and grace by balancing her own and her partner's impulses. She is elegant, charming, light and sociable, though a little disinclined to confront discomfort since she is as strongly invested in the appearance of harmony as in its endurance.

MARS in Libra (♂♎)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

The diplomat is a word warrior, and when in this sign, Libra, Mars does battle with mind rather than body. It has the ability to see both sides and uses this insight to real purpose in developing strategies; it is exceptionally determined to balance situations from the position of having the upper hand.

JUPITER in Libra (♃♎)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

Here, Jupiter can be popular, charming and expansive in social settings, and also well able to enjoy the to-ing and fro-ing of relationship. Its joy is to find perfection in beautiful things and scenarios, and it finds pleasure in the facilitation of harmonious outcomes. This ability to bring diplomatic solutions has great influence when opposite interests clash.

NORTH NODE in Libra (♊♎)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

In Libra, the North Node looks for ways to progress from a self-referential viewpoint towards a more balanced path of relating to another as an equal. How do I get what I want and facilitate someone else's happiness simultaneously? Identity is central. What am I really? Who am I, reliably, even when relating to another?

SATURN in Libra (♄♎)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

In this sign, Saturn will only be deterministic when it has been swayed by proper argument and weighed up both sides of a matter so that it can apply fairly its reasonable authority. It seeks to minimise the potential for later conflict by carefully considering all pertinent influences and then offering transparent legitimate control over events as they unfold.

CHIRON in Libra (♆♎)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

The difficulties experienced in partnership and finding balance need to be fully addressed before Chiron in Libra achieves its potential as a healer. Its method is reflective self-consciousness – being aware of the equal needs of self and other, fully and sensitively concerned to find the place where two opposing positions intersect in harmony.

LIBRA – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

ARTICULATION: PINNING BUTTERFLY WINGS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF LIBRA (0° - 1°)

It is both futile and poignant to articulate impermanence with gestures of beauty

Love, harmony and beauty are related. Love's highest attribute is harmony, which in turn is perfected in form as beauty. It is the interactivity between two opposite energies that sponsors these qualities on cosmic and personal levels.

Two equal forces co-exist in all things. Self-expression is the outward direction of separation that seeks exultation through exploring uniqueness; surrender is the inwardness of being that yearns to remember love, the sublime condition of merging with others.

These forces are more powerful than any other; they can be called experience and knowledge, and their mutuality of attraction is raw and passionate: desire itself. Great poise is needed to hold them in balance; otherwise what occurs tends towards either chaos or inertia.

In love, This and That are the perfect couple united in harmony, the one adapted to the other and both lost in each other. In separation, their profound yearning to reunite is shown by a constant urge to capture beauty, to pin the wings of a butterfly – preferably but impossibly in flight.

Such futility is so poignant! Yet what else to do? Why not articulate life's terrible impermanence with such a gesture of ephemeral beauty? Children build sandcastles, Tibetan monks make sculptures of butter. Beauty is fickle by nature.

In the very moment of creation, all forms are doomed to die, and what eventually remains is memory's impression. Then let us make our hearts as tender as a new-born, so they will be impressed deep and forever with the grace of beauty that only a loving heart can perceive.

Though we may pin butterflies to stem the tide of time, relentlessly the processes of ageing claw away at the surface grace of form. Yet this unwelcome imperative forces us to turn within and recognize the wiser beauty of love eternal.

THRESHOLD: LIGHT OF THE 6TH RACE TRANSMUTED TO THE 7TH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF LIBRA (1° - 2°)

Our race is transforming out of its current imperfections towards an enlightened future

According to certain esotericists, humanity is currently on the threshold between two significantly different levels of manifestation. Moving from the 6th to the 7th entails a transformational process, beginning first with the acknowledgment of our current imperfections and limitations.

We need carefully to study history, as if it were a mirror, to observe how our characteristics have been reflected by our circumstances. We live in a modern global society, an extremely complex configuration of thought and behaviour, and we need to understand who we are and what we are doing. This is our main task as 6th race beings.

What emerges into our awareness, during the process of reflection, is the truth of what we are valuing. There is evidence that we are showing too little appreciation for the gifts that have been bestowed. This shows in our poor physical health and various planetary abuses that have created climate change and the extinction of various species.

To cross the threshold is not a matter of journeying through physical distance, or even passing through time; we need to transmute light. Most individuals on Earth do not know how to achieve this, so those of us who do have a great task – to carry the burden for the rest.

We need to project a clear, strong, optimistic, enlightened vision for the future of our race.

We are challenged in this, on all sides. The powers against us would have us lose heart, feel weak, unguided, and prone to failure. We must not allow ourselves to indulge degenerate attitudes of complacency. We could lose all sense of reality, and become completely impractical. Many will regress into otherworldliness rather than face the hard facts of physical reality.

We are to find a legitimate balance between real and ideal – to both encourage, and trust, every individual to reach their own unique potential. This is both the means, and the result, of the transition.

INNOVATION: THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY, EVERYTHING CHANGED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF LIBRA (2° - 3°)

Our choices define us, and options to re-invent ourselves occur each day

We are all strongly motivated by an irresistible urge within us to find ultimate self-dependence – to be exactly who we are regardless of external forces. In consequence, we need to blaze a path through life that enables each personal characteristic of selfhood to emerge and shine out.

The dawn comes, and everything has changed again. We must re-invent ourselves each morning in a constant repetition of the need for innovation.

It is good, therefore, that our appetite for experiment is insatiable. Innovation requires trial and error for its own sake, and we love it.

Through this, and this alone, we are able to continue unending further self-discovery in an adventurous range of human experience.

Despite the kaleidoscopic variation of character traits, and the thoroughness with which we attempt to present ourselves, we come to discover a personal consistency in the recurrent theme of how we are, which gives a clear statement of who we are.

Even in the most trivial of matters, there is real challenge for us to work out our best response – the choices we need to make define us; they are frequent and often unexpected.

The range of possibilities is without limit – even in our everyday affairs we have an infinite flexibility of options to be whatever we want to be.

AMIABILITY: A GROUP AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (3° - 4°)

Skill in building everyday morale is a sustaining force, since community survival requires collaboration

A group around the campfire is the first, and uncritical, implementation of the community experience – when there is little or nothing else to do but enjoy the warmth of flame and fellowship.

It is a picture of amiability, and accordingly the special mystery of this degree is an exceptional skill in building everyday morale. This is no small thing; it is the sustaining force for creating an effective social structure to further greater objectives in life – things that require harmonious, collaborative effort to accomplish.

There is a totally unconditioned capacity of each of us to associate with our own kind. We take it for granted because it is so commonplace, yet without it life would be so much harsher and much more dangerous. However, some people are more capable of enabling this interaction; a person who can is an important, though often unrecognized, aspect of community leadership.

No exaction or inhibition restricts this campfire behaviour – everyone is welcome, everyone has an equal voice. This type of voluntary and undemanding association differs from hierarchy, or family units, and has a completely different outcome – one which is an essential component of healthy tribal life.

Implicit within this idea is the fact that any intended reality, broader than a simple self-concern, must also have its origin in common functions. Talking around the campfire is the seed of every vision, and this certainly includes major community activities of great consequence.

Because of this quality of relating, any path or interest that we may personally adopt becomes an expression of identity rather than a divergence of interest between our fellows and us. The campfire experience binds the community together so that any differences in approach are likelier to be celebrated than prohibited and feared as divisive.

The risk with such an easy-going style of connectedness is that it can sponsor the lazing away of opportunity, and reluctance to pursue one's ideal out of casual dependence upon others.

AFFINITY: MAN TEACHING TRUE INNER KNOWLEDGE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (4° - 5°)

A real teacher tunes into another's workaday life and recognizes unrealized potential

Qualities lie dormant in us until claimed and expressed, and then recognized by another; in some cases it is the recognition that comes first. So, a teacher who can see the potential in another, and who can understand and name it, demonstrates a degree of creative genius – and effectively is co-creating otherwise defunct potentialities. Rather than the skill merely to show knowledge of form and method, it is this ability, possessed only by authentic teachers, to recognize and so awaken another's potential, that demonstrates true inner knowledge.

It takes sensitivity and empathy with another – not only to recognize these hidden potentials – but also to meet them, and so sponsor them. This furnishes the confidence that leads to an expanded repertoire of their personality and behaviours; people will experience more, and participate more successfully in society.

To connect well with others, it's easier if affinity is based on everyday things – because everyone is concerned with them, unlike questions of spirituality and philosophy. We all have communal duties for example, so sharing some of their burden promotes cooperative involvement and better mutual understanding.

To be true to ourselves, we must be true to others, and this means having an optimistic supportive attitude to the ultimate potential that we perceive in them, and to orient ourselves to their highest qualities.

We are by no means small and contained, but vast and involved. Others are aspects of us and the world is a description of self – a true teacher knows and shows this. Yet someone with this ability needs to be careful not to lose focus and simply demonstrate their own skill and insights. The prideful use of them is a subtle form of manipulation that is often used in order to dominate and control.

However, if the inspiration is true and clear, then it cannot be threatened by ego pursuits, since all expressions of pure spirit result in unsullied outcomes. Insights that come from such an understanding can often lead to a genuine passion of inspiration.

So, as a matter of aspiring to, and demonstrating, a greater integrity of being, it is useful for us to connect with people by helping them to optimize their potential. We can all develop the flair to reveal qualities into consciousness – and reaching out to help others is as much self-realization as it is self-expression.

PERSONIFICATION: IDEALS OF A MAN ABUNDANTLY CRYSTALLIZED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (5° - 6°)

Our values are simply escapist constructs – mind games – unless we live them out

Here we affirm that the very root of beingness arises out of meaning. In other words, we each come into being for no greater purpose than to personify the meaning of our lives. Personification of our ideals means crystallization of our highest aspirations into our behaviour and situations.

When face to face with opportunity, the human spirit's sole dynamic is to bring form to its ideals – anything less than this is self-betrayal.

Otherwise our ideals are nothing – playthings of the mind – since in and of themselves, these values are simply escapist constructs without significant worth.

The embodiment of ideals into a set of behaviours, decisions and working principles is a great challenge that tests us fully. We are examined as to whether we are sufficiently sincere and adequately vigorous in support of our highest aspirations.

So, can we find ways to integrate whatever we yearn to attain into our everyday situations? We find that for this to occur a strong, active, liberal imagination is the key to abundance.

Equally, the very lack of a powerful, vibrant imagination certainly leads to self-defeat.

A measure of a person's spiritual stage of evolution is found in how fully their deepest awareness can be brought into material expression, manifesting as a great richness of life.

SHREWDNESS: WOMAN FEEDING CHICKENS, PROTECTING THEM FROM HAWKS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (6° - 7°)

It is intelligent to protect ourselves from the dangers than inevitably surround us

We need to protect ourselves from the intrusive forces of that which is undesirable, including certain aspects of nature. Hawks eat chickens unless we stop them; in this metaphor, we are the chickens – and strangers and unfriendly people are the potential hawks.

Life is very complex, and there are serious negative consequences if we lack the ability to administer our own interests with due diligence and aptitude.

What is of value must be nurtured, protected from harm, and fully supported on all levels of need.

Yet always a conscious balance must be struck between conserving natural order and promoting the development of what we aspire towards.

Inevitably a cooperative collaboration – as between man and nature – produces the best outcome.

Expressing the spiritual quality of shrewdness shows that we have a keen understanding of how best diplomatically to reconcile the various forces operating around us, and optimising our strategies in order to survive and prosper.

These challenges stimulate an individual soul – inspiration brings out creative ways to deal with whatever comes up, and then becomes a resource that sponsors improvements in our general appreciation of the richness of life.

GUARDIANSHIP: A BLAZING FIREPLACE IN A DESERTED HOME

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (7° - 8°)

We lose whatever we do not secure against loss

Why does a fire blaze when there is no one at home? It testifies that someone was there recently and suggests someone will be again soon, and has the twin function of gently deterring potential intruders, like leaving on a light when we go out, and also establishing homeliness.

We have each created a world that is familiar to us – and on a very deep level it is our home. It includes not only where we eat and sleep; it includes work and social activities too. We have invested our life in this world; nothing material is more precious.

The blazing fire is a good metaphor for the passion we feel – both to create our unique world, and to demonstrate a powerful loyalty to each of the individuals, activities and scenarios that populate it.

This loyalty is a real force that makes things have the tendency to continue steadily in their accustomed function. So even if, for a while, we desert any aspect of our life-world-home, it is still there for us to pick up again when we return – as long as we have a passion for it.

It is to be remembered that we can achieve little or nothing by ourselves, and we need to enlist the helpful support of others to co-create the particulars of our world. This is greatly facilitated when our vision of what is to occur is raised – by our burning desire – to be a dominant force.

This level of clear-focused, passionate self-projection will always create a stir – and we find we have to grow in responsibility to meet the echo of our thrust. The measure, of how far is our reach, is the level of responsibility we are willing to shoulder and capable of handling.

On the other hand, if we do not fully participate in our own affairs, we find that they are no longer our affairs. Involvement is an intense process of careful, considerate participation, and we lose whatever we do not properly secure against loss by our continued ardent participation.

ACCORD: THREE OLD MASTERS HANGING IN AN ART GALLERY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (8° - 9°)

Art teaches and expresses finesse; old art preserves and glorifies it.

Paintings often gain in value as the years roll by, simply because they are aspects of our heritage, rather than because they become intrinsically more beautiful. Heritage has tremendous value – it provides the foundation for each aspect of individual lives.

The past and present are in partnership. It is inconceivable ever to separate them, and we will always interpret the present – our very lives – in contrast to, and yet in terms of, what gave birth to it.

Hence what we currently desire must in some way emerge from the source material of what has been, and is the fundament of what will become. If we establish an accord with this source material – for example by appreciating old masters – then we build our future on proven values.

For example, we can radically and permanently change the feeling-quality of our lives, by being together with people in order to appreciate whatever it is we find of real value. This action not only bonds us to our values, it can even mystically rewrite the past the better to support our future aims.

Self-expression, as one of its characteristic qualities, has the ability to draw others into alignment with our desire, so to strengthen the power of our visionary projection, by adding the force of group intention to our own single-pointed will.

We need to moderate our acknowledgement of past glories however. To get lost in idle worship of traditions is to forego current opportunities, and to render ourselves of lesser consequence than the ones who – apart from their reputation – are dead.

To be fully in accord is to demonstrate how well we can embrace, within our own personal experience, that which has universal worth within collective reality. Any object, like an artwork, that can still command attention centuries after its creation, is addressing a higher order level of life experience. It is more subtle and so takes finesse to be in accord with it – hence the need for art and the culture of beauty.

COMPETENCY: CANOE APPROACHES SAFETY THROUGH DANGEROUS WATERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (9 - 10°)

Humanity has a genius for coping and finding ways to succeed

There is a dimensional difference, which indicates an accumulation of wisdom through experience, between trust that is well-founded and blind trust in sheer good luck. The love of risk and adventure can be nothing more than primitive stupidity.

Or it can be a very conscious self-challenge, designed to improve our skills. We can ask ourselves whether such skills are in fact apt and are developing our resources on the road to success, or whether the love of risk comes out of some other, less serious, motivation, such as thrill-seeking.

Humanity's genius is sometimes invested in nothing more telling than pleasure itself – for example for the feeling of self-love that comes out of skilfully overcoming danger. A whole new industry has arisen around this theme, which includes white water rafting, bungee jumping and sky diving.

Yet, however insignificant or indeed trivial it may seem, such a practice serves the race itself by constantly creating fresh new challenges. As with everything, if entropy is to be avoided, the genius we have for coping with unexpected threats and finding ways to succeed also needs to be practised and renewed.

What once were survival skills, and perhaps nowadays are used only for leisure, serve the same function as ever – to develop powers through the commitment to achieve a goal. Without an external aim we tend to let our abilities and finer qualities atrophy, whereas a target will pull more out of us than otherwise we could access.

Even in daily life there are constant demands that call upon us to come up with a useful response when we have no previous history to guide us. We come to depend upon an inventive level of creative resourcefulness that is, in fact, quite remarkable – but which we tend to take for granted.

All experience therefore is validated according to our willingness to accept the associated risks. We recognize that life is, quite simply, a dangerous activity and, like it or not, we need to deal with that.

SPECIALIZATION: A PROFESSOR PEERING OVER HIS GLASSES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (10° - 11°)

It takes the grace of modesty to express knowledge as wisdom

The professor, with all the idiosyncratic nuances of this line of work, is as much a part of his specialty as the supportive books and lectures, perhaps even more so. At the horizon of knowledge, a specialist mentality is needed as a skill of the conscious mind. This particular facility of consciousness does not arise alone; it requires an intense commitment to the process of self-refinement within a chosen, definite field of endeavour.

To claim the greatest influence over the shaping of ideas, we are required to have developed the greatest insight and most subtle depth of understanding.

We have to love our subject as part of ourselves – and, no less, we have to believe in ourselves actually as an aspect of the cutting edge of our subject. The knowledge itself is not enough – a thesis always has to be defended, and this requires the strengthening of the ego. Although so often disdained as an inelegant characteristic, a very strong ego is an achievement that often gives rise to further achievement.

Whatever may have been the first reason we chose to specialize, soon we come to learn that such an intense involvement generates influence – so we come to accept the importance of acting out a position of superiority among our associates.

There are a few exceptions, but the general rule is that in any attempt to develop quiet mastery – a quality so admired and sought after – a high ego sponsors attainment. We can see from this that it becomes inevitable that we claim position as we claim understanding – and become the authority on a matter.

By no means is it necessary to become arrogant, compelling the subservience of others and taking joy in their deprecation. We may, however, need to acknowledge that our service to give form to wisdom will often cost us the freedom to experience humility – and the grace that modesty attracts.

Yet of course, it is the very surrendering of self that makes this work even possible; all other considerations need to be subordinated to the dramatization of responsibility towards knowledge itself, in its yearning to be known.

ESCAPE: MINERS EMERGING FROM A MINE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (11° - 12°)

Freedom is in the ever-curious mind and the wilful spirit that changes what isn't working

The miner is constantly working in dangerous and difficult circumstances to wrest something of worth from the rock. It requires, and so develops, considerable strength of character and indomitable self-confidence to live like this.

Some lives are lived out fully in very mundane ways, and the scope for personal expression lives only in the mind. We are freed by a mind that is ever curious to understand and experience whatever can be found of interest on restricted horizons.

To harvest the fruits of our endeavours, and find greater happiness, is in any case dependent upon attitude of mind. So, ironically, it may well serve us better to be constrained within straitened life circumstances – in order to evolve a mind whose irresistible spark will always want to find the light in a dark place.

It is through doggedness and uncompromising effort that personality is forced to come to terms with life and find a way forward. The resultant grit is its own reward – nothing much will shake the integrity of one who has faced such hardship on a daily basis.

That said, life is not meant to have to be endured all the time and it is a grim failure if we are unable to find an escape. The miners' blackened uniform faces also speak of the dullness and bleak conformism of non-entities who lack the spunk and insight to rise up against the life-denying crush of Blake's 'dark satanic mills'.

It may well be appropriate for a time to face up to the risk of degradation, being constantly hampered and thwarted in our dreams. But really it should not be endured for too long.

When we reach deep into the well of our inner truth, we find that the life force is inexhaustible and indefinitely supportive. If what we are doing isn't working for us, then something needs to change.

ENCHANTMENT: CHILDREN BLOWING SOAP BUBBLES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (12° - 13°)

To be happy, we can learn from children the magic of being

It cheers us to see children having fun. Blowing bubbles has very little impact upon anything physical; its effect however is very profound on the level of mood. Despite the lack of tangible rewards, we all give a significant degree of energy and attention to gain reassurance through the presence of the beautiful and good.

There is enchantment here. We are moved away from hard reality into a fairy-land, and it makes us more kindly disposed towards our fellows. So in fact there are significant material benefits after all – as we feel friendly, we spend less energy and money to protect ourselves.

Life's constant challenge for us is to remain capable of childlike enthusiasm for the simple and innocent, while rising above childish incapability to manage difficult circumstances.

The business of adult self-definition can be meaningfully divided into two aspects – what we must do, and what we choose to do. There are duties and there are privileges in life, and it is well to remember that our duties are valid only to the extent that eventually they serve our playful, relaxed, childlike inner self. Perhaps we too should blow bubbles sometimes.

This is not to say that a life spent daydreaming is a life well-lived – that leads nowhere that a truly inspired, creative person would want to be. There is no growth in the mere rhythms of everyday routine, and human individuality knows it must be up and at the business of selfhood.

What this does say is that a constant simplicity of character enables us to maintain contact with the transcendental magic of being. If happiness is our purpose, it is unlikely to be realized only through ardent single-minded ambition – we have to stop and smell the roses.

There is a lot we can learn from children. The first expression of humanity is to be seen in their simplicity and openness, and we generally enjoy those qualities in ourselves and others in adulthood – provided they are expressed appropriately when we have completed our chores.

RECUPERATION: A NOON SIESTA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (13° - 14°)

Limits on freedom must be monitored to sponsor occasional inner reorientation

We are each competent to cope satisfactorily with whatever comes up in our lives. This is basic – the basis of all life. Any inability to demonstrate this is born of fear.

However, in order to cope and sharpen our thoughts, there are skills and strategies to learn. One important example is to make a normal, routine practice of taking time for a period of reflection and inner reorientation. This down-time is as important as energetic engagement with the external realization of our goals. Of course we need to rest after exertion, that is self-evident, but there is more to this wisdom.

Such a practice leads to a sense of life as being full and rewarding, with little day-to-day things bringing great satisfaction.

In time we come to learn that we need to withdraw generally from unnecessary involvements if we are to experience freedom. Whatever responsibilities we have that limit our sense of freedom must be carefully monitored. We can get caught up by the hustle bustle and fear-based need to achieve. Typically, people go helter-skelter in pursuit of ambitions that serve someone else's version of what brings happiness. It is a pointless expenditure of effort to target the wrong outcome, and yet it is almost certain that we will do that unless we are properly guided. Eventually we all have to access inner guidance in order to replace ambition with vision, and this requires the mind to find repose and allow soul feelings to emerge, rising up to the surface of consciousness. This is necessary if we are to find happiness upon achievement. It's not enough to know what we want; we need also to remember why.

Our lives are surely a representation of the vision we hold of a world in which we profit, as do others, from an ability to project who we are into the community that we choose to inhabit.

It is simply inappropriate to maintain such a force of projection indefinitely. We are best served by including recuperation periods into our lives whenever there are negative feelings of tiredness, boredom, or signs of disinterest in ordinary little things.

A short rest enables us to take an in-breath, take stock, and regroup. In this more inward state, the unconscious elements in the psyche are better able to commune with higher aspects of our soul's purpose.

CONGRUITY: CIRCULAR PATHS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (14° - 15°)

The incorruptible core of our being makes mind and heart congruent

Whatever occurs, we all stay true at centre. It really is an extraordinary fact of life that the inner core of our unique self can withstand all the comings and goings without contamination or corruption.

These events tend to be cyclical – it's as though our life path is more like a wheel than an arrow and we repeatedly re-live the same dramas interminably.

Of course, it can actually take this level of repetition for us to get the thorough deep-seated participation required in order to fulfil the purpose of an experience. We become shaped mostly by those aspects of our lives that form the rhythm of our days, weeks, months and years. These circular paths bring a necessary congruity to our lives, which are thus made smoother, more comprehensible, and more comfortable because we know what to expect.

We are the centre of everything that revolves around us – in other words we are more than an observer of the transient details of what is occurring. We are conscious to the extent that we are aware of being the central driving principle that energizes the dynamic flow of what takes place. If we do not realize this, then we are unconscious.

The facility we have to adjust ourselves to the never-ending changes in life is dependent upon our level of consciousness. According to this degree, we are either master or victim of events. Evidence of mastery comes in two forms – the ability to make practical adjustments to situations, and the ability to make inner adjustments to self.

This is because there are times when our plans and wishes are completely at variance with the circumstances that befall us. At these times, if there is nothing to be done, then the master waits. All will be well soon enough.

The twin danger exists – to try to control what cannot be controlled, or to accept what should not be allowed. Working out which is which, in great detail, can really befuddle the mind. Then is the time to trust the heart. If the mind and heart cannot find mutual congruity, then something is significantly wrong – and we need to look more deeply into the incorruptible core of our being.

RESPITE: A BOAT LANDING WASHED AWAY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (15° - 16°)

Death is freedom – we should allow ourselves to surrender to force majeure occasionally

So much is said to support the rights of the individual, laws are made and codes of behaviour are proclaimed. Yet we need to understand that power can never be given, it can only ever be taken. We ourselves have to claim our selves – and resist challenges to our individuality.

The forces of nature are both awesome and impersonal – the stormy sea that washes away the petty creations of people doesn't even notice the stone-built quay it has unceremoniously destroyed when the winds blew on a full moon at high tide. On the face of it nature is rather unfriendly towards our species.

Yet below this superficial level, where natural occurrences are indicted as 'acts of God', we have to acknowledge that the only joy we ever feel is because we are challenged by nature and are thus able to find out that we measure up.

Not only that, surely nature's best law is entropy? It is appropriate to let die that which is no longer life-affirming; death is freedom. We are cleansed of the out-dated by this liberating process whereby natural processes of cosmic law wash away what cannot survive.

Otherwise how would we be stimulated to new accomplishment?

It is not healthy to push forward without ceasing – a respite allows for regrouping, assimilation of knowledge, and renewal of plans – in other words we should allow ourselves to surrender to *force majeure* occasionally, instead of indulging feelings of frustration and powerlessness.

Whatever we build will always be a dimension less than the perfection of nature. The occasional return to a pristine condition is as appropriate as it is inevitable.

RELAXATION: A RETIRED SEA CAPTAIN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (16° - 17°)

Finally, we learn to relax

This old salt has been around the world more times than he can remember – yet what he does remember he has not forgotten, and will never forget: he is absolutely faithful to the lessons learned through the countless bizarre and testing experiences of his life-journey. This is what makes him a little gritty in his interactions with others and if he participates in anything at all nowadays, then it is precisely on his terms.

He has but two states of being. In the one, he is completely focussed upon the matter at hand, and brings all factors of realization to bear down upon this immediate situation to resolve it. Otherwise his default condition is relaxation. He's like an on/off switch.

He has repeatedly commanded a ship's company through danger and feels justified now to enjoy his own reality on his terms. And he can.

We are all getting increasingly like him as the potentials of youth make way bit by bit for the wisdom and confidence that is inevitably bestowed upon an experienced master – the Celts would say 'a bull of 7 battles'.

We need to choose between resting on our laurels to contemplate a lifetime of failures, successes and adventures – or embarking upon something new. Either condition is quite relaxed because we have unshakeable poise, yet the more active one is better for our continued life development. While it is important to have aspirations, ambitions, dreams and adventures, perhaps it is a little more important to remember why we have them. Is there a purpose, a goal? What is the goal? And most appropriately, have we reached it? It is all too easy to keep on trying to attain something by force of habit, when in fact we have already arrived.

The unshakeable quality comes essentially from self-honesty. We have seen the dark sides of our nature and found them forgivable; we have also seen the glories, and found them unsustainable – so we make peace with ourselves. All else is graceless, and very tiring.

The last chapter of an adventure, the last chapter of life, is to do with completion. This is to do with integration of all that has been, and release of all that did not come about. Learning to relax is quite a paradoxical idea; yet required. If we are truly to find a measure of happiness, then at the end of the day, we need to align with who we are and find easy surrender to enjoy what there now is.

CONSEQUENCE: TWO MEN PLACED UNDER ARREST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (17° - 18°)

If we do not reconcile feelings with circumstances there are serious consequences for body and soul

A lot of pressure is exerted upon the individual to conform to external standards that have evolved to protect and express community values. Often this goes beyond reasonable training to a level that is a forceful denial of the individual's legitimate freedom of expression. It is important to understand that it is the responsibility of the individual to maintain and proclaim their own essential characteristics.

A person's role in the community and their role in life certainly overlap, but they do not entirely coincide. It is for the community to try to expand and dominate its environment, and for the individual to contain that expansion – with their legitimate attempt to expand their own reach. Thus the boundaries of an individual and of the community are ever in creative conflict – as is right and necessary for the expansive wellbeing of both.

Naturally much arises in the relaxed state – yet it is at times of school examinations, warfare and Olympic Games that we see the boundaries of the possible pushed back. Every talent requires, for its own optimization, the threat of annihilation, because conflict sponsors excellence. It is the creative power of friction, and potentials are only ever brought into immediate effective expression by it.

Being consistently who we are, is of great consequence; this cannot be overstated. The challenges we meet are nothing more than examinations by which we can identify our imperfections and raise ourselves up. By imperfection we simply mean any discrepancy between being and doing. In other words we are constantly struggling until we have learned to walk our talk; then life gets easier.

Our trials are the feedback that we haven't quite got it right yet. The existential, cosmic need for continual rebalancing expresses itself through us as a compulsion to reconcile our inner feelings with outer circumstances. consequences if we do not get it quite right

As the image suggests, there are serious consequences if we do not get it quite right – the agencies of authority stop us in our tracks. But we notice that there are two men arrested not just one. Urges towards individual expression are easily contained, yet when one is joined by another, society needs to take notice in case others join and revolutionary shifts begin to threaten.

Revolution and protest are normal aspects of community life, each serving the other's optimization and development. Individually we acknowledge the power of the state to stop everyone's personal agenda when it oversteps evolved lines of accepted behaviour. As an officer of the community, we have the duty to enforce – as well as the need to adapt to changes forced upon the status quo. From the one perspective – if we want greater freedoms we need to inspire our peers to join with us in protest. From the other – we must preserve the status quo until enough protest is made to reach critical mass and overturn the extant order. The power of the individual is mostly the power of persuasion and there are consequences if we claim the right to self-expression through other, more forceful, means. Force is the tool of the police, and actually that is what keeps community stability.

DIVERGENCE: A GANG OF ROBBERS IN HIDING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (18° - 19°)

Occasionally, we must assert our freedom against external threats

The image of robbers in hiding is almost certain to be judged as a negative. *'Robbers are criminals and they are hiding from justice'*. But there is another perspective – they could be part of the forces of revolutionary change that eventually will unseat a corrupt government. All depends upon what is in the consciousness of the gang.

There is a Sufi story. The local gang leader, who was also a dervish, attended his sheikh one day to ask for a spiritual practice. Asked what qualities he wanted to develop, the thug declared his desire for great command to dominate the region and expand his power-base. Kindly, the sheikh offered him the wazifas *Ya Mutakhabir Ya Qahhar*, to help overcome obstacles. Years later the Mafioso returned with a similar request to deal with personnel problems within his mob. He was offered *Ya Majid* this time, and began to take on an aristocratic demeanour. His followers fell into line, and he was able to expand his influence. Time passed, the country's wise old sultan died and was succeeded by his feeble, self-indulgent son. Inevitably, one day the realm was under attack, from an enemy tempted by the perceived weakness. By this time the dervish robber had perfected his skills, and was the only person capable of pulling together a military force. He defended his country and deposed the young inadequate sultan. He became the nation's legitimate and admired monarch, and saved his people.

There are occasions when authority's threat against individuality is a real and present danger against the core purpose of our existence. Demands against the person are a constant force enacted by laws and customs, and we have to be alert to every illegitimate or immoral threat if we are to maintain and celebrate freedom.

However, this has to be balanced with the quite reasonable expectation the community has to limit individual behaviour, at least to some extent, in order collectively to create something worthwhile. So a constant kneejerk mistrust of every imposed discipline is not appropriate.

Also, we have to be careful not to indulge too much a disturbing capacity to take any antisocial tendencies to the level of perversion. No gain will come by prostituting ourselves just to make a point.

The real challenge here is to learn to differentiate between intelligent, imaginative detours from normality, on the one hand, and unsustainable flights of fantasy, on the other. Our divergence from normal attitudes is a fact of life – yet it doesn't have to lead to unhappiness.

The goal is to locate a path into the future that is unique, sustainable and sacred. This takes great powers of initiative, the expectation of meeting and circumventing challenges, and the ability to shift perspectives in ourselves, and others. This degree is neither easy nor straightforward – the path of freedom never is.

HERITAGE: A JEWISH RABBI

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (19° - 20°)

A guide finds balance in masculine and feminine, tradition and intuition, spirituality and service

Some of us have a position in life – one that both requires and develops impressive self-assurance – to guide our fellows. This is a normal functionality of any community whereby a deeper understanding of our shared heritage is imparted, and faith is generally strengthened.

The person of the Jewish rabbi represents the force of masculinity that has become contoured by age. Each of us has this force and so, as the years go by, our inner being pushes out against social pressure to form a strongly-defined highly individuated character.

Yet the qualities and behaviour of the rabbi are more indicative of the feminine receptivity – as he gently ministrates kindness and care to all who come to him, distressed and needy.

It takes tremendous dedication to fulfil the task of guide. It is necessary to be an exemplar of both the masculine and the feminine, to hold alive the heritage in the modern era, and to serve.

A single person can become a special channel for the whole community's highest aspirations. It is implicit that the guide does what we would all do if only we could – in terms of service and spiritual remembrance.

There is, with this work, a real and constant danger at a very profound and subtle level. It is little understood that the temptations of ego grow in direct proportion to our level of influence – even as spiritual guides. We are tested to avoid the seduction of self-superiority, and very few pass the test.

What makes it worth the risk is the extraordinary insight that comes to those who are able to stand on the shoulders of the giants who have gone before. These guides are guided, both by tradition and intuition, to a special level of awareness, and ability to serve others.

EXHILARATION: A CROWD ON THE BEACH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in xxx

21ST DEGREE OF LIBRA (20° - 21°)

Being friendly and open, enjoying the simple life, is not stressful

Sometimes people tend to overthink. Certainly analysis has its place, but really we have a lot to gain just by noticing where we are and what we're doing. The raw elements of experience – I am hot, I am wet, I am hungry, I am on a beach, there is sand in my hair – are good places to start when we want to become more self-aware.

It's much the same with social questions – instead of trying to understand what this person or that person stands for or believes, we can simply be friendly, and express ourselves freely.

Then everyone on the beach is a friend. This expectation of the simple enjoyment of company can be very exhilarating and actually life-enhancing.

Beyond a reasonable degree of self-restraint and sensitivity to another's need for space, we find that a free-and-easy openness of expression is helpful in keeping our levels of emotional stress to a minimum.

It's not so helpful to expect others to provide entertainment and company for us – we are better bringing something of ourselves to the table as a way both to show cooperation and energize involvement.

That said, there are some beach-goers who are very loud and coarse. That kind of behaviour doesn't serve the community well.

Still, with the right attitude of mind we tend not to be too bothered by these types – we can join them in their fun, ask them to quiet down, or we can simply just move on. Why make it an issue? But it is worth asking ourselves sometimes if we are the coarse ones!

SOLICITUDE: A CHILD GIVING BIRDS A DRINK AT A FOUNTAIN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF LIBRA (21°- 22°)

Kindness and optimism are self-indicated strategies of joy

The child is giving water to birds because she enjoys serving their needs not for anything she expects to receive in return. It demonstrates the naive, uncompromising, faith in friendly relationships that characterize the world. It is this sacred quality of solicitude that brings about a deep feeling of wellbeing that we enjoy and desire.

It seems self-evident that self-fulfillment is our constant life-goal, yet somewhat counter-intuitive that service is a fast-track path to accomplish this goal – and of course here we are not discussing service as the superficial efforts expended for transient popularity, or ready exchange.

The child is an image of naive optimism. If we express the same level of creative concern for others, as children can so often do, then we can experience a sense of our spiritual immortality – rooted in innocence, indestructible through time, and in complete harmony with the needs of others.

This attitude inevitably leads to the discovery that there are always fruits of everyday life that justify the simple fact of selfhood. Just being who we are leads to fulfillment.

A developed person is not dependent upon outer circumstances for their inner feelings; satisfaction arises within and creates life events that please us – not the reverse.

With this level of attainment it is easy for us to cast our glance wherever we choose – and there find opportunities for joy.

Equally, the extent of our responsibilities is indicated by our own inner nature and sense of what needs to occur. Thus our duties are self-indicated not imposed. Providing a bird-bath in our garden is then paradoxically neither duty nor hobby – but both.

FERVOUR: A ROOSTER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF LIBRA (22° - 23°)

We succeed by making the world aware of the qualities that define us

The rooster image is often associated with conceit and bombast; these attitudes do not lead us anywhere helpful. In all likelihood they would generate resistance that could block our legitimate progress.

However, we do need to make known to the world the qualities, skills and aspirations that define us. This will lead to practical rewards as we learn to make effective use of our own unique and distinctive merits.

The struggle to achieve an appropriate place in life is deeply meaningful, and bestows enduring significance at the level of soul. At times the ego needs to risk the loss of grace as it crows a little to announce the soul's purpose.

When taken to an immoderate degree, such behaviour may well become inelegant, and threaten our social stability – yet, when we are motivated by the fervour of self-disclosure, such concerns are of secondary importance.

In fact, very often fearless self-disclosure is enough to win the minds and hearts of others whom we seek to influence. It certainly secures attention, and possibly allegiance too, and these are both concomitants to success.

It is a very special person who is able to live by, and proclaim, their own unique set of ideas and values untarnished by social niceties and the demoralising imposition of community disapproval. We have our own insights and discernments – and the soul establishes its basic integrity in life only when these are assumed to be enough for each and every one of the situations we encounter.

With such integrity, it is very likely that our social role, and how we conduct our affairs, will go generally unchallenged. So we are able to create a smooth, satisfying and utterly authentic life path.

DISTINCTIVENESS: THIRD WING ON LEFT SIDE OF BUTTERFLY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (23° - 24°)

Our unique qualities distinguish us from the norm and add to the richness of society

This speaks to the importance in life for us to hold firm to the distinctiveness of who and what we are unconditionally – even if that makes us extraordinarily unusual.

By cherishing our own particularities, we sharpen our acuity of perception towards our social group, and we then see more clearly. We see not only the opportunities that come from differentiation, but also the underlying affinities beneath the differences.

These quirks of character are the treasures of human life – the fruits of previous choices and realizations – that have practical value.

They indicate, incontrovertibly, the exact contours of our specific idealized standpoint. Not only that, the process by which we reach such a specific life-statement brings out an ability to assess situations and respond with originality.

What use are we to humanity if we cannot add something original and idealistic? The potentiality of the world, and of our species, will only ever be acted out through individuals.

So many people invest themselves within trite attitudes, and become obsessed with impoverished or ridiculous ideas and worthless occupations. They blame the harshness of life self-pityingly, instead of forging ahead meaningfully.

We must trust that our destiny will reveal itself to us if only we would let it. Surely we can be intuitively aware that our fate is not to suffer a pointless, uninspiring path of failure and regret?

TACT: INFORMATION IN THE SYMBOL OF AN AUTUMN LEAF

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (24° - 25°)

Everyone has their meaningful place in life

A fallen leaf seen tactfully is not a waste product of the tree's summer need for the Sun's energy; it has become food for the earth and a source of joy and inspiration for those touched by natural beauty. Somehow this unswerving fidelity, to honour everything and everyone for their ultimate goals and meanings, creates a sense of being able to adapt spontaneously to all that comes along, trusting in our own sense of how best to serve the needs of this moment simply by being who we are without censorship or external reference.

That special ability we have, to know how to respond imaginatively to challenges, can be directed towards the greater questions so that we come to see how, exactly how, all things are interconnected by the process of mutual exchange – that all of the various aspects of life have their own contribution, and mutuality is the universal currency of survival and abundance.

On the human level, it is tact that awakens this comprehension, since through it we look for ways to show appreciation of the value that another person brings. It is much more than a simple courtesy or charming elegance, because it raises both giver and receiver. Our sensitivity develops so that we always keep in mind the intended final purpose of a situation, a person, or thing and, by so doing, offer greater recognition.

Our capacity to think things through, to consult inner experience and intuition, and to find imaginative solutions, is so often wasted on new ways to make the same old mistakes.

Whereas the constant practice of the art of tact will unfailingly generate the inner understanding that all things are inter-dependent; in every case there is symbiosis between the individual and the world.

On a personal level we then develop the efficient means to serve ourselves and others simultaneously and accordingly grow in our influence to shape events. To serve the world, to serve a neighbour and to serve ourselves are therefore equivalent and mutual activities.

Humanity's intelligence is so often misspent by engaging in unbridled fascination with trivia. We need to focus more on the way that sometimes someone contributes in small ways, and accept that they are doing what they do in their own way and usually better than we ever could – and, even if we don't know how or why, accept that their contribution is an essential part of the whole picture.

ADEPTNESS: AN EAGLE AND A LARGE WHITE DOVE TURNING INTO ONE ANOTHER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (25° - 26°)

The position of the adept is above emotionality; immediate pleasures are subordinated to ultimate ideals

There is a point of consciousness above duality, where neither this, nor that, dominates. It is the position of the adept. Above emotionality, from this perspective we can see clearly the options available to us before we descend into committed choice. Then we become able to choose eagle or dove – hunter or peace bringer – and readily change from one to the other.

In every moment, our general state of affairs is the immediate reality of what choice we are making – and we need to take on fully our responsibility for that. What we get is what we choose to get – eagle or dove.

There can be an unhappy vacillation between two sides of our nature – the one represents our ultimate ideals, while the other is more interested in our immediate pleasures.

The extent to which we can cope with this vacillation is the extent of how well we control our fate. Every action we take must serve our own true interests – short or long term – if we are to become real masters.

Adeptness is the image of exceptional personal endowment to meet each and every situation and turn it to our own creative solutions to all difficulties, and grasping of all opportunities in human experience.

Whatever frustrations we feel when we cannot shape matters along idealized lines of development must be addressed internally. This is done by revisiting the mind's place of neutral clear-sightedness and taking stock.

We must notice any imperfections in our state of ultimate indifference. Whatever ideals we are attached to will certainly bind us to the frustrations of the earth, so we have to hone our self-discipline to root out any irrationality or emotionality that clouds our path to supreme indifferent happiness.

REFLECTION: AN AEROPLANE HOVERING OVERHEAD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (26° - 27°)

Overview sponsors good judgement by seeing things in terms of their likely consequences

Some people have a complete inability to attend to immediate realities, and somehow they just bumble along not really engaging with the truth of the situation or matter at hand. Others, having acquired proficiency in self-adjustment, become very adept in dealing effectively with crises.

Clearly, which of these types we are depends a lot upon having a resourceful character – with a broad and deep palette of imagination that enables appropriate creativity.

In this image the aeroplane hints at overview, which is a perspective that sponsors reflection. The idea here is that we can get a fuller and more workable sense of any situation by seeing scenes and scenarios in terms of their likely consequences, and their relationship to other things.

In life, this higher level of real intelligence is won through encounter and contemplation; consequently we need to allow for that in our attitude or approach, and how we adjust to circumstances. So even when we don't want what we get, as a resourceful person we will chalk it all up to experience and find a way to profit – for example by accumulating wisdom.

As we test our new understandings, in the normal trial and error processes of life, we project our imagination onto the field of potential. Imagination is a creative force; it creates the future, and its reach is never-ending. Thus, in one sense, we become immortal beings by being the author of, and so part of, whatever occurs down the line eternally as a result of our projects.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the human species has an impressive degree of psychological maturity within its range of behaviour. We can anticipate consequences, we can appreciate other viewpoints, and we can discipline ourselves to defer personal gratification for the greater good.

A very high level of satisfaction is felt when we get even a taste of this advanced state of being. There are certain moments when we can touch within ourselves the place that resonates with the highest – then, perhaps just for an instant, we have the capacity to know the quintessence of human potential.

RESPONSIVENESS: MAN IN THE MIDST OF BRIGHTENING INFLUENCES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (27° - 28°)

Life is a pilgrimage from darkness to light guaranteeing enduring rewards to the faithful

Man in the midst of brightening influences is a symbol of our responsiveness to an inner sense of hope.

We should avoid wishful thinking, when it is unadorned by accurate reflection on the facts of the matter, and absent of the will to achieve, because it leads to stultification of the self. Yet confidence in the certainty of a good outcome, peace after the storm, is a valid spiritual principle.

To raise this impulse to its highest level at which it is useful, one simply has to accept the positive evidence that beneath all the sham, the world at large has an underlying fundamental friendliness. This engenders, even in the cautious soul, a sense that the world itself is a nurturing and encouraging place in which to act out our ideas and fancies. It can be counted on; trust will be rewarded with success.

The pilgrimage, from darkness to light, requires us to press forward with unflagging courage, safe in the knowledge that the journey itself is its own reward – yet also aware that detachment from outcomes is actually what ensures a successful result.

When taken seriously on its own terms, life guarantees enduring rewards. Wishy-washy won't work, and really we wouldn't want it anyway because we get so much more from a life that fittingly rewards courage and clarity. Our intuitively derived principles of justice require that brave, clear-minded individuals are suitably valued.

With this cosmic law operating, we see that our moods and potentialities are fairly and accurately reflected by the particulars and atmosphere of our circumstances. This is a deeply satisfying improvement on the alternative – something-for-nothing – and it is the ground upon which is built spiritual integrity.

Since all are subject to the same ruthlessly applied natural laws, what develops in the responsive soul – who sees all suffering as fair yet heartrending – is the deepest level of compassionate wisdom and a feeling of spiritual fellowship with all beings.

RATIONALITY: HUMANITY SEEKING TO BRIDGE THE SPAN OF KNOWLEDGE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (28° - 29°)

Meaning comes when we find the pattern that connects the various aspects of our lives.

We gain knowledge by bridging the gap between the known and the unknown. And each individual's faith, in their own powers of reasoning, generally proves itself when they connect with a different world or culture, as they seek to further their range of experience.

We all have special gifts, and our lives represent the rationality of our belief in those unique gifts. As we present these talents and understandings to the world, we require some recognition. We want to be valued for our skills and insight.

We need to remember that our desire for achievement, and realization, is only effectively made manifest through activity that aligns with our essence. This naturally calls for the dramatization of our fullest potential in every direction within our circle of influence.

The perfecting of wisdom cannot take place out of context – in order to be wisdom, it needs to be applied in practice. There is a clear relationship between cause and result, one which obeys laws of rationality, and to gain knowledge of what our experiences mean, then we have to join the dots, and find the pattern that connects the various aspects of our lives.

This is a symbol of humanity's capacity to make a very practical instrument for measuring our accumulated experience in terms of wisdom – for every inspiring or unusual contribution we might choose to make.

Egotism needs to be kept in check – too much of it belittles or defeats even normal accomplishment. Even though a strong healthy ego is a prerequisite to attainment, there are dangers in going too far with this aspect of the psyche.

The final mystery of knowledge is not so much the answering of all our questions, but the very disappearance of questioning. For this to occur, it means that we have to let go of any intention to persuade ourselves or others, and just know what we know without the need to have it approved or even necessarily heard.

PRESCIENCE: THREE MOUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE ON A PHILOSOPHER'S HEAD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF LIBRA (29° - 30°)

Seeing the future requires and accurate appraisal of the past

The philosopher metaphor points to our human faculty for analytical thinking, and the three mounds of knowledge can be seen as our skills, allegiances and ideals. These are the aspects of mind that formulate our perceptions, and upon them we build our structures of reality.

What may be, and what must be, are different qualities of the future and are, to some extent, knowable. We develop an exceptional gift to further our designs when we learn how to extrapolate patterns from the past to gain knowledge of the future.

This ability, called prescience, is quite normal – and applied routinely by those who hold on to a balanced way of life, where instinct and thought are together used cooperatively. We would be wrong to believe that philosophers have small regard for intuition – however, as disciplined thinkers they confirm their feelings with rational thought.

The challenge we all have is to progress to an optimal expression of being, the perfection of self. In this state, we can read the flow of our lives and we come to see how there is a dynamic integrity – a reliable code that informs all that unfolds.

It is an aspect of a universal code, the cosmic order, which interpenetrates us and everything else, forever. Everything we are, and all that we experience, is a part of this unfolding complex vibration. We gain insight into its secrets only when we study what has gone before with impeccable, unattached clarity of mind.

Grasping this brings with it a very seductive sense of wellbeing, even superiority and hubris – so we must be on the lookout for signs of fatuous intellectual pride. It is rather an ugly condition of so many scientists and philosophers that they remain self-obsessed despite their awakening to the reality that knowledge is infinite and therefore, finally, unknowable. Humility seems a more appropriate response, given how little we know of what there is to know. For some reason people generally make the claim that their understanding of this code is as valid as anyone else's – even though they lack the diligence and intellect needed to penetrate the biggest mystery of all. Low-level scientists, politicians and religionists make their claims and govern the world, yet so often fall short of the appropriate skills, allegiances and ideals to be worthy of this duty.

Since everything is always in alignment with the universal, eternal code, nothing is ever wrong. Wars and famine, disease and injustice all have their correct place in the order – yet it takes a truly wise and exceptionally mature person to understand why it must be so.



SCORPIO

PASSION / EXPLORATION / SECURITY / UNVEILING / MAGNETISM / INVOLVEMENT

Embracing death to the false, rebirth into truth, transformed, I release myself totally into full awareness

Scorpio is passion; its deep emotions are often deliberately intensified, and gut instincts and psychic sensitivity are very strong. Always penetrative and sometimes invasive, it feels a compelling fascination with the seamier side of life, where destruction and creativity meet together. This allows for a sense of alchemical power – a transmutative force between attraction and repulsion – and a mysterious insight into human psychology. It can be unashamedly sexual, yet its renowned personal magnetism is independent of physical beauty.

The survival instinct and the religious instinct connect at the deepest level of the psyche. The luxury to delve into the life's meaning is afforded only to those who survive, and have the emotional balance to see the truth. Scorpio's first concern is to establish an impregnable position both materially and emotionally – often taking uncontroversial positions of responsibility and then steadily building increasingly firm foundations to secure basic needs against all threats. Its influence is formidable, mostly projected behind the scenes, and backed up with hidden reserves. Best suited to a defensive role as guardian or protector, it fights ruthlessly in business, law or the military. It is resistant to distraction and, as a strategy of power, instinctively secretive.

Secured in its fortress, it reaches out on a journey of exploration. This serves both instincts – and we see how in essence they are two sides of the same coin. Imagining all credible dangers and safeguarding against worst-case scenarios is a mind-set utterly suitable to explore the mysteries. So much false doctrine has been shovelled into human consciousness that it takes a mental surgeon to cut gangrenous rot away to reveal truth and discover wisdom. With real grit, Scorpio makes its mission a journey to probe the squalid depths of human psychology, identify the filth, and report honestly about the infected elements that must be purged.

The ability to secure a safe place attracts the trust of others – so that deep involvements are possible; this can be family, social or occupational, and demands commitment and loyalty, or else the need to seek redress becomes darkly compulsive. To find the safest position, Scorpio reaches out with highly sensitive emotional antennae, to gauge how best to respond to the atmospheric undercurrents. From this is learned how all things interconnect – and that in fact trust can operate subtly to support personal security. This is because the connection is subtle, not physical, so influence must also be non-physical to be optimal. If we are to develop any real power, it is entirely necessary to be aware of this. Scientists may not have found a way to measure this power – but most people have. It is called charisma or magnetism, is felt within someone's personality and shows as self-confidence, sex appeal, sparkling intelligence – basically, animal vitality and spiritual light.

A sublime sense of freedom and power unfolds with this understanding that the background stuff of any situation is atmosphere, and it is mysterious. Yet there is a point of consciousness above either freedom or power – a choice point where passion is born. We can learn to choose freedom, and thus surrender power – or to choose power and give up our freedom. However, at the point of passion we do not descend into its expression as either freedom or power, but simply vibrate passion as such. This is the exaltation of sexuality, of beauty, of truth and of Self. It is the ultimate safe space.

SCORPIO WISDOM

PASSION

Spirit is limitless in its ability to find and profit from new perspectives
Each moment we experience is a creative outpouring of self
Our contact with others is profound and shapes our destiny
To show our light we have to overcome fear
The workings of human emotions are mysterious, unpredictable and sometimes overwhelming

EXPLORATION

Possibility is made known by those who creatively reach out and make claims
Deep involvement in life comes from plumbing the depths of our experiences
Soul empathy creates a powerful, subtle influence
We are required to make known to the world our best sacred vision
Society is the context for self-expression

SECURITY

Projecting faith into the future makes us safe from danger
Loyalties enable us to experience devotion
Nothing we ever encounter is beyond our ability to deal with
Higher intelligence is responsible for lower
Being true to oneself is paramount in all things

UNVEILING

Acquiescence is not self-betrayal when it reveals wisdom and promotes harmony
Anarchy is the enlightened behaviour of a self-realized being who needs no master
The fruit contains the seed
Public conventionality promotes general stability; personal ideals are a private matter
The soul is courageous and free, its essence-stuff is the spirit of daring

MAGNETISM

Through inner awareness the power of the individual transcends the power of society
Self-determination arises from specificity of desire and unremitting fortitude
Imagination is the transition of consciousness that can endow anything with profound meaning
To influence the many, words of inspiration must sparkle with magnetism
Knowledge serves humanity as much as we serve knowledge

INVOLVEMENT

When we have learned how to seek, then we have discovered how to find
It is poor life management to defer to social pressure to be commonplace
We must focus the creative mind only on what we want to come to pass
We must balance what we want with what society wants, and trust this process
Our inner jester challenges authority and upholds our unorthodox spiritual understandings

THE EXPRESSIONS OF SCORPIO

PASSION

SCORPIO 1 – 5

When life force is allowed to flow freely between two polarities, the result is passion. These polar extremes could well be man and woman in sex, but it applies to everything at all times. Passion is worthwhile for its own sake, because this is how energy moves – there is no other way that life can be dynamic; it is the essence of existence. Life is passionate; the birth of life is passionate, made obvious with the Big Bang theory, in childbirth, and in sex. So if we want to get to the secret of life itself, we must allow passion to overwhelm us.

Passion overrides all else, with no regard for analysis or comprehension. It is evidenced in violence, in orgasm, in enthusiasm and in awe – and if we do not know passion, then we cannot know the depths of soul. Disdaining trivia, finding the highest potential in any situation, the person of passion is ever-resourceful – because they've learned the secret of how to align with cosmic, existential excitement. Having mastered control, the possibility of complete surrender becomes feasible; having mastered security, the possibility of complete trust becomes feasible – so natural urges and spiritual ecstasy are in total accord.

EXPLORATION

SCORPIO 6 – 10

When what is said and what is true differ, then the foundation of our life is false and insecurity results, so a cautious person will test a situation to examine its truth fully. It is not entirely neurotic to goad another to find out how they react; such provocation may seem to lack good sense in the moment – but as a long term strategy it has some merit. It is only really possible fully to trust someone when you have had a set-to with them, and come out the other side with nothing more serious than hurt feelings and a bruised ego.

Exploration takes us into new areas of experience where we may find the need to mobilize hidden resources, and through this, we can uncover an innate creative genius that finds answers to all challenges. Whether they are to do with dealing elegantly with someone's emotional process, or safely moving heavy objects from here to there, a careful, fail-safe attitude is useful. Life is a real treasure in both outer and inner aspects – the physical and the psychological – and each realm responds to our deeper exploration with pearls of wisdom and the certainty of personal evolution.

SECURITY

SCORPIO 11 – 15

We are very vulnerable – that simple fact determines so much of our lives and our choices. We are puny when measured against ordinary natural forces, and we only manage to thrive when we collaborate with others. Perhaps the riskiness of life and the miracle of survival are often forgotten, yet when we do remember, then it makes so much more sense to attend fully to the matter of core importance – security. It may well be an advanced spiritual principle to trust and surrender but it is equally an enlightened material principle not to. As the Sufis say *“Trust in God, but tie your camel.”* Let us also note that security is as much a feeling as it is a configuration of physical circumstances. A surfeit of wealth can be amassed yet we all know that it is not dependable. What is trustworthy is the sense of being stable within a circle of mutually inter-dependent helpful, reliable neighbours and associates. Staunch adherence to social norms is a strategy to create such emotional wealth that stands up in hard times and generates a deep inner condition of anxiety-free wellbeing.

UNVEILING

SCORPIO 16 – 20

As long as we are hiding something, then we are vulnerable. The final level of self-assurance is evidenced by the willingness to expose everything allowing whatever comes to do its worst. All polarities are illusion – and false unless the reconciling third energy is identified. Good and bad, birth and death, existence and non-existence – these are secondary realities born of the prime causes: duality, phenomenal life and transcendent truth. On a personal level, simply put, it is impossible to unveil ourselves without unveiling the world at large – as indeed the mysteries of the world cannot be made known to anyone who stubbornly resists a radical process of self-inspection. By this alone can we become firm in our principles, firm in our resolve to deepen awareness, and firm in our commitments to society. Such a straightforward approach to life bestows spiritual authority and a mysterious power of insight into the secrets of other people and the affairs of the world.

MAGNETISM

SCORPIO 21 – 25

Sufis teach that it is not space-time that connects things; it is light. The understanding is that reality is more than physicality – that the material world is a mirror of a more subtle dimension of existence. In that world the shaping of scenarios is carried out with ‘light’ – or energy. Many people are aware of this – to them it is self-evident; others scoff because they have no such awareness. It has many of the qualities of electricity and it is by no means unreasonable to refer to it as magnetism. When someone knows what to do to stimulate an effect using subtle methods, then they are often described as having magnetism. It is most obviously present in those who are comfortable with certain taboos – such as manipulation, sexuality, power and truth.

Truth is a spiritual principle – an ideal that emerges by degrees as we quest for answers. And the question has more relevance than the answer, since questions are real and answers are ideal. If we approach life with this awareness, we become increasingly more self-sufficient on the level of emotion. Somehow we learn that nothing outside ourselves will ever satisfy – that questions need to be dissolved, rather than addressed, and dealt with inwardly. Friends and associate recognize this spiritual station of self-containment and find it appealing – so they radiate appreciation and admiration. To those who know how, these are qualities that can be harvested and stored as magnetism. When converted into charisma this shows as charm and influence.

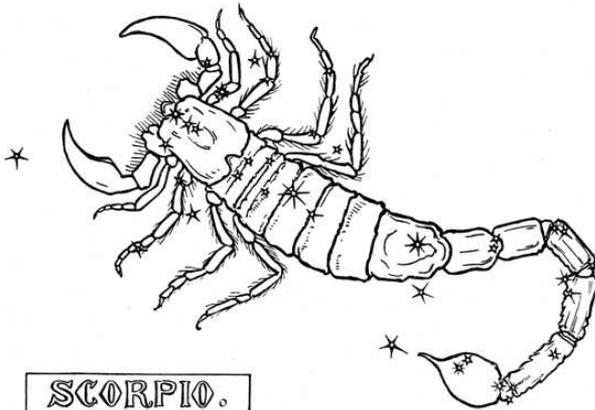
INVOLVEMENT

SCORPIO 26 – 30

Scorpio is made for involvement – intense, long term, transformative, passionate commitment. Without it, life feels shallow, false and untrustworthy, whereas involvements impact permanently upon our situations and character. There is some inner resistance – a voice advising that to be alone is more secure – and yet the fascination to engage is paramount. This indicates naive trust in life, a reckless, courageous disregard for self-preservation, and great strength of purpose drawn from knowing about the deepest workings of the world.

There is also a sincere willingness to offer skills and insights to the community. What we do for ourselves serves the whole; that’s how everything works. We are all interconnected, and this mystery makes itself known most readily to those who give themselves fully to whatever it is they choose to do. Intuitively it is seen that, for the deepest emotional attachments, vulnerability must be reciprocated; so in a strange way Scorpio needs to be simultaneously dependent, dependable and in control. These are mutually inconsistent states for most people, yet somehow it is made possible – and how this works is the mystery of the sign.

PLANETS IN SCORPIO



SUN in Scorpio (♏)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 266 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Scorpio (♏)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

With Moon in Scorpio, you will probably access the Sabian Symbol mystery best through deep reflection, becoming increasingly faithful to your reliable intuition. An unrelenting need for emotional security and stillness empowers this moon to bring passionate feelings under tight control – for self and special others. Yet the examination of this ability to control must constantly be re-enacted to bring reassurance – so there is often a provocative attitude that seeks to goad, and bring out the dark side of people. For others, this can be either emotionally threatening or else perceived as irresistibly exciting, seductive charisma.

MERCURY in Scorpio (♏)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

In the profound, passionate sign of Scorpio, this planet's mercurial aspirations are channelled towards an understanding of the deepest undercurrents of feeling that inform exchanges between people. Wisdom is realistic, truthful, confronting and revealing – communicated very carefully, where atmosphere and tone are centrally important.

VENUS in Scorpio (♏)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Passionate, sexual, seductive and dangerous, yet incomparably loyal and devoted, when in Scorpio Venus is best able to show how powerful beauty is. To open the veil of this enigma is to open Pandora's box. The Sabian degree is likeliest to become clearly observable only in the bedroom or in extremely passionate works of creativity.

MARS in Scorpio (♂♏)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

In Scorpio, Mars takes no prisoners. It is absolute, determined and potentially ruthless because it carries out unwelcome tasks that require a surgeon's clarity and courage. Sometimes to save the leg we must lose the foot. It does battle reluctantly and is well-prepared, but once engaged will not turn away until matters are entirely decided.

JUPITER in Scorpio (♃♏)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

There is a near limitless appetite to explore the meaning within the darker side of life when Jupiter is in Scorpio. Such people bring the light of understanding and acceptance to issues normally taboo such as sex, death, abuse and extreme emotions. This brings both healing and wisdom, and can be rewarded with an atmosphere of great maturity and poise.

NORTH NODE in Scorpio (♁♏)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

An all-or-nothing approach to spiritual development takes the path of passionate involvement in matters of concern to the soul. The North Node shows our biggest life challenge, as the South Node – in Taurus – shows the resources we have readily available to apply to the task in hand.

SATURN in Scorpio (♄♏)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Saturn is extremely serious in Scorpio and has the power to insist that boundaries are kept. It becomes darkly emotional when intrusion threatens, and can create a psychic wall to defend and protect. There is little room for casual or half-hearted interaction, yet a rock-solid reliability and considerable dignity of being.

CHIRON in Scorpio (♆♏)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

Sexuality is strongly featured, and at first not easily embraced. Yet as the deeper mysteries unfold, of death, of loss, and of truth, Chiron's hunger for absolute honesty reaches culmination in Scorpio and can bring intimacy to a truly transcendental state of union.

SCORPIO – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

FRIENDLINESS: A SIGHT-SEEING BUS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF SCORPIO (0° - 1°)

Spirit is limitless in its ability to find and profit from new perspectives

At every juncture, life present two fundamental choices – one path one is authentic, the other on some level is false. We can be freed from all artificial experiences by exercising care of choice and clarity of identity. Such behaviour ensures we do not lose the self either in wasteful expenditures or lost opportunity.

There may be boundaries within which we operate, yet these do not diminish our range of experience; they simply focus it. Spirit is limitless in its ability to find, exchange, and profit from new perspectives with others.

Friendliness can lead to friendship, empathy and sympathy. Sight-seeing, which often leads to an expansion of perception through culture shock, leads to awakenings. Going sight-seeing together with a friend therefore is a good way to deepen our understandings.

As we are carried along the meandering journey of our lives, opportunities come and go quite quickly – and to seize the moment requires more than just intelligence. Yes, if a balanced judgement is to be achieved, there has to be a significant degree of detachment – yet we also need to sponsor passionate enthusiasm to strike out fast and certain.

The combination of a clear mind, and an open, ardent heart, creates a strong approach towards exploration – and consequential gifts of richness and variation.

Further, this combination enables us to respond sensitively to developments, in order to recover from difficulties and distractions. This is achieved by re-ordering how we see the present moment, in order to gain insights into what future possibilities are available.

Life then becomes a constant source of engaging scenarios to which we can relate thoroughly – both in innocence and in considered strength.

PERMEATION: A BROKEN BOTTLE AND SPILLED PERFUME

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF SCORPIO (1°- 2°)

Each moment we experience is a creative outpouring of self

The image of a broken bottle is similar to a chrysalis, being burst open. To some this might appear as tragedy – yet we need to remember the bigger picture. We have within us something more precious that can only permeate into the world when we crack open our container.

Every person has a mark of divine determination to be significant at all costs. This irrevocability of self-expression is so fixed that the more esoteric spiritual traditions are based on the near-impossible task of ego surrender, as the greatest of all challenges.

In any and every experience, the completeness of self flows out, and the ramifications of that will spread further and further into our world.

Each event and interaction is therefore a creative outpouring of selfhood, utterly faithful in its legitimate rendering of who and what we are. This is most clearly demonstrated during crises, and other times of real issue. Then what is shown is our power of influence – how we impact upon others in a more permanent way.

Like a rose, our most beautiful quality is our fragrance – the subtle influence that spreads out universally, no matter what we say or do. When we live with a supreme dedication to this higher, spiritual, aspect of ourselves, then we optimize the beauty and the power of our influence.

It may seem that breaking the container of our lives – for example by surrendering control – will threaten our security. Yet this is a false and fearful interpretation. Nothing as hard and inflexible as a fixed ego will endure; it must crack one day. It's better to face up to that certainty and deal with the consequences, consciously in our own time.

Otherwise, like spilled perfume, we waste our lives in a witless dissipation of every resource and potential, always at risk and never fulfilled.

HELPFULNESS: A HOUSE RAISING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF SCORPIO (2° - 3°)

Our contact with others is profound and shapes our destiny

Conditions must be right for us as individuals to fit into fixed patterns of shared relationship. Such a profound investment of emotional energy, time and attention, needs great care and caution since it will inevitably influence the future of our self-assessment.

This is because we seek to fulfil our inherent divinity within the scope of relationship with our fellows. Individual realization is entirely dependent upon this, so contact with others is not seen as trivial and of little consequence; it shapes destiny.

A person's gain mostly depends upon the strengthening of effort, and a boosting of such effort so often arises when the spirit of common enterprise promotes joy in the individual.

Also the power of accomplishment is significantly dependent upon enlisting the cooperative support and practical help of others, as best exemplified by the communal practice of house-raising, the normal activity of rural American communities.

People are generally like this; they have an indomitable spirit of cooperation in everyday matters that binds them together into a strong survival unit.

Our sense of wellbeing derives from this. There is sure dependency that family and friends will rally round in an emergency in the normal, and completely trustworthy, spirit of helpfulness.

Within this seemingly mundane pragmatism is hidden a truly spiritual aspect. We subsume personal preferences and agendas to the greater good of the whole so a shared sense of unity arises during such activities.

RELIANCE: YOUTH HOLDING UP A CANDLE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (3° - 4°)

To show our light we have to overcome fear

Living in the physical world presents constant challenges that press us to get to grips with quite compelling realities. The naiveté of youth comes head to head with the harsh truth of having to keep the wolf from the door. Whatever we have as a visionary life strategy will fail if it is impractical.

To learn how it all works means that we have not to be self-obsessed. That is a luxury of childhood, and simply will not do for a viable independent adult life. The ability to relate to others properly is a survival requirement; it demands that we take into account the wants and needs of our friends and neighbours.

Through these dealings we are tested to hold on to our essential goodness and innocence, at all costs affirming lightness of being when cynicism threatens. If we place reliance upon our own ability to do this, then others will come to rely upon us that we will always hold up a candle rather than fear and blame the darkness.

Each single interaction with each and every person in each particular moment is of some consequence. On some mysterious level, a pulse is energized by all aspects of our lives, a vibration which goes out and re-echoes throughout eternity. In this way we come to know something of our immortality. In essence, nothing that was ever alive can ever die, even on the level of thought and feeling.

So we raise our light to the outer world; this is done not only to proclaim but also to remember. We have to overcome fear or reluctance to show our light, since by showing it we keep it alive and even influence others to keep their light shining. A lighted candle touches our sense of sacred, it cheers and inspires people.

The main thing in all this is to know how to raise up even mundane connections with situations and people. Gold can be found hidden beneath the dross of everyday life – a higher meaning that is evidence of universal, eternal, all-pervasive, spirit. It rises to the surface whenever two or more people engage with as much sensitivity to the other's viewpoint as to their own values.

The inner experience of such interactions can awaken our awareness of another reality; it is ever-present yet rarely invoked – the sense of transcendence. This aspect of life, though entirely natural and ever accessible, is nonetheless non-ordinary. The highest within us connects to the highest there is, and for a few moments we get a sense of the interconnectedness of all things throughout eternity.

STABILIZATION: A MASSIVE ROCKY SHORE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (4° - 5°)

The workings of human emotions are mysterious, unpredictable and sometimes overwhelming

Oceans are powerful images that help us comprehend the mysterious workings of human emotions. They are unpredictable, overwhelming at times, unceasingly changing – and almost uncontainable. Yet the massive rocky shore does contain them, as indeed does the essential reliability of physicality contain our feelings and bring the comfort of certainty.

Lacking such certainty, we would incline towards blind conservatism – clinging to the past, eyes tightly clenched, desperately hoping that at least things will get no worse.

Life requires us to maintain constant vigilance throughout eternity so that we are staunch to our heart-felt values. We reaffirm a path of happiness, trusting that this, our optimistic approach to the uncertainties contained within the future, will steer us true.

We know that the extent to which we may legitimately trust the future is measured by our ability to bring stability to situations. Such stabilization requires that inwardly we control our feelings and cultivate poise. This requires – and therefore develops – great firmness of personality.

External circumstances can be managed with aplomb when we have learned to centre our sense of reality inwardly. It is we ourselves who must be stabilized – all depends on this.

Then, however dynamic we choose to be in the world, life will respond to us with its characteristic physical reliability. The inner poise of spirit becomes reflected in the dependability of matter.

We come to experience in life whatever we are within. Strangely, and yet unfailingly, we find the possibility of personal exaltation within this. It matters not whether we have joy, as long as we have ourselves – the joy comes from the integrity of the reflection itself. If life is a mirror of what is within us, then we are in control. If things get too difficult, then we must exert prodigious effort to strengthen our will and certainly reclaim the all-important feeling of stability.

AMBITION: A GOLD RUSH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (5° - 6°)

Possibility is made known by those who creatively reach out and make claims

Let's first make the observation that gold-rush greed is a distortion of a quality – and it is a great danger risked by those who have ambition. Yet ambition itself has positive aspects – the urge towards self-disclosure and self-improvement. The world's possibilities are made known by those who reach out and re-create them.

It is easy for us to determine that appetite itself is wrong – but typically it is those unable to achieve wealth that make such a determination. People who rush towards the opportunity for superabundance are freely expressing an almost universal drive towards betterment.

How can we really doubt that material abundance is an aspect of achievement – since evidence of this is all around us? Genuine enterprise is the outpouring of enthusiasm and appreciation of plenty, and typically it wins its own rewards.

We are challenged by life – and this is our great good fortune, because otherwise we would not and could not evolve. That which pulls us through the trials is so often the prospect of reward. The greater benefit is in personal development, yet the motivation is frequently more venal.

It shows intelligence when we direct our attention and energy in pursuit of a goal, and it shows initiative when we exploit natural resources to achieve our ends and fulfil our desires.

Any lack of discrimination, an irresistible desire for easy money, and indeed any unbalance between taking and giving, needs to be carefully considered and addressed. Ecology is the study of sustainability – and applies on a personal level as well as global. If we are out of kilter, then certainly our health will suffer – whether mental, emotional or physical, or indeed all three.

A deeper contemplative approach to this question shows how we rail against superficiality and denial of potential. We feel as gods – we want what we want. Instinctively we expect fulfilment as a given – and yet the world generally speaks through the language of scarcity and disappointment. It is altogether healthier if we choose to be independent of this sickness of pessimism, and strike out seeking our fortune.

INVOLVEMENT: DEEP-SEA DIVERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (6° - 7°)

Deep involvement in life comes from plumbing the depths of our experiences

The relatively recent focus on the hidden workings of the mind, in psychotherapy, shows how we all have aspects of our personality that we are reluctant, often afraid, to examine. The image of a diver conveys the sense of one who is truly willing to get to the bottom of emotional questions. This impulse indicates a person of true integrity.

Such an enthusiasm to plumb the watery depths of all emotional experience, on the most inward levels, will inevitably lead to an intensity of involvement with life.

Self-fulfilment is the result of pursuing this approach with an insatiable appetite. Problems are no longer obstacles; they are grist for the mill.

We rise to them, joyfully testing our skills and seeking ever more demanding examinations to test and evolve them.

All relationships and scenarios then hold unlimited scope for self-improvement and we welcome each as an opportunity for further expansion of our horizons.

Persistence on this course of action leads us to a very insightful perception of people and their reasons for being and doing. We can penetrate the vital core of human motive and make-up.

This is not a popular approach to life, and can lead us to become disliked and, in response to this, rather antisocial. The tendency towards escapism exists – we look so deeply into our own unique universe, that we can get a little lost and unworldly. For a while this is acceptable – yet it must not be allowed to become a life-path.

RAPPORT: THE MOON SHINING ACROSS A LAKE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (7° - 8°)

Soul empathy creates a powerful, subtle influence

Some would see as magic the special atmosphere generated by natural forces such as moonlight reflected on a lake, where all aspects of a scenario find mutual rapport. Others would recognize that in fact eternal harmony is the outer expression of an enduring inner rapport, an alignment with our higher selves, which can be harnessed and made to work according to our will.

Indeed, we can learn how to call on magical states of being within ourselves and in our situations. This is especially helpful when we are coping with inner ambiguities that require us to make some kind of psychological adjustment and reorient our perceptions toward more helpful attitudes of mind and heart.

We know that rapport is a feeling of fellowship. It is much more than just a feeling however, since it is a tool by which support is given and received between people; it is felt as empathy and strengthens our courage. It creates the conditions wherein the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

We can gain mastery over the conditions of our lives when we know how to apply such knowledge of empathy – so that the magic of rapport unfolds. This allows us to bring a seductive sweetness and beauty into our connections with people and elegance dealing with things so we gain quite extraordinary subtle influence.

The way this works is by offering our full involvement – especially in the depth of an emotional moment. We often experience this as yearning, and we allow our desire full rein so that it becomes the overarching reality that engulfs us and everything around us.

The danger with such a powerful emotional nature is the risk of becoming lost in an undisciplined imagination. We tend to create whatever we passionately imagine – for better or for worse. We must not lose contact with the hard facts of physical reality and of course the mind's rationality of approach so that a somewhat balanced line of attack may be found. Also it's of great importance that we guard against negativity, and constantly affirm optimistic outcomes, otherwise we attract the worst as well as the best.

The human heart has its own compelling need to find a way to release pent up feelings. We need to attend to this demand for expression, because if it were allowed to build up it would become a force of overwhelming strength – then an explosive uncontrolled discharge occurs, one that is unlikely to be very helpful to us.

PRACTICALITY: DENTAL WORK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (8° - 9°)

We are required to make known to the world our best sacred vision

On a very simple level, we can see how it is thoroughly necessary to keep good care of our teeth. It is a real and important practicality, and demonstrates a relationship between the individual – who has the need for expert help – and society, which provides it. The high reward for taking care of our teeth is having good teeth – the same principle applies to everything else in our lives.

This is as true for the other planes of life as it is for the physical. We need to approach all things with a continuous, conscientious attention to the needs of self-renewal, whether spiritual or phenomenal, social or individual.

In some ways our relationship with our community is symbolical. It represents the wisdom we have gained about the practicalities of living a spiritual life within the constraints of physicality.

The highest measure of a person is how well they demonstrate their spiritual attainment in everyday relationships and activities. Our mission in life is to dramatize to our fellows our best qualities and most subtle realizations in a practical form.

In that we are entrusted with the divine spark, we have a sacred stewardship. We are required to make known to the world our best sacred vision.

Some are shallow, lazy, immature or simply accept the false and easy. They do not see that dental work is an artificial compensation – a remedy for previous imperfections – and that surely it is better to do the right thing early than to repair the damage later; that prevention is better than cure.

When our creative ingenuity is completely explored and brought to the service of others – as dentists, clerks or poets – then we find ourselves blessed with great good fortune and joy.

FRATERNITY: A FELLOWSHIP SUPPER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (9°- 10°)

Society is the context for self-expression

Fraternity indicates a very particular type of human interaction. It is not parental, nor is it sexual, yet it is intimate and as influential in building society as these other types of involvement. Brothers, sisters, and neighbours expand our world in a special way – one that requires us to show a high degree of personal responsibility and self-awareness.

The simplest of everyday requirements, such as eating supper, is directed by the physicality of our being. It seems so trite to bring attention to such a self-evident truth – yet there are those who fail to appreciate quite how fully our lives are arranged to meet our physical needs.

For example, we form the fellowship of our social connections with a really clear understanding of how such ties will attend to our essential requirements. On a basic level, we need others to help us through every phase of life, in the same way that certain animals could not survive without living together in a group.

Typically, there is an inclination to live out these animal tendencies and surrender our individuality, but this is to be resisted if we are to maintain our integrity. This attitude of resistance is not something that our fraternity approves of at all – in fact there is a real risk of banishment if such self-expression goes too far away from the median level of behaviour.

The grooves of communal activity and shared experience are in place not to avoid self-expression and self-determination, but supposedly to help channel these important qualities of individual life within the context of shared needs and visions. Still – we do have to make a claim if we want to cut our path differently from the common, communal direction of purpose.

In one sense, there is no mystery here at all – this is how, in everyday ways, we offer practical support to our community – we do what we do in order to invest in a society that allows an acceptable degree of self-expression.

But only up to a point. If we surrender independence then we lose the very reason for our life, because we fail to encounter our own destiny, lost as we are in the group experience. Our highest responsibility is to ourselves, and society is just the context for that, not the superseding validation of it.

SAFETY: A DROWNING MAN RESCUED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (10°- 11°)

Projecting faith into the future makes us safe from danger

The image is of rescue; we get in danger and are saved. We have to learn that it is faith that ensures this, as a reliable foundation for all our adventures. If we project our faith into the future with enthusiasm, then we are safe from succumbing to danger. Certainly there is risk – how else would there be adventure? Yet faith is of spirit and is inviolable. Our general picture of a mature, wise individual is of one who is not drowning, who is always safe from life's vicissitudes and emotionality.

The general population by contrast is given to hysteria. This is a condition whereby a strong, often dangerous, feeling is transmitted throughout a group, overwhelming the possibility of the individual to act rationally. Transient excitement dominates the person, who then makes decisions based on silly ideas. The most obvious example is when Cupid strikes, but political propaganda and football games, pop music and TV programmes are all included here.

The antidote for this form of mental disability is mostly found in our relationship with nature, and the resultant sense of beauty, tranquillity and wonder that soothes the heart. The assumption made here is that our communing with the real physical world is an expression of a spiritual dimension to our lives.

It takes a degree of courage to practise enthusiasm and faith – since it will typically be challenged and attract the strong possibility of becoming marginalized in society, a society of the fearful.

This eagerness to live is the hallmark of soul consciousness. The soul is the eternal aspect of our individual existence, and has no need to settle for anything less than fulfilment. As long as it has enthusiasm, it will engage repeatedly with any scenario it chooses, until it has come to the understanding required.

The corrective processes of life often operate when we are close to ultimate danger – at real risk of loss of life and limb – because certain biological and psychological functions are only awakened in emergencies. If we avoid physical danger then we cannot strengthen these aspects of our nature, and we are diminished.

When we notice ourselves feeling fearless and indestructible, when we throw caution to the wind, when we have faith that whatever occurs, all will be well – then, and only then, we are in alignment with soul consciousness.

DISPLAY: AN EMBASSY BALL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (11°- 12°)

Loyalties enable us to experience devotion

It is irrelevant to animals and angels what we wear, or say, at an embassy ball, although to ourselves and the other guests, these things actually classify who and what we are. Our very individuality has no definition except as it is framed by the general background of what society values.

A stable and fulfilling life requires us to develop and maintain loyalties, and anyway without this, our need to demonstrate devotion is thwarted. Such loyalties are all too easily misplaced and need continual reappraisal. Any inappropriate allegiances formed earlier – perhaps naively in the mistaken folly of youthful permissiveness – need to be re-evaluated and corrected.

From time to time it is meaningful and healthy to show where our commitments lie. Such display is the authentic externalization of an evolving inner truth, and which we could never even know clearly were they not made obvious as a public statement.

How we choose to behave eventually comes down to what has practical worth. A meaningful series of choices is arrived at by the process of discarding what is meaningless, for example empty shows of conformity. Yet without some degree of self-dedication to our community, we will find ourselves eventually unsupported, alone and adrift.

Civilization evolves within the creative tension between the haves and have-nots. High-achievers at the ball may feel the need for recognition and reward, in order to be motivated to their highest efforts to raise society, but if this degenerates to a smug demand for privilege, then certainly decay and exploitative corruption are close at hand.

The politics of exploitation are disguised with empty words, false smiles and crocodile tears. The idealisms of youth are of course tempered by the experience of how power operates in reality, yet if there is to be justice and the general sense of wellbeing that goes with it, those of privilege must prioritize the use of their resources with good conscience.

By the time we become sufficiently mature to shoulder the burden of collective responsibilities, we will have developed the ability to influence collective morality by demonstrating not only that our own life is stable, but also that we can moderate both our idealism and our ambition.

CLEVERNESS: AN INVENTOR EXPERIMENTING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (12°- 13°)

Nothing we ever encounter is beyond our ability to deal with

In order to secure independence from others, it is necessary to become much more self-dependent. In fact, until we do so, it is unlikely that we'll discover our hidden assets of ingenuity and resourcefulness, and thereby gain unlimited access to freedom of self-expression.

When confronted with puzzles, the mind, and its versatile intellect, delights in the exploration of options and possibilities. The greater the effort expended in finding solutions, the greater the joy.

Taken to a deeper level, we can apply the quicksilver mind to a particular area of life and creatively develop a special niche for ourselves to achieve social value. All of our situations are puzzles to solve, and the solution to each is, eventually, evidenced by a feeling of happiness.

By this process, greater accomplishments than we imagined will be within reach, although of course there is always the proviso that a serious degree of application must be presented to the task in hand.

We come to understand that this technique is useful in each and every aspect of life. The mind truly is able to come to grips with anything and find a new perspective and a constructive response. Nothing we ever encounter is beyond our ability to deal with.

When taken to a committed level of interaction, the contribution we have to offer is entirely unique – and, in the context of the specific place and time in which we operate, that makes us special and important.

There is a constant danger that we give in to a sense of complacency and indulge a feeling of helplessness or being overwhelmed, deferring our dreams of creativity to a later occasion. The remedy for this is to put aside fears and expectations of failure, trust in our undiscovered talents, and enjoy the spontaneity of mind – the prerequisite of genius.

ATTACHMENT: TELEPHONE LINEMEN AT WORK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (13° - 14°)

Higher intelligence is responsible for lower

It is good to notice any urge that we may feel to interfere in the private affairs of others, because this inclination speaks of our lack of appropriate self-centredness. We must develop inner control to contain ourselves and resist inappropriate concern for others' business; otherwise confusion about who we are will be the result.

Nevertheless, all affairs interconnect, in other words there is interconnectedness between distinct things. The outer dimension of all things forms a network, while the inner depth is beyond reach, having a transcendent quality.

It requires a certain amount of attachment to connect with what is meaningful in a thing; this is because everyday living is so complex. To grasp meaning through the fog of this complexity is beyond mind; it requires feelings also.

When we do, what emerges is the power of realization. This fills the gaps between things with the magnetism of awareness. It is then also seen that there is a link between all phases of existence. Therefore neither time nor space can separate things in essence, although of course in appearance they do.

With a vision of self, expanded throughout eternity and connected to all forms, we can lose perspective. Self-specialization is the only refuge and the only wisdom. If we try to be everything, then we are nothing, we have no substance. So we need to use the force of will to become something in particular – and we do that by focusing on the appearances of what occurs to us, and forming our identity around that connection.

Maturity expresses itself through the practical application of the principle that higher intelligence is responsible for lower. Therefore we assist those who have not our degree of awareness and we demonstrate this universality of involvement with compassion.

In turn, as lesser we serve higher; we take our place in the greater scheme with a sense of exaltation that we are participating in the mystery. It is of no consequence whether master or slave because both depend upon the other for self-identification. Being neither is true freedom.

NAIVETÉ: CHILDREN PLAYING AROUND FIVE MOUNDS OF SAND

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (14° - 15°)

Being true to oneself is paramount in all things

A child does not concern itself with philosophy or morality overmuch; it plays. As we reach further into the disturbing complexities of fulfilling personal ambitions and social responsibilities, we would do well from time to time to remember who we really are and what we really love to do. Being true to ourselves is paramount in all things, and a child has no need to be reminded of this self-evident aspect of living free.

People get caught up in social niceties, so when we openly express our own innocence we can help them find theirs. It's rather unusual to meet someone who, in a world beset by ambition and fear, opts to retain a naive sense of fun. Such people are often well liked since they have an atmosphere of purity, and reluctance to judge others. They are trusting and light-hearted, and can often impact upon others in playful ways. Though this may appear a rather simple behaviour, it is not without profound consequences. Generally people like – and need – to be helped to relax, those who can do this tend to gain influence.

We each have the gift to discover new and fascinating ways to be who we are and to find something worthwhile in any situation and all experiences. This is life lived in innocence.

Whatever comes up – be it easy or difficult, pleasant or challenging – we have within us exactly what it takes to cope and gain satisfaction. The best of us still lies dormant as an unrealized potential and will only be awakened – often with easy spontaneity – when its time has come, and when the need arises.

There is a question of reassessing, and perhaps reorganising, what is worthy of our committed involvement. And here we can gain insight by remembering the child within, who knows intuitively how, and with what, to become completely absorbed – and thus make it meaningful.

To live a life without much profound purpose, punctuated by a frequency of inept responses to what occurs, is soul-destroying and symptomatic of someone who has lost their sense of *joie de vivre*.

Trusting the inner integrity of human spirit, we simply have naively to meet all events as they come, and know that we are always good for purpose.

ACQUIESCENCE: GIRL'S FACE BREAKING INTO A SMILE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (15° - 16°)

Acquiescence is not self-betrayal when it reveals wisdom and promotes harmony

We may try, through modesty or caution, to veil the mystery of our being, yet the truth will out. In essence, nothing remains forever hidden, so ultimately our value and our values must bubble to the surface and be revealed.

Humans are friendly by nature; it shows in how we respond to others and to animals. So, try as we might to hold our clench, there are social forces that compel us into dramatizing our inner need for sharing.

Acquiescence is not self-betrayal when it reveals wisdom and promotes harmony: it is a giving of the heart. If wisdom is stubborn then it is not wisdom, and should not be accorded much value.

The core of oneself must be revealed in order to be examined for authenticity. Everyday life is certain to push us to dramatize inner truths, so that we come to be seen for who we are. All illusion is, at some point, exposed.

What dresses-up our essential being is the veil of personality. It is magical, and has an uncanny ability to conjure up the exact circumstances of our lives. This is charm. With its powerful grace, desire is realized.

Such a power is constant temptation. We can so easily become confused and misinterpret our indiscriminate attraction towards taboo pleasures as if they were a revelation of a deeper truth, whereas actually we have simply lost the connection to essence-self.

In the end we learn that nothing is ever truly hidden. Yet nothing can ever be truly revealed. So we can elegantly employ simple things to deal with great and complex obstacles, a smile that turns enemy to friend.

NUCLEATION: WOMAN FATHERS HER OWN CHILD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (16° - 17°)

Anarchy is the enlightened behaviour of a self-realized being who needs no master

Nucleation is the process of forming a nucleus; it is the initial process in crystallization. Virgin birth is quintessentially an image of creating our own lives out of our own visions – rather than reactions or responses to external input. It is a symbol of one needing no external authority or permission to realize their dreams – someone capable of self-referential decision-making, and becoming the centre of their own circle of influence.

We have ideals, which are the sum total of our best dreams, and yet the journey from their conception through birth to full physical realization is fraught. Our identity is shaped; are we sincere? Our visions are challenged; are they true? If we lead our circle with borrowed ideas, then the charismatic force is not optimized.

Yet, if truly authentic, we will grow in power and are seen as the pulse, a constant rhythm and a dynamic force of appropriate movement that inspires those who orbit around us, who are perhaps unconsciously looking for guidance. We can fulfil this role with integrity because we know how to develop charisma through being aware of the heart centre. We learn to trust that the heart knows the voice of the soul better than the mind, and see that we will only be at peace when we reconcile the centre of our chosen world with the centre of self. This centre is called the heart, and is the heart. When we find a place that continually and deeply touches the heart, then we have located our world.

Consciousness evolves through the eternal conflict between principle and practice. The highest within us seeks far and wide to establish its place in the world. The quest takes us to many strange and wonderful locations, where we have to take on some of the thoughts and attitudes of strangers to discover whether it feels right to be part of their world. This journey of discovery is the external circumstances of our lives.

The responsibility for leading a group is not at all comfortable for the soul, whose essence is freedom and who rebels against any constriction. Hence we see the need for the group's visionary heart to be in alignment with our soul's, as a further expression of our own vision rather than a compromise. Then the soul can refine itself, and so evolve, through involvement in harmony with the group rather than at variance with it.

In fact any inclination that spirit may have towards escapism is evidence of a lack of responsibility. Escape into our true heart-centre is a spiritual liberation that needs no excuse, whereas escapism is impotent rebelliousness against the perception of a more powerful authority.

It is no easy task to gain freedom to be oneself; there are huge challenges that most people skirt or entirely run from. Yet the evolution of awareness – the development of knowledge through experience – requires such challenges. Ironically the more we develop freedom, the more we attract responsibility, because freedom is empowering, and power always goes hand in hand with responsibility. Yet power and freedom are strange bedfellows and, ultimately, mutually unsustainable. So a life is lived in pursuit of the challenges that facilitate growth, while constantly striving to avoid having our freedoms curtailed by the needs and expectations of others.

FULFILMENT: WOODS RICH IN AUTUMN COLOURING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (17° - 18°)

The fruit contains the seed

Our lives have stages that can often be understood better by looking at metaphors in nature. Here we have the sense that a person's fulfilment comes in the autumn of their lives – when the richness of a colourful personality speaks of their ability to offer the fruits of their encounters. The ultimate promise of life is achieved only through personal excellence, and the fullest experience of self.

Personality is complex, and often seems self-contradictory. Yet when the time arrives, all the pieces fit together and create a tapestry that expresses one unified statement. The diverse manifestations of our parts are brought to genuine fruitage when we find our highest degree of self-expression.

The resultant benefit of this level of synergy is so very much greater than perhaps we can imagine. We are rewarded for keeping alive all the many and varied aspects of our life and for not allowing anything potentially useful to go to seed.

Each of us has the possibility to gain success in one of several different fields of interest. The true achievement, however, is to master several, and gain the real attainment – not only of multiple strings to the bow, but the higher dimension of awareness that can synthesize them into one unique skill set. This is our life message, which only we can deliver.

The exaltation of a forest is seen in the autumn, notwithstanding its year-round beauty. This is because the fruit of any dynamic living system contains its seed, and taken together they demonstrate the full circle of life in its fullest glory.

It is nature's high ministry of service to every living thing – that continuance is its primary goal, with the implicit promise that evolution will naturally occur. Any potential, when its ideal is realized, will align with this dramatized form of the order and beauty of the universe.

We have but to pass on our seed and all the illimitable resources of the universe are at hand to carry the best of us forward to contribute to the greater magnificence of all that is.

CONVENTIONALITY: A PARROT LISTENING THEN TALKING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (18° - 19°)

Public conventionality promotes general stability; personal ideals are a private matter

Most people behave according to conventional markers about what is and is not acceptable in terms of passionate speech, behaviour – and even thoughts and feelings. This programming serves the community by constraining individuals, and establishing secure boundaries.

Within these general parameters, we have the freedom to express ourselves fully, and so we can consciously choose the shape of our personal lives. More intimately with our own circle, we examine the tensions between private principles, of our own ideas, and what we outwardly express in accordance with conventionality.

It may take exceptional skill to do this. The parroting of opinion will not be enough, but it is a first step to form rapport. In these community-building exchanges, opinions expressed have no great profundity of importance – the outer form is of no great consequence – however the atmosphere we convey has great importance, it speaks subtly and silently of our inner world of feelings.

In this way, whatever may be going on in general society, we can bring the atmosphere of our lives to a point of personal aspiration. Whether we find ourselves in 12th century China or 21st century New York, something unique about us must and will inform the tenor of our circumstances. On the level of soul, this has greatest value – because circumstances are of little consequence to the essence of our being, tone is everything.

We continually project our beloved self-image onto the current situation, and can adjust what we choose to show or hide. By this means, we select and reject which of the component parts of our deepest identity we want to expose and have measured and tested.

The danger always lies in getting caught up in idle mimicry and self-gratifying pretence, so we do need to be somewhat provocative at times in order to keep alive the hidden truth of our unconventional aspects.

The community, by its very nature, lacks depth and originality – it is designed to support parrot-like opinions. So we learn to hold alive two faces – essentially the public one that accepts, and the private one that often rejects. Yet the raw substance of our intelligence is gleaned from involvement with the community – so the private one must expand itself, to become sensitive to the continual reworking of reality, and find a way to perfect private ideals even as they tend to contradict current social values.

DARING: A WOMAN DRAWING TWO DARK CURTAINS ASIDE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (19°- 20°)

The soul is courageous and free, its essence-stuff is the spirit of daring

The vitality of human life is centred in the understanding that there is no ultimate reward to be found until we cross the threshold of common limitation. Animal behaviours are insufficient to inspire us – we need more to feel alive than keeping the species going by creating offspring whom we feed and house. The enduring values that describe our species go deeper than the facade of the daily round; it is simply not enough to go to work to get paid to buy the shopping and pay the rent.

Our desire-nature, the passionate queen of all feelings, is directional. It is pointing us to whatever is the most exciting way to penetrate deeper into the mystery.

In the image, a woman has courage to risk penetrating through darkness. The twin veils of ignorance and fear have to be put aside if we are to be free.

The soul is indeed essentially courageous and free, its essence-stuff is the spirit of daring. If we feel this – and only when we feel this – we are aligning with the soul, and its eternal life-purpose to have unending adventures.

There is a psychological indomitability with which human spirit plunges ahead into every new adventure of accomplishment. We have appetite to do more, and reach out beyond what is safe and assured.

There is the need for balance – passion and reason each cooperatively engaged, because taken to a level of foolishness, this quality of daring can be distorted into silly exhibitionism and crass recklessness.

Yet without some risk of foolishness we are constrained to be less than we could be. Our very life is not our own unless we grasp the moment at hand and gamble on the probability of our unassailable continuance.

DEVIATION: A SOLDIER DERELICT IN HIS DUTY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF SCORPIO (20° - 21°)

Through inner awareness the power of the individual transcends the power of society

The power of society is greater than we can possibly conceive and tends to force people into unsought situations, as in the example of a conscripted soldier. Yet truly, the power of the individual is even stronger. An inner awareness of the truth of who we really are makes it impossible for us to continue on a course of action that is essentially unrewarding or inauthentic.

Intuitively we know, whatever external pressure there may be, that in the deepest sense we are more responsible to ourselves than the community. Although we feel allegiance to our people, in the end our feelings of faithfulness are not best applied in service to the common good at all, but to ourselves.

In order to become a soldier, a person must put aside considerations of heart and go away from everything they hold dear. The emotional wrench cannot be soul food – it offends us on such a very deep level. This feeling is not so very different from that experienced when work duties dominate, and the possibility of full enjoyment of home and family is stolen.

In moments of truth, the inner stirrings of spirit express as a willingness to face all the consequences of true self-assertion. Whenever obligations and desires conflict with each other, the drama of life takes the form of tragedy. This promotes decision – root-level decision – as little else does.

What follows this watershed occurrence is a necessary adjustment to bring us into alignment. This deviation is a course correction to put us back on track. That track is towards a self-fulfilling vision – so it may be completely legitimate for a soldier to desert his post.

There are consequences – and whether we turn right or left at the crossroads, there always are consequences – and these are unknown and unknowable. Yet the absence of electing, for this or for that, shows no discrimination, and will always attract penalties. Facing court martial may well be of lesser import compared with soul-level self-betrayal.

At such critical points in life, we must trust in our sense of inherent divinity. We are sacred beings who know what to do – we have to do the right thing trusting that it will work out well.

ENTERPRISE: HUNTERS STARTING OUT FOR DUCKS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF SCORPIO (21°- 22°)

Self-determination arises from specificity of desire and unremitting fortitude

Enterprise is an important quality to bring to bear upon life. Ducks do not conveniently fly into our larders, they need to be hunted, and hunting is a full-on passionate, yet highly sensitive, skill. If we are to fulfil our potential, then, against opposition, we need to go out of our way to harness our abilities and desires towards a given specific target.

From the moment we are born, in all things of ordinary frequency and significance, we have a marked tendency to exhibit simple, honest desire. We want what we want – that's it and all about it.

This simple imperative is the motivating force of all life, and without it we would be constrained to a low level need-fulfilling existence of no creative consequence. Yet it requires of us certain initiatives and creative imagination if we are to enact our desires and stake our claims.

This certainly doesn't have to degenerate into a callous exploitation of life, yet it does promote a complete lack of personal inhibition and frustrations as we go about our daily affairs and situations. Day to day problems need not be irritating – they are seen to offer a means, in fact the only dependable means, by which to refine our practical skills, moved as we are to perfect our abilities in order to complete our goals.

We will find the need to give up something if we want something more. Enterprising people take risks, they lose before they gain, and they understand the dynamic sequential balance in life called swings and roundabouts, where the ups and downs work themselves out in over time. In the end, we get what we go for.

However, our determination to have what we want must necessarily be measured against the constraints of society. We all need a little psychological elbow room when coping with the world; we do, yet so do the others.

The uncompromising imperative that we enjoy freedom of action, speaks to us of the essential nature of our very existence. It is the voice of spirit, and even if it is resisted, it will never be fully thwarted. To engage it requires us to demonstrate the strength of will and unremitting fortitude that is born out of our certainty that we have the sovereign right to self-determination.

TRANSITION: A BUNNY METAMORPHOSED INTO A FAIRY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF SCORPIO (22°- 23°)

Imagination is the transition of consciousness that can endow anything with profound meaning

The ability we all have to turn a bunny into a fairy is a quality of the imagination. All things – the least of things around us – can thus be endowed with more profound meaning. This process has no limit, and a transition of consciousness is the inner requirement.

The imagination is a vast field of potential, whose kaleidoscopic reach can easily surprise and delight us. It has a real functionality. Children invent fantasies to help them deal with their troubled lives; we can too.

We have values and preferences, which are of key importance to us, and life doesn't always respond to them the way we'd like. Yet we can be creative, by power of imagination, and re-evaluate externals to come into alignment with internal needs and wants.

In this way, we can learn to remould life to suit our sense of what is right, and deal with the difficulties we encounter. This is the path of self-conquest by which each individual subordinates his naive and animal impulses to their ideals and aspirations.

The soul speaks to us through poetry not prose. The skills and characteristics of our personality are avenues through which to ensoul our lives with a grace and beauty unknown to animals and lesser beings. We are given to make the poetry of the soul known through influencing externals.

This idea does not stretch beyond what is workable in life; that would be undisciplined escapism and a distortion of a beautiful, spiritual principle.

By making the necessary inward transition of consciousness, we can imbue everything with dynamic meaning and give ordinary things a special value.

APPEAL: CROWDS COMING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TO LISTEN TO ONE MAN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (23° - 24°)

To influence the many, words of inspiration must sparkle with magnetism

This is all about how higher realizations are brought into everyday reality. Typically a person somehow gets into a receptive state – and one example might be meditating on a mountaintop – and then has the task of making an appeal to have their message heard.

There is a dimensional difference between the first personal feeling of an idea, and the specific clear articulation of it. Until spoken, the message in fact does not even exist. However the functionality, of grounding an ideal or spiritual wisdom, has as much to do with its initial confirmation as its arising in the mind of the visionary.

And going one step further, a single witness is not enough. Any aspiration within the message is meaningless until it achieves practical focus in those realms and events with which people in general are familiar. A bridge must be built between the realm of ideas and the realm of behaviour, and this must include the establishing of rapport with the audience through empathy with their specific reality.

A prophet or teacher receives recognition for their intellectual or spiritual attainment as much by responding to material concerns as heavenly. Many a brilliant concept or teaching has been wastefully cast on deaf ears – as seeds on stony ground.

Certainly we see that spiritual wisdom generates the supremacy of authority over people – yet only when applied in tangible form. In this case it can enlist spectacular support and awaken the higher potentialities of its adherents.

Even ideas are subject to entropy, so the purity of the initial inspiration is always somewhat corrupted as it interfaces with practicality. Principle and expediency dance the dance of heaven and earth – each nothing without the other, yet both engaged in an attempt to dominate.

The balance is in responding with innocent wisdom to the practical needs of the moment, yet never gullibly believing that fairies and angels will ever replace human competence.

INVESTIGATION: AN X-RAY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in xxx

25TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (24°- 25°)

Knowledge serves humanity as much as we serve knowledge

It is of course meaningful to allow subjective feelings to inform our take on reality – and yet we also have an aspect of truth that is objective. Indeed, this is called reality. We share this with our fellows, and it serves as the foundation of our lives – not only in relationship but also in self-appraisal. Our very intelligence depends upon the dependability of nature and its laws and structures.

X-rays were discovered – or invented – to further our investigations below the surface of things into the hidden aspects of what life is and does. We ourselves are revealed as we explore, and this process of analysis and comprehension in some way is useful for self-validation. We become competent in analysis as we become capable of understanding ourselves.

The appreciation of this knowledge for medical purposes speaks to our willingness to give emphasis to the wellbeing of our fellows. Knowledge serves humanity as much as we serve it.

Knowledge has magnetism in and of itself, and many are attracted to it for its own sake – yet unless we can measure it against our sense of reality, then until it is found useful it remains as art. Typically we recognize ourselves as the measure of all things – and this is grounds for profound meditation.

Taking this idea further, we are given to measure ourselves as individuals in relation to our relevance to life in general. We learn to keep ourselves fit for purpose – and our purpose is to add something to the knowledge that keeps our community functioning.

However, we must be careful not to take this measuring too far. Neither we, nor our society, are free from imperfection, so any excessive analysis will result in restlessness and dissatisfaction. It's all a question of reasonableness and balance.

Our investigations lead us to the brink of knowledge, but never to its completion. Things are only finally understood in their relationship to all else – the integrity of knowledge is that all is One. Past and future, cause and effect, you and me – are all constructs of analysis rather than true knowing.

EXTEMPORIZATION: INDIANS MAKING CAMP

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (25° - 26°)

When we have learned how to seek, then we have discovered how to find

Everything we actually need, for our practical and all other purposes, can be found immediately at hand – just as hunter-gatherers would relocate themselves and find whatever they needed when making a new camp.

From moment to moment there is a wide range of possible experiences that present themselves, although not everyone notices them or claims them. No map or musical score exists to help us choose or reject these various options – we must extemporize in response to outer situations and inner feelings. Then potentially we can find what we require.

In order to achieve true self-fulfilment, we need to be fully alert to what there is, around us and within us. Alertness can be practised, and improved – when we have learned how to seek, then we have discovered how to find.

Each of us has the gift of resourcefulness and the freedom to employ the art. We simply have to engage fully with our reality in order to claim its benefits.

Perceived reality is nothing more than the result of each individual's choices and rejections in their everyday dealings with the world at large. The wherewithal exists for us to do whatever we want, to be whomever we choose to become – as long as we believe this.

This by no means implies an unambitious acceptance of things as they are, rather it affirms an inexhaustible capacity for repeated self-establishment as our lives and circumstances move on through the changes – and we have to work with what there is in order to make it so.

A very useful attitude of mind, which supports this wisdom, is the enjoyment of challenge. When we trust in our skilful resourcefulness, then we delight in testing it and showing it. Every new situation is another opportunity to demonstrate that we can cope creatively with whatever comes up, and this facility is an essential ingredient in the human species.

INTREPIDITY: A MILITARY BAND ON THE MARCH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (26° - 27°)

It is poor life management to defer to social pressure to be commonplace

The military band is proclaiming its strength, and its determination to carry through a clear intention bravely and against whatever opposition it encounters. Equally, it is entirely appropriate for us to proclaim, and establish something that will endure, constantly and courageously affirming our own personal sense of reality, and having that reality be significant enough that we are willing to fight for it.

At all costs, we must avoid crystallising trivialities as the permanent circumstances of our lives. Human spirit rejects drabness entirely; anything that lacks interest lacks worth.

Rest and relaxation serve us for a while so that we can recover and recharge our batteries. Yet there is always a danger of foolish self-exploitation when we crave comfort and security more than challenge.

We need to check that the temporary compromises that we made have not sapped our strength of will. It takes resolution and audacity to break away from the comfort zone; in some ways it's like going to war. Anything of real worth requires that we mobilize ourselves into intense effort.

When we press towards worthy goals, then we always evolve. Parts of us are stimulated into expression, which would otherwise remain hidden, undiscovered and unknown. We grow – and it feels exciting.

Small matter that the blare of our self-affirmation causes others to flinch. Let them understand that such behaviour is best seen as our rejection of lesser experiences; we are not satisfied with the ordinary, and claim a larger slice of life. We are so much more than we ever knew, and so much bigger than others usually want us to be.

What previously seemed an impossible dream is drawn into the realms of reality – it becomes hope, and then expectation. Through this process, inspiration flows through us into life, transforming everything we touch. All life has a sharpened sense of vitality and potentiality.

ALLEGIANCE: KING OF FAIRIES APPROACHING HIS DOMAIN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (27°- 28°)

We must focus the creative mind only on what we want to come to pass

We demonstrate true allegiance not to causes similar to ours, but to causes that actually define us. There is but one cause that defines us completely – it is our own life. Our own domain is none other than the circumstances of our life, and we approach that domain as does a king expressing sovereignty.

Central to the understandings of wisdom is the key mystery – that there is nothing outside us other than a reflection of what is inside us. Life is a mirror, nothing more, nothing less. Some take on this knowledge as a burden of responsibility, and feel chastened as their awareness is drawn to their imperfections.

Others feel the gift that goes along with this, and appreciate the inherent promise that all developments in self-knowledge must necessarily be met by improvement in one's life situation.

Full of self-confidence, we can then put aside futile concepts of good fortune or bad fortune as though the gods were dealing our hand. We get what we deserve, we get what we are ready to handle, and it is we who call it up.

The world of imagination is powerful – it is what we imagine that comes to pass. This mystery is hinted at in the fairy king imagery. Yes we do have a considerable measure of control over our future circumstances and, on the deepest level, complete control. Yet it requires that we are capable of focussing the imaginative creative mind passionately, consistently and in detail, upon something that has never before existed – something we desire, and not anything else. Quite a challenge!

Such creative power has its dangers, especially in a poorly disciplined mind. Free will allows us to call up dragons as well as fairies. We must be careful to whom and to what we offer allegiance, and be neither fearful nor self-indulgent; both are wasteful and lead to a poverty of joy.

With practice, understanding and experience, a highly developed person will know that what they choose must come into form – when inner vision becomes clear and expectation of fulfilment becomes normal, then great achievements are realized.

EFFECTIVENESS: AN INDIAN SQUAW PLEADING TO HER CHIEF FOR THE LIVES OF HER CHILDREN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (28° - 29°)

We must balance what we want with what society wants, and trust this process

In this image, a mother pleads to her chief and indicates submission – yet it is implicit that a good chief will protect her valid interests. In all life we need to balance what we want with what society wants, both looking after our own imperatives and yet also trusting in the community process.

We are not likely to feel satisfied if we are obliged to truckle to others in order to resolve our most important issues, in the naive hope that our priorities are theirs. First and foremost, we ask to develop a reliable effectiveness in our ability to control our world, at least to the point where the basics are not at risk – things like protecting the family from harm.

The family unit is the foundation principle of the tribe. Society must first and foremost protect the family if it is to be accepted as a force for the good. We are willing to defer to collective authority only to the extent that we feel that our nearest and dearest are protected and supported by it.

This is not feasible without forming allegiances with emphasis upon the principle of fair exchange and justice, backed up by the practice of caring and empathy. To feel both caring and cared for, we must be part of a society that responds appropriately to help balance rights and wrongs that arise as a result of our direct experience with the problems of self-fulfilment.

From our personal viewpoint, we must develop the gift for putting our priorities clearly – first things first. Without this, personal accomplishment and enabling of our dreams is uncertain at best. We feel that any diminishing of our personal aims must be offset by the advantages of communal life – yet our personal goals need only be stated clearly and prioritized for this not to be a problem. The community surely is better able to thrive when its members are fulfilled?

So any group will only hold onto its influence under two conditions. The group must invest in the welfare of the individual and the individual must invest in the welfare of the group.

A functioning society cannot emerge without each member accepting, and being made to accept, a degree of self-sacrifice to minister the common interest. To achieve this, it must function to improve the effectiveness of individual aspirations as much as its own declared common dreams.

SPONTANEITY: THE HALLOWEEN JESTER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF SCORPIO (29° - 30°)

Our inner jester challenges authority and upholds unorthodox spiritual understandings

All too often our spontaneous, but rather inept, attempts to express certain idiosyncratic aspects of ourselves – in contempt for established values – lead to nothing but embarrassment and reduction of influence.

However, society does recognize the need for the release of buoyant energies and has created events and media for the proper demonstration of informal behaviour.

Ultimately this leads to a more genuine spiritual sensitiveness. When we let our hair down, for example by playing the fool at Halloween, we become somewhat refreshed – and our strange quirks are welcomed as a grace that enriches our community rather than unacceptable oddness to be hidden away.

Our overboard humour is thus dignified and can even be seen as sacred. The jester's function was not only to cock a snook at overblown authority figures – but also to keep alive some of the unorthodox spiritual teachings from days long gone.

Spontaneity is irrational and out of control, so it allows for the possibility that non-ordinary wisdom can occur, and this emerges as inherent within the unconscious bank of knowledge that society has available. In unusual, troubled times, this can be of crucial importance.

Even if the strange behaviour has little relevance to current community needs, it does allow the individual their chance to go a little mad now and then. This release from the hard press of daily life has profound therapeutic value for everyone, not just the jester.

Society's ability to control its members, and achieve wider, deeper harmony, is not absolute. There must be chinks in the armour – times for rebellious energies to dissipate without danger.



SAGITTARIUS

EVOLUTION / HOPEFULNESS / AIMING / ADVENTURE / EXPERIENCE / CONSCIENCE

I examine the mysteries, to experience knowledge, the non-truth of truth, and the truth of non-truth

Sagittarius is philosophical, visionary, tolerant, and jovial, known for generosity, exuberance, confidence and optimism; its eyes scan horizons of the future, and its enthusiasm is contagious. Loving sport, playing the chances, and generally being in the thick of it, it exhibits a natural, easy-going, approach to relating – full of humour, pithy remarks and witty candour, frank, blunt, and disconcertingly valid. It is false to deny the sign's fiercer aspects – the mythological centaur was war-like and inspired awe and fear. Indeed, though acting with integrity, with a genuine moral code that underwrites all of its actions, Sagittarius can be very antagonistic, particular if forbidden the space it requires to expand. It needs freedom to travel physically, intellectually and emotionally, since exploration, vision, and adventure are true indications of its essence-nature.

To measure the evolution of consciousness we need a yardstick, and the duty to create one falls to this fiery, expansive sign. It is an impossible task, yet this suits Sagittarius well because completion and agreement are not considered high-value states – since they diminish the delight of discovery and debate. We endlessly seek to make objective what will always remain subjective, and this paradox drives our development. Wisdom arises through reflection, self-discovery and experience. Evidence that we understand some of the meaning of life is found in high-order mental constructs such as conscience, truth, morality, law, science and religion.

There are natural constraints, and cultural constraints, and life is inherently bound by rules; yet we must always challenge the merit of whatever structure of control we adopt to reflect them. To test the validity of our philosophy requires us to be able to cope well with whatever occurs, strengthened by the principles that derive from it, so that we can manage both opportunity and crisis in good conscience. Any such system must satisfy both body and soul – if collective morality is unworkable in real life then it is not authentic; it is false.

Projecting a considered, workable imagination onto the field of opportunity is a worthwhile attempt to create lasting realities based on considered wisdom. This is a non-judgemental account of the aims of law, morality and philosophy. However, any visionary effort only generates a close approximation to our desires. How well we overcome obstacles, to embrace the unexpected, clearly influences the actual impact of our vision. Others might see the differences between intentions and consequences as grounds for disappointment, yet this sign is invariably positive, and sees the unexpected simply as a new adventure. By staying alert, its characteristic ready resourcefulness is quickly employed, readjusting to establish ideal outcomes. Something of value is always to be found by cutting a path into the dangerous unknown; we learn that in pursuit of self-interest the benefits go beyond survival, and support an ambitious and very effective programme of self-improvement.

It is inherent for us to seek a spiritual aspect to our lives, and the philosophical approach to this comes through the collective development of shared ideals. These offer a form, yet the essence has to be realized personally by somehow making an accommodation for all that arises. This is how to achieve mastery. Eventually we learn to make sacred each part of our circumstances – because everything and every encounter are in service to the highest ideal we have. Somehow we understand that it is through self-sacrifice that we serve our community and yet spectacularly, and counter-intuitively, such sacrifice brings high personal reward.

SAGITTARIUS WISDOM

EVOLUTION

What went before can give useful insight into what is to come
Our appetite for experience tests our resourcefulness of spirit
The master sees with broad vision yet concentrates focus on only one outcome
Collective evolutionary processes guarantee connection and encouragement for all our needs
Living according to spiritual principles develops inner poise and outer success

HOPEFULNESS

To live by putting principle above expediency is an extraordinary, admirable personal attainment
Visionaries follow their dream motivated by optimism – they know that life is bountiful
Dreams are the seeds of tomorrow's uncreated potential that spring from the depths of the past
Education draws out a mature awareness that to serve another is to serve ourselves
Nature takes care of adventurous opportunists – the lucky ones know this

AIMING

Without trying new ideas, we have no way forward at all.
Willow bends, oak breaks – a balance is sought between real and ideal
We must learn to integrate both failure and accomplishments
We look for assurance that our seed has potency
We approach the unknown with caution and wisdom

ADVENTURE

Spirit is ever alert to fulfil its desire nature
Our life path is the reconciliation of two forces – individual fulfilment and spiritual fellowship
An innocent involvement in life is a joyful routine experience, with occasional bursts of excitement
Life is a frontier, an exploration where refuge is momentary – a place to recuperate
Fruit doesn't jump into our mouths – we need to do work to harvest nature's abundance

EXPERIENCE

All is illusion and meaning is subjective, so we must examine everything without prejudice
Life's true rewards come through poise, inner awareness and self-possession
With faith, imagination and expectation, we create a new life every day
To become happy, radiate goodwill – we get whatever we merit
By emulating an achiever we can focus our desire more effectively

CONSCIENCE

Whenever they resound with the imperatives of history, collective ideals trump personal needs
With mastery, when our vision of self is strong, light can shine through stone
All ideals and all people fit together to embody an eternal pattern of nature
To be involved in community, we must each find a way to attend to another's needs
We raise ourselves up by sanctifying our highest values

THE EXPRESSIONS OF SAGITTARIUS

EVOLUTION

SAGITTARIUS 1 – 5

The journey we are embarked upon has not just begun; it is an aspect of the eternal dynamic that links the infinite past to the eternal future. The part of us that was born recently, and will die soon, is quite absorbed in the drama of this particular personality – and yet there is another part of us that knows of the bigger game, the cosmic dimension of our being – and it has its own evolutionary agenda, which differs from, and yet is complimentary to, that of the ego.

Life is change – of course – yet the change is not random, purposeless and unpredictable. Although often hidden, misunderstood and even cynically refuted, the dynamic of life – that which drives the changes towards a particular direction – is evolution. Much as a turbulent river has its certain flow disguised by eddies, whirls and even tidal forces, the perpetual shuffling around is secondary to the forward-moving, uni-directional thrust towards its inevitable destination. When evolution is thwarted then revolution occurs – but it is simply a backlog of designated evolutionary change suddenly unjamming.

HOPEFULNESS

SAGITTARIUS 6 – 10

Youthfulness and maturity, idealism and realism, recklessness and caution are polarities we encounter and resolve as we progress in furtherance of our goals. We need to shape ourselves as a ready receptacle for the bounty, and over time this shaping is what perfects us. It takes both wisdom and skill to grasp opportunity and thereby take a further step towards realization. Often there are crucial issues that test and define us, not the least of which is the overwhelming force of desire that cannot be reconciled with common sense. Yet we trust that good fortune comes to those who risk and commit – and this is the hopeful formula for an optimist: risk, commit, and trust. More often than not it results in success – and indeed always for those who positively define any failure to meet an intended outcome as a helpful educational process of self-refinement.

AIMING

SAGITTARIUS 11 – 15

It is absurd to think we can focus our goals with fully detailed precision – we simply cannot anticipate all the changes that come about within life's complexity. Every single activity is the expression – on one level or another – of trial and error. Whether it is a marriage, a political alliance, employment or friendship, every interaction between people is subject to shifts in self-interest and the resultant rupturing of shared purpose and mutual benefit that leads to broken agreements. Not only that, people cannot escape misfortune and seduction forever, and some are so knocked off centre that they cannot fulfil their promises and duties. If we do not take these factors into account, then we will certainly be disappointed.

In order to set a meaningful course that will lead to lasting outcomes, we have to come to terms with both darkness and light and try not to judge the one more meaningful than the other. Since our aim is always necessarily imperfect, it will inevitably create both light and dark occurrences, and we must accept responsibility for both. The words sin and repent are derived from French archery terms. If our arrow is not within the range, it is without (*sans*) – so we need to rethink (*repenser*). The overlay of guilt is a relatively modern invention; the *sin & repent* formula is actually a common-sense rule for trial and error techniques.

ADVENTURE

SAGITTARIUS 16 – 20

The future comprises two aspects – what *must* be and what *may* be. When we have learned the relationship between cause and effect, we know how to anticipate what *must* be. For example, given correct environmental circumstances, apple seeds become apple trees; the Sun rises and will always shine after the rain. Yet our relationship with what *may* be is an adventure that demands our special attention, exemplary acuity and a willingness to become a different version of ourselves. We simply cannot know what is next – and so we must somehow hold an attitude that protects us from danger, yet readies us for opportunity. Between where we are, and where we hope to be, lives an uncharted path – labelled on maps as ‘*here be dragons*’. Some people would see a sign about dragons as a dire warning – and others as an irresistible attraction.

EXPERIENCE

SAGITTARIUS 21 – 25

By reflecting on what has gone before, and the specific connections and alignments we have experienced, we become more certain of who we are, and of what we feel capable. This stirs us to greater self-expression, and greater dedication to make our mark on the world. There are abundant treasures available to us if we position ourselves appropriately to attract them; they draw us towards them as part of our evolutionary progression.

The soul’s eternal evolutionary journey is seen by Sufis as having two polarities of expression. When disincarnate, it experiences knowledge, and when incarnated it acknowledges experience. Firmly bound by the constraints of matter, there is much more to the soul’s experience of life than corporeal sensuality. Through the hard authenticity of physicality, we get to see the true effect of our qualities – such as poise, courage, radiant wellbeing and optimistic imagination, amongst so many others.

An ambitious push towards an outrageously idealistic vision energizes our situations and catalyses events – so that we are subjected to life more deeply, more fully and more colourfully. It is not more important, or even helpful, to know what we are ‘doing’ – because the soul’s present purpose is not to experience the knowledge of what we are doing, but to acknowledge the experience of how we are being. Process matters, not product.

CONSCIENCE

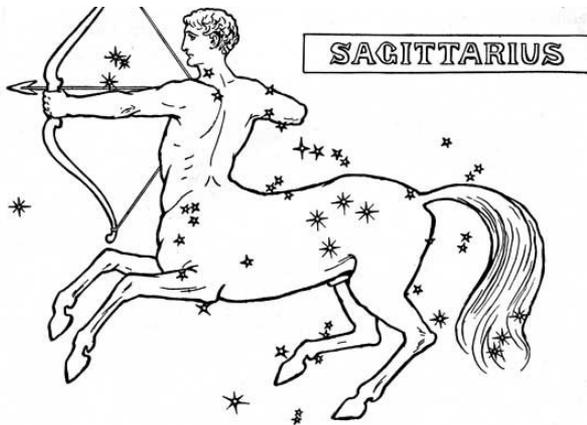
SAGITTARIUS 26 – 30

Sufis speak of the democracy of the ego and the aristocracy of the soul. In other words, we have to be reasonable and compromising when operating at the level of ego, yet affirm the highest uncompromising level of nobility when expressing on a soul level. In this way, we build a testimony both to our uniqueness of character and our spiritual understandings, in such a way that the soul feels at peace and clear of conscience.

Having awakened the relationship between ego and soul, we seek to master every part of our lives to the greater glory of both. This can be achieved with alert expectancy, primed for either conflict or opportunity – not at all unlike the approach we have when visiting a new philosophical idea, or indeed a new country.

Although prayer and worship are useful tools by which we maintain and develop the soul/ego relationship, they are just tools; they serve a greater function. The point is to bind ourselves back to the whole, to Unity, to all and everything. Of course, we can never truly unravel from it because there is actually nothing else, but we can forget to remember – and that is as isolating as separation would be. Having learned how prayer feels, we then train ourselves to replicate that feeling as often as possible, in fact whenever we remember to. It is thus that we consecrate our lives – by reoccupying a condition of worship even in mundane scenarios.

PLANETS IN SAGITTARIUS



SUN in Sagittarius (☐♐)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 302 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Sagittarius (☾♐)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

The non-stop traveller; in Sagittarius the Moon's restlessness shows as an unfulfillable, untiring appetite for new places and wisdoms. Never happy to be tied down, here the Moon feels fiery emotions more often than watery ones.

MERCURY in Sagittarius (☿♐)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

This everyday philosopher wants to map reality onto a legitimate intellectual model that has both truth and wisdom at core. It needs freedom from dogma, plenty of deep thought, and association with controversial thinkers to soar to greater heights of comprehension. Not much concerned with tact or compliance, this is a fiery mind that gives off sparks just to see what flares up.

VENUS in Sagittarius (♀♐)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

In Sagittarius, Venus likes to be free to have nice adventures and meet stimulating people with new ideas and different ways of being. She is energetic, spirited and fiery, and openly admits she cannot be relied upon to settle into rhythms and suffocating commitments.

MARS in Sagittarius (♂♏)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

This is the true seeker who journeys far and wide to have adventures and discover further opportunity. Mars enjoys the freedom of Sagittarius with carefree abandon, although often with less than a full portion of caution and sensitivity.

JUPITER in Sagittarius (♃♏)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

Exploration, travel, high-level study and nobility of endeavour are all suitable expressions for Jupiter when it operates through its favourite sign of Sagittarius. Horizons are expanded indefinitely, and goals are motivations – not necessarily targets to be attained.

NORTH NODE in Sagittarius (♁♏)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

Sagittarius wants to journey towards deeper philosophical understandings, and the North Node there will draw us away from easy and casual interactions with people to seek out new horizons and wisdom. This is a life path of questing – discovering what truth can be found beneath the surface, demonstrating freedom through recklessness and adventure.

SATURN in Sagittarius (♄♏)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Saturn's nature is to resist, to measure, to slow things down and hold everyone accountable. In Sagittarius this applies to matters of high mental constructs – so such things as law, religion and philosophy will be very carefully considered and very slowly accepted. The Sabian Symbol will speak to you in a mysterious language that needs committed mental focus to penetrate and examine for the truth it may contain.

CHIRON in Sagittarius (♄♏)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

In Sagittarius, Chiron the Centaur seeks to bring its highest ideals to bear upon the world of human imperfection. The lies and foolishness of our species offends painfully, and there is a life-long quest to bring justice and wisdom to bear upon mundane affairs.

SAGITTARIUS – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

REMINISCENCE: CAMPFIRE, GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (0°- 1°)

What went before can give useful insight into what is to come

To optimize our potential, we should not spend too long nostalgically resting on our laurels, telling tales around the campfire with compatriots. Our gifts have to be repeatedly re-grasped, re-energized, and renewed in their application.

What is seen as contentment with the way things are, can be none other than superficial idleness; what is considered as valuing of old ways, none other than an unhealthy veneration of the past. Discretion must be exercised to know what is helpful in previous events for developing our present wellbeing.

If reminiscence is to have useful impact, then it must serve to help us appreciate more deeply each significant aspect, and each phase, of our life experiences. What went before can give useful insight into what is to come.

With such an attitude towards remembrance, during points of crisis in life we can usefully call upon our collected wisdom to sustain us and carry us through the challenges.

Besides, the connections and allegiances that have, over the years at campfires, been nurtured, cultivated and preserved, will support us in our accomplishments.

Doing nothing much except feeling and perceiving what is now present – subjective passivity – can be of immense importance, yet surely only to the extent that it is gainfully employed to build inner strength.

For example, a periodic 'return to centre' is of great value in rebalancing and reorienting. We can look for, and find, great relevance in all that has gone before, and all that is to come, by deepening our involvement in this present moment. This may well be enhanced by placing today's events contextually within the backdrop of our fondest memories.

IRREPRESSIBILITY: THE OCEAN COVERED WITH WHITECAPS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (1°- 2°)

Our appetite for experience tests our resourcefulness of spirit

There is a constant restlessness of spirit in any truly alive person, especially children for example. The white horses on the breezy ocean are both energetic and beautiful – and are clues to the inner condition of our basic vitality.

This ceaseless activity is easily accommodated in our lives – we can never run out of new experiences to absorb every ounce of our energy for living.

The extent to which we can call upon this life force, through a self-quickening process, is the extent to which we prosper in terms of both a spiritual and material sense of abundance.

This is because such an appetite for experience brings with it a naive delight in finding answers to problems. When we are in normal good health, we enjoy the challenges of everyday life.

The soul's essentially attractive force anticipates the feeling of enjoyment it will have when it has attracted, identified and dealt with yet another puzzle, to test its resourcefulness.

We know when we have taken this too far because we start to get signs of irritable exhaustion.

Still, even then, a truly alive person is irrepressible and will always bounce back, stronger and perhaps a little wiser.

ABILITY: TWO MEN PLAYING CHESS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (2°- 3°)

The master sees with broad vision yet concentrates focus on only one outcome

There are those whose suffering causes them to believe that suffering is inevitable; this leads to furthering of victimhood. In order effectively to participate in life this attitude needs to be corrected. To profit in every situation we need first to accept full responsibility for having brought it upon ourselves.

With this highly mature and self-empowering approach we are motivated to raise our skills, to discipline our understandings and to mobilize our fullest potential. Like the two chess players, we have chosen to engage on equal terms with life in order to refine who we are and what we can do, presumably, enjoying the process.

A secondary aspect of the development of our abilities has to do with how we present them to the world. We find that exactitude and bigotry tend to be disliked and so are usually counterproductive.

Challenges and other events that call for a high degree of confidence, and the authority of ability, are often fraught and require sensitive management, so any attempt to claim importance can undermine our effectiveness.

What does in fact optimize our ability to hold sway and resolve events to our satisfaction is concentration. The quality of genius is dependent upon sustained, single-pointed focus.

Yet this is only one side. On the other hand, we also need such a wide panorama of vision that we embrace all possibilities. The chess master sees all the potential moves and keeps them all in mind.

Thus we see the formula for success – broad vision and pinpoint focus. Each of these is a skill to be identified, developed, nurtured and practised, and yet they only begin to operate when we sit down at the table to play with a realistic hope of winning.

INDIVIDUALITY: A LITTLE CHILD LEARNING TO WALK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (3° - 4°)

Collective evolutionary processes guarantee connection and encouragement for all our individual needs

We come into life pre-programmed to meet it all on our own terms. We are never taught of the right of an individual to be free – because it is felt as self-evident at the core of our very being. Individuality develops as we learn skills, and our entitlement to learn them is unmistakable.

We are, however, given plenty of instruction to help us awaken and master aspects of character, and a complex skill set. The child even needs to learn how to walk, and inevitably this is done with parental involvement.

Further instruction is offered by other members of our group – and this becomes a very important and dependable background to our lives. From birth to death we are able to call upon guidance from our fellows, and they will gladly respond by sharing their wisdom – from tips on where to buy good produce, to medical advice during old age.

The constant stream of apt information is often taken for granted, yet is very much a part of our strength. It is very empowering to develop a list of useful contacts. Without a network of connections, we are lost and alone.

Another quality, included within this support framework of information exchange is that of encouragement. This is quite another matter – and it speaks of humanity's underlying, dependable kindness. Typically even a stranger will lace their traffic directions with a dose of goodwill. Our entire attitude of life is constructed around the premise that is essentially helpful and kind.

As a result of this reasonable expectation of supportive assistance, we tend to reach out more – simply because we have fewer doubts about meeting a helpful stranger. This enables us to journeying on in life, through the evolution process of rehearsal and perfecting.

At the other end of this spectrum – we might imagine an isolated city-dweller, less confident of meeting helpful support from strangers, and diminished as a result. Not one who confidently takes the initiative, this person is less inclined to progress spiritually and more likely to indulge in harmful pleasures and the rut of a humdrum round of inconsequential routines.

NORMALITY: AN OLD OWL UP IN A TREE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (4° - 5°)

Living according to spiritual principles develops inner poise and outer success

Only when we can respond true and clear to each natural, ordinary occurrence will we know both the owl's wisdom and the tree's tranquillity. When all the glitter and glamour is removed, and a person is seen exactly as they are, then what shines through is the quality of personal dignity. This is born of self-respect and becomes a clear light in those who, with reliable constancy, adhere to their principles as a normal way of life. If we embody our deepest values in everyday matters, personality becomes down to earth and pleasingly authentic.

This dignity may be hidden beneath a camouflage of emotional and intellectual skills that entertain others to win popularity. This veneer needs to be carefully moderated because there is a profoundly disturbing risk of smugness, which is a distortion of spirit, and harmful in terms of grace and happiness.

Great poise can develop in one who shapes their world using a charismatic personality to demonstrate the balance between humility and self-expression while achieving worldly success based on spiritual principles.

This inevitably requires us to exercise a measure of self-restraint in many of the detailed activities we pursue en route to accomplishment. Difficult situations have to be handled carefully.

Compelled by an inner force, we feel that we must realize our potentials absolutely. This force is as strong as raw desire itself – because that's exactly what it is, applied fully to all the details of our ordinary lives.

Its power can catch us unawares, so it takes remarkable steadiness to hold true to what we elect to make important, especially at times when the battle between conscience and temptation is emphasized by a highly charged desire nature.

The highest spiritual principles are nothing if they are not practical in day to day terms. It is foolish to distinguish between what is, and what is not, spiritual life; life is both spiritual and material simultaneously. The beautifying of personality rests ultimately on our ability to balance and integrate both sides of this coin, the two aspects of one normality. Yet to make this easier by distancing ourselves from our desire nature is false, and we must not capitulate to society's pressure to conform, and thus become only a distorted caricature of ourselves.

SPORTSMANSHIP: A GAME OF CRICKET

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (5° - 6°)

To live by putting principle above expediency is an extraordinary, admirable personal attainment

In any situation, we encounter unpredictable elements – we actually exist in a milieu of confusion – and seek to find a position of balance in order to bring a measure of stability to our circumstances.

Not only do we want to feel able to cope, we want more than that, we want to excel and gain success – and we need to be recognized for this success.

Some people are entirely willing to play by the rules, fully appreciating how fundamental they are in the creating of a stable society. In England the more aristocratic gentlemen would once disdain the beastly behaviour of a foreigner with the invective – ‘*but it’s just not cricket!*’ Good sportsmanship was clear evidence of a person’s attainment to the ranks of civilized behaviour.

Of course there is real challenge in sport – the closest, playful version of warfare – and it is known that this is required in order to bring out the best in a person. If we can still play in strict accordance with the rules when we are threatened with defeat – then we have learned how to put principle above expediency, which is a rare and honourable achievement.

A false pretence to excellence will not do; it is always exposed on the field.

The purpose in all this is self-refinement. We cannot evolve unless we find a way to raise our game, which will only ever occur by playing tougher opponents.

Taken outside the sportsman metaphor – we see how, if we are to become better persons, we must take on further challenges voluntarily, and shape ourselves to fit within a new world of further and challenging constraints.

ALLUREMENT: CUPID KNOCKING ON THE DOOR

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (6° - 7°)

A visionary person follows their dream motivated by optimism – because they know that life is bountiful

Life is abundant. With the correct attitude of expectation and focus, we can inevitably draw deeply upon the resources that are all around, and receive rich blessings.

To do so it may well require constant renewal of our relationship with others, an individual willingness to change or refine anything and everything in our nature and circumstances, as an exercise in self-quickening.

There is an incurably romantic aspect to humankind that is brought to life in relation to others, time after time, notwithstanding frequent and repeated disillusionment. This surely speaks to us of hope and optimism. However often Cupid strikes, we always get caught again next time.

Seeking out an unattainable ideal and vision of self-fulfilment, we can go through unending social renewals, forming and then breaking the ties of association with fellows, ever moving on towards the allurements of a dream.

There is no limit to the horizon of our appetite for new experience. It is as fundamental a motivation as any other; it is creative, liberal and far-sighted.

Through this process, the integrity of our spiritual self is made known, since it is entirely necessary to become self-aware and sensitive to the needs and constraints of whatever and whoever we meet en route.

Unbridled desire, cupidity and self-exaltation are never far away, and can bubble up to take prominence at any time, yet – in all innocence – we seek only to consume and be consumed within the intimacies of involvement with whatever life offers us.

COMPOSITION: ROCKS AND THINGS FORMING THEREIN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (7° - 8°)

Dreams are the seeds of tomorrow's uncreated potential that spring from the depths of the past

Persistent inner confusion is undeniable evidence of a basic misunderstanding about the nature of reality. Rocks seem lifeless and eternally enduring; yet this interpretation is insufficiently profound because they do support life, and eventually do change their form.

It's the same with actual life situations, they may not seem even slightly pliable, yet when we look deeper we can find the potential for change locked within, and discover any number of hidden opportunities.

It is always possible to take control of your own experience of the aspects of life that are meaningful to you, since that which is forming is yet unformed, and will yield to passionate persuasion.

What has been and now is, is the foundation of what will be, just as solid rock gives rise to dynamic life forms. Though our present circumstances may be slow and seem fixed into patterns, nonetheless they hold the seeds of tomorrow's uncreated potential.

So, by accepting our solid roots and learning to make the best of that which is now available, our dreams of a better future will grow out of the depth of the past.

The mystery revealed is that of composition. The refining of self is a constant rediscovery as the many components of reality are pulled into another and yet another shape and attitude, according to changing personal preferences and the creative intelligence of the composer.

In learning the hard lesson of how to find life within that which seems dead, what unfolds is an exceptional ability to mould and remould each of the many and various elements of life, such that the seemingly fixed course of events are shaped and made more pliable, so to fit the dictates of our needs and desires.

EDUCATION: A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN ON STAIRS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (8° - 9°)

Education draws out a mature awareness that to serve another is to serve ourselves

The process of civilizing begins at an early age; it is one of the primary occupations of a mother to sit down with her children and talk about how best to climb the ladder towards successful social integration. We are inclined to act and react without thought, and we need to learn how to moderate and control these base instincts.

Of course, education is more than learning about the significant importance of social customs, and the penalties of non-adherence to them. It is also the gentle, conscious leading out that draws potentials into a form of expression – at the level of ideas, feelings and behaviours.

The mother is an archetype of one who serves the needs of others first. And indeed, we all can develop the mind-set of service, and extend it beyond the genetic imperative of serving our own blood. By doing so, we go well beyond securing our place in the community as a useful participant; we move into more spiritual realms of our evolutionary development.

We learn how best to respond to each and every challenge. When we have perfected the ability to recognize some need in another person and, without hesitation, readily respond with appropriate kindness – then we have raised our inner state to the advanced level of competence that equips us for all that can occur.

Knowing we can cope with everything frees us to pursue anything. We then reach further, and we aspire to attain greater, more idealized outcomes.

The biblical question ‘*am I my brother’s keeper?*’ is not best seen as rhetorical. It can be seen as a subtle, coded esoteric explanation. Yes indeed, most certainly as we evolve, we have an inescapable duty to demonstrate a highly polished and enthusiastic mature social conscience. This however is not an obligation for the common person – it is a privilege for the advanced student of spiritual attainment.

As a matter of cause and effect, fruits and abundant rewards arise from this awareness and practice. Yet these are perks; the true benefit of service is the feeling of serving.

REWARD: GOLD-HAIRED GODDESS OF OPPORTUNITY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (9° - 10°)

Nature takes care of adventurous opportunists – the lucky ones know this

It is well worthwhile to train ourselves to become tireless in reaching out into life, to participate in everyday wonders energetically and enthusiastically. Opportunity is a beautiful golden-haired goddess and rewards her adherents with abundance, especially the confident risk-takers who enjoy the process more than the product.

As humans, it is in our character to be adventurous opportunists. It is only by being this way that we become conversant with what the life-force actually is, to the level where it is true and relevant to say that nature takes care of her own.

A bizarre self-defeating mind-set has beset the Western world for many years – one that equates spiritual excellence with material poverty. This is a distortion of the valid teaching that attachment, through neediness, to physical and emotional satisfaction can rob us of higher states of grace. But this is a warning against attachment not materiality. Certainly the very rich have a hard time squeezing their camels through needle's eyes – but neither are the very poor given easy access to states of serenity, and those jealous of others' wealth have the most difficult task of any. Truly happy people always have enough to share, and never fear lack.

The safest protection that we can have in any experience is full-on involvement. Half-hearted is dangerous – any serious sportsman knows this. To fulfil our potential, we need such a grip – the grasping of opportunity requires sure-footedness and clarity of desire. If we are to enjoy a sense of complete wellbeing, then we need to know who we are, that we are solid, and exactly what we want to create.

This level of certainty is the source of, and the evidence of, an irresistible confidence in ourselves and in life itself. What occurs around us is then a mirror – the reflection of self-love. The feeling is itself reward enough – yet it also generates material and spiritual abundance. Unconditioned expectation prospers.

After the early years, it is no longer appropriate to be dependent upon others for encouragement and support. As adults, we aspire towards a level of emotional self-sufficiency and practical viability that establishes a firm grip on life – firm enough to make happen what we choose to happen.

People so often speak of luck as though it were randomly generated by external forces. Not so. We make our own luck; the truly lucky know this.

RECONCILIATION: LAMP OF PHYSICAL ENLIGHTENMENT AT THE LEFT TEMPLE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (10°- 11°)

The world is a laboratory for the soul to discover relationship between meaning and consequences

The world is a laboratory for the soul. The left temple refers to the place where we intuitively seek inner understandings, and yet there is always a reminder of the need to provide physical support as well as spiritual. In fact temples have to be managed well, illuminated at night with electricity or candles, in order to serve their intended sacred purpose.

Every reality is provided for in our laboratory-temple, not only for us now, but for everyone forever. The very unlikeliness, of this fact of existence, makes it difficult for us to grasp quite how free we are. The reconciliation of spiritual and physical is in no way different to the reconciliation between our fear-begotten limitations and the truth and experience of our freedom.

Inner, spiritual outreach leads to wider understanding, and we are encouraged to pursue such a course if we are to be free and happy. Free will requires that we choose one position, and then typically other people will compel us to come to terms with both sides of the situation that we have chosen to study. This leads us to refine personality and develop loftier spiritual perceptions.

This image is to do with optimising personal effectiveness by making the most of past achievements. Before we experience something new, our knowledge of it is limited and inconsequential. We are drawn, by curiosity and inner conviction, to try out various ways of living our lives and it is important to notice what happens as a result of what we do and say.

Nothing but confusion will come from a witless process of trial and error. We need to study and learn from our attempts and discoveries, and reincorporate new realizations into our mind set, if we are to have a clear and successful approach to life.

Of course, ceaseless experimentation with modes of self-expression has certain benefits. Without trying new ideas, we have no way forward at all.

Yet, in each relationship and activity, we need to balance meaning against consequences, cost against benefit, and bring about reconciliation between apparent opposites – things that pull in different directions.

ADJUSTMENT: FLAG THAT TURNS INTO AN EAGLE THAT CROWS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (11° - 12°)

Willow bends, oak breaks – a balance is sought between real and ideal

The image for this degree is rather strange, yet we can see how the flag indicates allegiance, and we see how a noble bird behaves like a common crow. This hints at the need we have to adjust – and almost falsify – our true self, if we are to find existential security.

To some extent we must conform to pressures from the environment and the community if we are to survive. All around us, everywhere and without exception, there are forces that push and pull, largely through the use of words to make claims, which are rarely substantiated, and to promote idle prejudices. We form our loyalties – we have to if we are to survive – based on these doubtful claims and unexamined prejudices, typically before we are mature enough to validate them.

Yet also we must somehow maintain awareness of what makes us unique – our own inner values, which sponsor our preferences and decisions, and for which we also feel loyalty.

This world is a place of struggle – a dangerous environment that forces us to be cautious about full disclosure. The risk is real that, through this necessary survival-stratagem, we come to a position of crystallized, permanent self-deceit.

So, in order to hold true to our inner convictions, and often against the flow and pressure of mainstream thinking, we have to maintain a clear goal that is the shining light of our dreams, to project the highest part of our unique character into the world. This idealized ambition is a true and valid aspect of who we are – a precious illumination of hope.

As this projection interacts with life, a balance is found between the ideal and the real, the dream and the matter at hand. We can best see the resultant friction as the sandpaper that smooths down a rough-cut personality, and refines fancy into project.

The willow bends in the storm; the oak breaks. The lesson here is adjustment. We need to shuffle our dreams about until they fit the circumstances available to us.

RECTIFICATION: A WIDOW'S PAST BROUGHT TO LIGHT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (12° - 13°)

We must learn to integrate both failure and accomplishments

A widow would normally expect to receive compassionate forgiveness, yet here she is being made aware of her forgotten transgressions, in a seemingly insensitive breach of etiquette.

Nonetheless, just because the widow is sorrowing, does not mean she is free from accountability. This degree asks us to consider the extent to which we have a callous inclination to repudiate responsibility for what we have done – or if we are willing to integrate both failure and accomplishments into personal improvement.

Penalties and rewards arise, but they are not automatically imposed according to natural law – rectifications are constructs of society and, in the final analysis, subject to our own acceptance or rejection of them.

By making public our imperfections and sufferings, we help to demonstrate the connectedness of souls. Our own agonies and ecstasies are shared as part of the wider experience of our soul-group. A successful life must include coming to terms with both failure and loss, since by this integration process, we make ourselves better, stronger people. For most of us, this requires community support, even in the form of censure.

Public exposure can actually assist us profoundly with our emotional clearance. It also has even greater value in encouraging others to deal with their own ordeals of spirit, in a way that recognizes their community involvement and duties.

There are better times ahead; we of faith live our lives according to this understanding – it is this that makes everything right. The almost unendurable pain of loss and grief feels to be beyond anything worthwhile – torture for the soul, and of no value. Yet this all-too-reasonable sentiment is eventually seen as unhelpful. The passing of time eases the pain and ultimately uncovers the benefit we have derived through the suffering.

The true blessing, deeply hidden within such darkness, is a spiritual light – a light that becomes an eternal refuge, a certainty that we are now forever immune from a repetition. We become a rock for others, having gained true empathy and a profoundly understanding character.

CERTIFICATION: THE PYRAMIDS AND THE SPHINX

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (13° - 14°)

We look for assurance that our seed has potency

The divine dispensation of Free Will has been soiled and distorted. Those responsible for introducing this message of Free Will were priests and parents; they failed. This was because the power possessor, whether parent, priest or politician, would not relinquish their power. One consequence of this is that our perception of reality is not free from distortion – it was corrupted in the process of our early conditioning.

Instead of trusting authority figures to authenticate our worth, we need to reclaim our own ability to self-certificate. This has to be done on the basis of objective proof, rather than feelings of self-satisfaction. Hence the need for the Pyramid; it proves something. However, that proof is not greater than what it proves. The Sphinx itself is not of greater consequence than the one who chose to make it become real.

We live in the world and partly within ourselves. The inner world, of our own subjective thoughts, feelings and beliefs, is reflected in the outer world of our circumstances. The criterion that establishes the reality of our outer experience is to do with endurance; if something endures physically, then it is certified as real. We see, in the Pyramids and the Sphinx, an attempt by earlier giants to project into the future, and so realize, their understandings, aspirations and ideals.

This is done by making an enduring mark on events. Will our song be sung in a thousand years? A tendency toward genius exists in each of us, and when we focus our clear, single-eyed attention, then we inevitably create testimonials to that proficiency, which must take on form and endure, if it to be confirmed.

Nothing can be done alone – and our best potential is enacted from within a state of brilliance, this state of grace is an attractive force that pulls together supportive, harmonious associates who bind together in a collective fellowship of creative capacity.

The spiritual test of this degree of wisdom is to avoid the ego-temptation of self-congratulation. This only leads us towards rather ridiculous attempts to fill the shoes of giants – instead of optimising our own unique talents and potentials.

Even the very least of us is pleased to receive certification, an assurance that our seed has potency, our vision has relevance, and our beingness is recorded somehow, somewhere. This comes from developing an effective practicality in our thoughts and deeds. Does it really work? Will it really last? This very practical approach to life sharpens the imagination so that the mind penetrates more deeply and more meaningfully into the mysteries. The outer tests of enduring reality are no less inner tests of relevancy and competence.

REASSURANCE: GROUNDHOG LOOKING FOR ITS SHADOW

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (14° - 15°)

We approach the unknown with caution and wisdom

This groundhog image is of an ingrained timidity or lack of stability. These qualities are not normally considered attractive in a world that rewards power, courage and confidence.

And yet it is worth observing that there is but one process by which we move forward in life: trial and error. It is meaningful to dip a toe to test the temperature of the water – this is an entirely sound approach into the unknown.

If we are to capitalize on the situation at hand, then we have to become aware of the flow of things around us and the direction of drift of potentials. Our creative appreciation of possibility depends upon a certain degree of sensitivity to the changes. Rather than charging in headlong, we need to exercise caution and perspicacity.

This is the best approach if we are to develop a talent correctly to determine our best course of action in situations fraught with danger or uncertainty. The groundhog is looking for the shadow – the feared aspect – of the situation.

Many experiences are best anticipated and rehearsed. Of course we enjoy the spontaneity of responding to the unexpected, yet mostly our lives are made smooth, enjoyable and productive through careful planning, and taking measures to cope with rogue occurrences.

The timid groundhog wants to feel reassured – as do we. Becoming increasingly sensitive to the slightest changes in the wind enables us both to feel secure, and to take the wisest option available. Thus, we see the link between caution and wisdom.

Naturally we would do well to adjust our standpoint and direction according to these sensitivities. It is a great advantage to have sensitive nature, as long as we trust in the intuitive realizations that occur as a result, and seek then to influence outcomes by adding a more subtle wisdom to the decision-making process.

ALERTNESS: SEAGULLS WATCHING A SHIP

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (15° - 16°)

Spirit is ever alert to fulfil its desire nature

The gulls following a fishing trawler know well enough that their survival depends upon observation and competition. This is also true for us humans.

It is true to say that we do not have to grasp every single fish we are offered – because there is also give-and-take in life, and what we lose on the swings, we gain on the roundabout.

Yet there are opportunities all around us, and we are required by our uncertainty of survival to develop the gift of receiving them. This is best seen as a twofold process – first see, then take.

This image is of alertness. There is a very definite process by which sensory data comes at last to enter consciousness. The object of our opportunity is there – but do we see it? We may see it – but do we notice it? We may notice it – but do we act? Alertness is a state of consciousness that has both yin and yang aspects – first see, then take.

Spirit is neither modest nor fearful – its essential purpose is to fulfil its desire nature. It demands its full share in the privileges and rewards of human society. This runs contrary to the non-stop pressure to conform and accept that typifies our public surroundings, within which we are constrained to fit in with social constraints that forbid us full expression of our urges.

Our personal interests are served only as we maintain unceasing vigilance on our own behalf. No one else holds us first in their hierarchy of importance – and society has no respect for our personal characteristic desires at all.

Whatever we fail to claim definitely for our own purposes, to fulfil our own desires, is thereby surrendered promptly to the devices of someone else, or lost entirely.

REBIRTH: AN EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (16° - 17°)

Our life path is the reconciliation of two forces – individual fulfilment and spiritual fellowship

Those things that we do only on special occasions, with ritual and a poignancy of feeling, are meant to be kept special. Their specialness would dissolve and become unavailable to us if we allowed ourselves to become overly concerned with form and ceremony. Easter – and sunrise – has magical power only when celebrated infrequently.

Expansion of awareness, and the related capacity for acuity of perception, is facilitated by moving the attention towards a focus different from what our conditioned upbringing suggests. To realize the fullest extent of our immortal resources, we have to give up the senseless struggle for ephemeral awards – fame and fortune lead us nowhere in the cosmic scheme of things.

Nor is it enough simply to collect skills and explanations. Without the ability to employ them wisely, such preoccupations are as cups and certificates decorating the living room. Wisdom goes beyond them, as fruit goes beyond plant, and is held as the position of poise where head and heart have equal attention.

This attitude of attention is not just another skill; it is a new dimension of being – a place of highest consciousness, which supports the constant process of self-renewal and acts as a catalyst for everyone we meet to awaken, reborn.

Easter speaks to us not only of spiritual fellowship, but also of redemption and its consequential purification. Disregarding the dogma that religionists use to enslave minds, we act in good faith and project into the world our highest sense of eternal values, which endure even as empires and papal supremacy eventually collapse.

Our deepest urgency aligns with our basic sense of racial identity – we are human first and foremost, so we serve humanity's survival and prosperity. Yet we are of spirit, eternal and free, so we align with our desire for individual fulfilment.

The reconciliation of these two forces is our life path. We find that our contribution to the human estate is of greatest general importance and actually optimized – as is everyone's – by finding a way fully to serve ourselves and our community at the same time.

INNOCENCE: TINY CHILDREN IN SUNBONNETS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (17°- 18°)

An innocent involvement in life is a joyful routine experience, with occasional bursts of excitement

Tiny children are powerless to look after themselves, and sometimes they need sunbonnets put on them. It is their innocence that makes them both delightful and incapable of self-protection – and indeed self-projection.

It is quite normal to protect ourselves by shielding away from the dazzle of the Sun – a metaphor for the glaring demands of others. Yet it is through contact with others that we manage to focus who we are and where we are going – so the absence of interaction can lead to diffusion of identity, and the associated frustration.

The many non-special interactions that we have are actually quite important when taken as a whole, even though one by one they may seem trivial and unworthy of keen attention. When we were young, playing with other children generally was of great consequence in every sense, yet each individual session of playtime was not seen as such a big deal. These easier modes of interaction are very worthwhile and yet undemanding.

There is an optimal life-path that unfolds our potentialities fully and beautifully. It is pursued by seizing, with confidence and hope, whatever opportunities that arise from time to time. This really does require that we engage with the world, and to some extent that means stressful situations become inevitable occasionally.

Full participation in everyday life can become a joyful routine experience, with sporadic bursts of more meaningful or exciting events, within a backdrop of simple, innocent wellbeing.

It is good and wholesome to launch ourselves into the world, and then to stand firm when this leads to confrontation about matters of great consequence. Yet residual tendencies towards infantile self-assertiveness need to be honestly examined for what they are, and what they tell us about ourselves.

The ideal corrective for any such feelings is normal day-to-day life. The simple things add up to complex important things, and anyway they also have their own intrinsic value in the moment. If we are doing the washing up, then that is what we are doing and we need to do it well.

FRONTIER: PELICANS MOVING THEIR HABITAT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (18° - 19°)

Life is a frontier, an exploration where refuge is momentary – a place to recuperate

The integrity of our being cannot be realized by accepting the unacceptable.

Whatever is missing from our lives here and now, will be found elsewhere at a later time. The range of life experiences has no limit, our potential resources are unending – and our skills and capacity are without measure. Any willingness to settle for less than enough is born of fear or lack of gumption.

Like these pelicans, we may have to move our habitat in order to reestablish ourselves whenever our circumstances no longer seem profitable.

Whether or not we realize it, we live on a frontier. A frontier is not an established border; it moves – as do the shifting sands of life's variables in all their complexity. It stands as a moving line between where we are safe and where we are not safe. That is the condition of all life – and is basically an antisocial understanding.

We achieve our best outcomes only as we make the fullest use of our capacity for genius. This is a non-ordinary state of consciousness that is awakened in a person – any one of us – when certain conditions arise. These conditions are the need for genius – and are stimulated by situations beyond the safety line.

The refinement, and evolutionary growth, of our character and soul, will never occur without living outside the comfort zone and on the frontier of our awareness.

Spirit has the capacity for indomitable originality; nothing is beyond our ability if we would only awaken our fullest potential. Yet to do this, we have to live life as an adventure where safety is a temporary place to rest and regroup.

PROCUREMENT: MEN CUTTING THROUGH ICE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (19° - 20°)

Fruit doesn't jump into our mouths – we need to do work to harvest nature's abundance

Observing men working in the cold, on a difficult task, we might focus on the hardness of life, its difficulties, and the mighty task of surviving nature's cruel indifference. Yet such pessimism is a poor choice of how to focus the mind, and shows lack of perspective.

The more helpful attitude of mind is one where we interpret everything we encounter as fully in service both to ourselves and to the community.

Nature is what it is, and affords us unlimited opportunity for self-expression and self-discovery. Whether we choose the hard or soft version is a matter of personal preference. In this example, men take on a hard task in order to procure the fruits of that task.

It is typical that we have to overcome obstacles in order to fulfil our wants and needs. The deeper benefit comes from the overcoming – in other words the process rather than the product.

It is very unlikely that we could establish the essence of who we are without receiving recognition for our talents and knowledge. Such recognition comes from the community only when we struggle to overcome, and find our way to capitalize upon opportunity.

This success is achieved according to our ability to organize nature. All around us is a superabundance of natural resources. Yet the fruit doesn't jump into our mouths – we need to do work to release the bounty.

Failure to grasp this principle leads to wasted effort and disappointment.

EXAMINATION: A CHILD AND A DOG WITH BORROWED EYEGLASSES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (20°- 21°)

All is illusion and meaning is subjective, so we must examine everything without prejudice

This is a very strange image. Are the child, the dog and the glasses in some way an accurate representation of an event that has occurred or could occur – where the dog has greater intelligence? Or is it an eloquent metaphor that speaks in one dimension of another, offering clues to help us discern meaning?

We humans have the ability of analysis; we can ponder on patterns, relationships and meanings. We are tasked to examine all and everything, without favour, because it is this facility of the human mind which can liberate us from the enslavement of pre-conception. We may eventually come to the accurate realizations that meaning is subjective, a personally-invented device to please that part of the mind that needs to trust in some cosmic order.

We need the structure of the material world to give form to nuances of our inner world. This serves an emotional functionality, because we would lack mental stability if we could not ground our fantasies. Also, in order to penetrate the mysteries of personal identity, we need to give careful enquiry to that very personal aspect of reality that we fantasize about.

The neediness is what creates prejudice. We pre-judge, and project our needs upon the outer world in the form of blind expectancy. This allows us to exclude hard fact, and see nothing but what we expect or hope to see.

The typical conversation between any two people is structured around the certainty that the physical world is the only reality. Yet this is false and many of us know it is – yet we continue to live within the perpetually reaffirmed illusion of its validity.

It is a worthwhile exercise from time to time to stop. Then look around at what we are experiencing. Sometimes the strangeness of life is really quite startling. There is plenty of evidence of the non-ordinariness of our everyday lives, but few are willing to notice.

Human spirit is unimpeachably universal – there are no absolute lines of demarcation between higher or lower life forms or varying stages of competency in each. We cannot assume the child has more awareness than the dog – because, although this is extremely likely, it must be subject to examination.

SECLUSION: A CHINESE LAUNDRY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (21°-22°)

Life's true rewards come through poise, inner awareness and self-possession

It is necessary to resist potential inner feelings of inferiority brought on when people disdain our work and worth – as can happen towards those in a Chinese laundry, whose service to the community is actually of real, if hidden importance.

The image hints at those whose path towards self-optimization requires them to follow a very specialized occupation that might deny them superficial communion with fellows, and even seclusion – a somewhat antisocial lifestyle demanding tremendous concentration for us to focus on important goals.

To master any occupation, it is entirely necessary to guard carefully our inner state and to make a daily practise of inwardness. Whatever is done in the outer world has its origins within – in the inner world of thought and vision. So re-engaging with the inner source of initiative is very wholesome.

In order to sustain the enduring, unrewarded, and even disrespected labour, it takes unremitting dedication and profound faith in ourselves and our work, and a confident trust that out of this work will come a better future for humanity. A great richness of life eventually comes through the pursuit of an objective for which the incentives are remote. Modern society typically rewards those whose achievements and attributes are seen – this is not at all indicative of any emotional or spiritual maturity in the culture.

Because of this, we have to develop exemplary poise. This begins as a necessary facility to maintain a sense of dignity, and yet develops into a masterly attribute – of being able to hold our own even in strange or irksome situations.

Seclusion at work – perhaps at first enforced by an unappreciative social environment – can now be seen as a path towards, and expression of, an unusual depth of inner awareness and self-possession.

By retiring from the busyness of life, we learn to touch the state of soul consciousness, and develop associations with spiritual or angelic forces, whose influence radiates forth. This promotes access to the highest reaches of our inspired creative being, which state is a requirement for the pursuit of the specialist occupation.

ENTRANCE: IMMIGRANTS ENTERING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (22°- 23°)

With faith, imagination and expectation, we create a new life every day

In his book Music of Life, Hazrat Inayat Khan explains how all the clashing and banging in life is entirely the result of souls being in the wrong place, trying desperately to shift their position until they find peace. Each soul is unique and individual, and has the capacity to express genius if it can find its place in the world. Unless and until this is done then it is existentially restless – so we are never at peace if we are not well positioned.

When an immigrant crosses a frontier they are taking a big risk, and know for certain that they will need to learn a great many things, and train themselves in additional skills in order to find their place. Their entrance into another life is not unlike our own – we enter a new life every day, and each day brings its own different challenges and opportunities. This is a life-attitude of a person of vitality.

Daily life offers opportunities which we must grasp if we are to manoeuvre into better position to experience ourselves at our best. It's a *snakes-and-ladders* kind of game though – we can go down as well as up. The downs are typically evidenced by a diminishment of vitality, absence of creative flair and the presence of impasse. If the heart is not engaged, and enthusiasm is a rare experience, then root-level change is called for.

We yearn to feel the certainty that we are authentic and in the right place, and this sometimes demands radical transformation. When we feel absolutely real and if our work and relationships are all true and deep – only then can we know soul consciousness. Otherwise we must find the courage to move on, or risk stagnation at the level of soul. We have to leave the nest if we want to fly.

To speak of genius is to court ridicule – yet each of us has the potential to create something original out of nothing but thought. Here's the formula: first faith, then imagination, then expectation.

Only the foolish and silly will expect success without ardent application. We need to learn how to make reality conform to our will – by repeatedly learning from never-ending trial and error experiments. This is often called training, or sometimes knowledge management.

This is the secret that separates out the goats from the sheep. It is so convenient for the sheep to accept life as disappointing, dismissing all the evidence that it is their own inadequacy that led to the poor attempts to create predetermined outcomes. The goats apply themselves properly, and succeed.

FORTUNE: A BLUEBIRD STANDING AT THE DOOR OF A HOUSE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (23° - 24°)

To become happy, radiate goodwill – we get whatever we merit

Our worthiness is always rewarded – and the rewards are always apt and fair. If we have the good fortune to see a bluebird at the threshold of our place of dwelling, it is because we deserve it. This wisdom is the foundation of all wisdom – we get what we deserve.

More accurately, we are offered it. The portents are given – the signs are always there – but it takes constant alertness and creative aspiration to make the best of what is signalled.

The immanence of rewarding experience is a constant river that flows into our lives and embraces us, carries us and refreshes us.

The correct attitude – by which we not only reap the rewards but also stimulate further abundance – is radiant goodwill. We shine our complete sense of confidence and wellbeing on all who enter our lives.

By this attitude we capitalize on every potential and make our lives rich and fulfilling. We behave as though we are rich and we therefore become rich – ‘seem happy to become happy’.

This doesn’t work so well without a suitable measure of careful attention being offered to matters of serious consequence. Careless and carefree is a rare combination for a reason – because it is so impractical.

The danger with that approach is that we tend to miss opportunities for dimensional shifts, and degenerate into bland non-entities.

EMULATION: A CHUBBY BOY ON A HOBBYHORSE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (24° - 25°)

By emulating an achiever we can focus our desire more effectively

The least of us has an irrepressible and powerful motivation to make our stamp on the world, chubby boys included.

We tend to do this by a process of learning skills and finding a place to employ them. Training very often takes the form of play – as the hobbyhorse suggests.

Things of lesser consequence can be raised up with the correct attitude of mind. Our corpulent young hero may well be at the earliest stages in a long career that is capped by his attaining the position of Field Marshall, and winning a battle for his country.

However, the optimization of life achievement is more about the extent of our improvement rather than the end result. The perfection of our best accomplishment may not be recognized by society at all – what really matters is that we fulfil our desires.

To do this, and realize complete fullness of life, we need to hold our attention in a particularly focused way upon the objects of our desire.

This invariably requires that we learn how to emulate a previous high achiever. Even if we have no role model for this, we can imagine one – as no doubt the tubby boy is doing when he rides into battle on his imaginary warhorse.

The wisdom is about the advantages of using the power of imagination to overcome imperfections in confidence – *fake it til you make it* – and not about making false claims; this must be avoided because it leads to resistance and the powerlessness of inauthenticity.

NOBILITY: A FLAG BEARER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (25° - 26°)

Whenever they resound with the imperatives of history, collective ideals trump personal needs

In battle, the flag bearer carries no gun and is very vulnerable. Yet it is a high honour and requires a deep sense of nobility to raise up the standard that holds aloft the value-essence of those who are loyal to the flag.

This is no empty gesture to win false credit – when properly done, all available resources are pulled together and applied effectively towards a common purpose that expands experience to a new dimension.

Nobility commands. This is the quality that commandeers resources so that the impossible may be achieved, typically in times of emergency or when great deeds are enacted.

At such times, things of enduring significance have to be managed – historical imperatives are at play.

Our personal ideals take on a transcendent dimension only to the extent that they resonate with the collective vision that unfolds as the march of history.

At such times our personal agendas are made subservient in service to the greater good. Common ideals trump personal visions.

This is the image of a level of service so high that it awakens the spiritual dimension in our lives, as we put aside lesser considerations in order to apply ourselves in a self-sacrificing way to support the great cause of the moment.

IMMORTALIZATION: A SCULPTOR

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (26° - 27°)

With mastery, when our vision of self is strong, light can shine through stone

An irrepressible desire to endow transience with permanence – possessing it – somehow brings nature into subjugation. The sculptor immortalizes an otherwise fleeting aspect of life, bringing truly exceptional self-expression to bear upon rock-hard reality. In a similar way, we have to make up the worldly expression of who we think we are, so that we have substance within our world.

In order completely to have something, we must share it. That is because one aspect of a thing is its relation to other things, and without that aspect, it is not fully realized and enjoyed. This applies as much to our own self-image as anything else.

What's more, by sharing ourselves with others, we allow them to contribute to our evolutionary shaping process, and so we actually absorb aspects of them into who we are.

We cannot maintain any expanded self-image if we cannot strongly project it – so our vision of self must endure. It needs to withstand the challenges of social involvement and community approval as well as the tests of time. Otherwise it is a mood, an ephemeral idea, a fancy or fantasy.

Maturity of self-development is the furthering of self-manifestation. As we become increasingly aware of who we uniquely are, we want to find ways to give more definite substance to that uniqueness. This is inevitably linked to the creative aspect of self. If not creative, then how unique?

Of course we need to guard against overambitious pretension and the dry pointlessness of callous impersonality. After all, by sculpting personality, we have turned vibrancy to stone; this is hubris.

Let our gift of manifestation be expressed in living works of light therefore. Even in statues of stone, light can shine through. It is the talent, which moulds the statue, that is the real treasure; the sculpting is a process whose highest product is mastery not statues. Mastery lives on and is passed down through the generations indefinitely, not for a mere handful of millennia.

CONSERVATION: OLD BRIDGE OVER A BEAUTIFUL STREAM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (27° - 28°)

All ideals and all people fit together to embody an eternal pattern of nature

Old things, old ways and old ideas can be nothing more than outworn evidence of a total lack of initiative, or an inner lack of vitality or courage. Old isn't necessarily good.

And yet, delightfully, old structures can also speak of the enduring stability of the world at large, hinting at an eternal sense of security and wellbeing that places us in the present moment, yet with firm and ancient worldly roots.

Humanity has built objects of stone and wood that last for generations and have seen the rise and fall of empires, fashions and waves of historical change. We come to depend more for our sense of rightness on what is built by masons than what is built by governments and culture.

Each person can attend to their own requirements by expressing their needs in form and function, and such objects that are thus made tend to last, and take on a special worth within our sense of goodness and beauty.

In turn, nature has a way of integrating the best of these to enhance her already perfect beauty. Does the chipped, moss-clad, discoloured bridge diminish the scene? It does not; it seems to draw better attention to the loveliness of the stream it spans.

Each person can blend and integrate each other person – as do stream and bridge, which are in natural harmony, each enhancing the other's essential features. All needs and ideals fit together to serve the eternal pattern, though only genius can see this.

What falls away, as ephemeral as dust upon the wind, is what does not serve and take its place usefully into this universal pattern of cosmic alignment.

PARTICIPATION: FAT BOY MOWING THE LAWN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (28° - 29°)

To be involved in community, we must each find a way to attend to another's needs

All of us must participate as individuals within a group context and this inevitably requires us to offer a service that has practical relevance to our community. 'Community' is a concept; in reality we have to find a way to attend to the needs of individuals.

Doing so, we give evidence of a broader competency. Not only can we mow this lawn, we can probably mow other lawns, and perhaps even trim hedges.

The range of our potential contributions is like an artist's palette, and speaks of what we have made familiar over the years through the innumerable choices that express our preferences. We can now see that how we serve is the creative expression of who we are.

If this service is half-hearted, we will not win full acceptance from our fellows. In most cases, doing our very best is enough to earn full approval, with all the benefits that go along with that approval. It is by mastering challenges that we gain respect – the community needs its members to rise up and overcome.

The grinding pressure to conform can mould a person tightly into a pattern that will only ever throw up clones and robots whose projection into the future is dull and perfunctory. The true servant of collective wellbeing will be able to meet this life-denying force and assert a more creative outcome.

In adulthood, the refinement of selfhood thrives on this. Counter-intuitively, the grind is what throws up individuality so much more extravagantly than would a supportive, encouraging environment. The power of social moulding typically tries to disempower primitive appetites and instincts yet can have the exact opposite effect – and the person who can access both the primitive and the social is rare and special.

This is the one who has learned to tame the beast. A calm disposition engenders an effective attitude of service, yet the inner passion that allows unbridled appetite is never far away.

SANCTITY: THE POPE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF SAGITTARIUS (29° - 30°)

We raise ourselves up by sanctifying our highest values

The Pope represents the principle that ordinary people can raise themselves up to a place of excellence by acknowledging that certain values, attitudes and qualities have special worth, even to the point of sanctifying them. Each of us reaches the highest dignity of being only to the extent that we have made sacred those of our qualities that we hold up as the best we have to offer.

To some extent we are all tempted by a lust for power and the love of self-display. It is very difficult to resist the egotistical sense that we are more important – or less important – than anyone else, so we can easily be drawn into a distorted sense of self.

We eventually learn that of itself raw ambition is inadequate – except when it meets the exceptional needs of our own personal day-to-day life experiences. Positions of high profile rarely answer all of our personal needs and desires, although the illusion that they will may be a major motivating force to drive us to seek elevated status.

One example of these exceptional needs is the appreciation we receive from our fellows. This actually is a type of energy; it strengthens us, and further boosts our appetite for self-disclosure. Our eagerness for position may well be motivated by a yearning for admiration, and the benefits that that brings.

Thus we find the vigour to climb to a position, inevitably dramatizing our skills and abilities as we do. This supports our essential life-purpose, to experience ourselves as fully as possible in all ways imaginable.

Social and political hierarchies must exist in a civilized grouping, and they are constructed upon a value system, which is raised in importance by rituals and sacredness. That can be religious, it can be cultural, it can be scientific, yet we will always be measured by whether our choices and behaviours are consistent with the predominant establishment.

People are capable of spectacular self-surrender in service to their family, nation and race. Without established value systems, such service will never occur, and the opportunity to experience the high spiritual principle of sacrifice is not sponsored.



CAPRICORN

RESPECT / PRAGMATISM / ACCOMPLISHMENT / SELF-EFFACEMENT / FORTITUDE / MASTERY

Humility and diligence deserve respect and position

Capricorn is steadfast, stable, shrewd, resolute and disciplined. It is the most single-minded of all the signs, whose qualities are promoted deliberately, methodically and decisively, with a persistent and intractable spirit of nature. Fecundity, affluence and advancement are the result. It shows great resilience and matchless stamina, has a stark survival reflex, never assumes good fortune and can suffer abnormal adversity. Its potency, staunchness and sheer doggedness predictably lead to mastery, and the prestige of a managerial rank. With great regard for history and convention, it represents orthodox morality, holds a demeanour of gravitas, and wears a mantle of emotional control, psychic resilience and earthy endurance.

It sees life as a serious business that must be negotiated with due diligence. Objectives are managed carefully, with real grit. As servants or as managers, it pushes efficiently against obstacles, makes the most of any talent and potential and sees it as a social duty to achieve goals and challenge others to reach their own level of excellence. With few comforts and resources, goats persist to claim their place in the hierarchy, finding themselves rightfully at the top – highly respected leaders in organizations they once humbly served. A drive for recognition binds them into a system of social control, which they learn to handle with great focus and authority. Respecting structures that have proven viable over time, they often become officers in the chain of command, key wielders of power, able in turn to demand respect from others.

The structure of life is very clear and generally reliable – applying this saturnine wisdom is the foundation of the goat's power. Since rewards stimulate effort, they are an aspect of the formula of attainment – and so therefore are considered sacred and worthy of celebration. Success follows a formulaic pattern, and to master materiality we need to learn how to master the pattern. First play – through which skills and tips unfold; then learn – in order to complete self-confidence; then intend, with clear focus of a specific well-defined outcome; then expect a result – which finally triggers celebration, the initial purpose of the exercise.

Each of the Earth Signs is rigorously engaged with the physical, and there are deeply hidden reasons for this, which relate to the need for security. In Capricorn's case, this secure state comes through identifying that they are not needed, and therefore are free to fail without being held responsible for the collapse of society's structured stability. The irony is very subtle, paradoxical even, since it mostly seems that their abiding motivation is to demonstrate their irreplaceability. Yet this is their existential double-bind – the only way to prove they are not needed is to become apparently indispensable and then be replaced.

Tremendous faith comes from knowing they are the bedrock of society – and, as irrepressible as the rock of the earth, this sign cannot be broken down. It knows how to win and knows how to lose; it does not confuse what appears to be with what is; ego is a tool not a *raison d'être*; it knows itself to be in this world but not of this world – and finally its reality is universal and cosmic, not subject to the structure it has mastered. Tarot links Capricorn to The Devil, seemingly, but not actually, chained to the earth. People bind themselves to attachments because freedom is frightening and requires too much responsibility. Yet the goat affirms a path of responsible power towards greater cosmic potentiality, overcoming challenges of the base nature and environment, to gain in stature, reach and awareness – soul prizes worth the formidable expenditure of effort.

CAPRICORN WISDOM

RESPECT

Authority requires and demands respect – most effectively through an uncompromising inner integrity
Commemoration creates our sense of belonging and is a binding force of community
Appropriate renunciation is the greatest attribute of personal freedom
Clear-mindedness and efficiency are leadership qualities, promoting good order and effectiveness
On occasion, taking power is entirely valid

PRAGMATISM

We have all the resources we need to deal with the vagaries of life
Few learn to see what the essential nature of existence is; these people succeed
There is an overall coherence to life in which each individual part is essential
Worldly success follows spiritual attunement
Our right to eat is authorized by our willingness to feed

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Following a herd instinct will not lead to self-actualization
True knowledge is imparted through explanation not persuasion
We all have a certain and inviolable connection to the creative power of the universe and its source
Our creative life-signatures are valid only in relationship to our surroundings
Abundance is the mystery of life on Earth

SELF-EFFACEMENT

Individuals and society both gain evolutionary benefits from animated mutual interaction
Only by letting go of that which covers us, can we find out what is being covered up
Membership of any group always costs us some freedom of self-expression
The heart enjoys service for its own sake, so we each have an inherent desire to be helpful
Through worship, one unifying motivation enables us to experience the full exaltation of self

FORTITUDE

Each of us takes responsibility for our own self-mastery
Having loyalty to long range ends, we can transform setbacks with grace of spirit and self-discipline
With leadership comes both high reward and onerous duties
True life-satisfaction is beyond us until we find something to make sacred
The material expression of our character is the final and undeniable proof of it

MASTERY

Free spirits are masters of their own experience
The seeker of ultimate realization must hold to the path with resolute steadfastness
Management is its own fulfilment for those who make common welfare their personal concern
To balance seen and unseen worlds, our inner feelings have to be tested in outer experience
The life lesson is to seize opportunity

THE EXPRESSIONS OF CAPRICORN

RESPECT

CAPRICORN 1 – 5

Respect is not seen here as a gentle courtesy that each affords all others equally in a gentle social scenario, it is understood on a deeper level. It is a power, and an aspect of the powerful. The weak and mild will teach that if we want it, and if we want to remain in control of our own situations, then we need to win respect of others; the strong simply demand it. It is wise to protect and defend ourselves, and the least violent use of power is to command respect.

Society teaches and requires mutual respect by implementing codes, rules and laws. Moralists and lawmakers claim their authority from historical precedents, and these codes are the agency through which the better aspects of the community's past are projected into its future. This process – respecting attitudes of the past and challenges of the future – enables various communal imperatives. We can sort out what is important from what is trivial, and we can make plans to optimize opportunity and security. Countries, for example, that do not manage this well are mostly underdeveloped and constantly at risk from aggression.

PRAGMATISM

CAPRICORN 6 – 10

What some see as pessimism, even cynicism, Capricorn sees as necessity, due diligence, common sense practicality, and down-to-earth reasonableness. The true leaders of a community are those who are able to inspire others, to nurture and offer advice, and to guide situations towards helpful conclusions. Mostly, they are professionals – managers, doctors, architects, accountants, and others. They share a particular attitude to their work and their lives – they are trained, cautious, responsible, meticulous, and most of all realistic. Typically they report to a body of governance, and carefully maintain their status as respected notables.

The inner quality that gives rise to such high standards has a definite dignity of being, which requires constant self-discipline and adherence to a code. The characteristics of such people are more conservative than radical, promoting the tried and tested more than new wisdom because the penalties for mistakes are much more impressive than the rewards for innovation; they avoid the stick, rather than chase the carrot.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

CAPRICORN 11 – 15

By whatever personal standards we have set, accomplishment seems good and right – it feels like we have fulfilled an important aspect of our life purpose when we manage to overcome difficulties and enjoy the good fortune of a measure of well-deserved success. Luck actually is not random – it is attracted into the lives of those who work hard to develop skills and fulfil their plans. It isn't simple to handle matters – for most people this world is much more of a challenge than a joyride. Different types of people have different names for the processes by which a thought is made into a thing or an event. Some call it management, some call it magick, and some call it prayer, but the process of each is the same. An attitude of focus, and usually persistence, is important, plus the expectation of reward, the ability to project imagination and knowing how to win cooperation. It is very interesting to read biographies of successful people – in any field of life from politician to comic, sportsman to disciple – the formula for attainment is universal, and it can be taught and learned.

SELF-EFFACEMENT

CAPRICORN 16 – 20

Learning how to balance Self with Other is the essence of life on both the material and spiritual levels. A sports team is an example that shows how the whole is greater than the sum of parts, and how to identify more with collective endeavour than personal. This same idea is found in nationhood – and promoted with jingoistic phrases, emotional manipulation and raising the flag to a level of sacredness – ‘*for God and country*’. Being a team player is learned very early at school, and, ideally, encouraged as much as individual excellence.

We can lose ourselves, in the sense of surrendering to the moment, when we are rapt in the joy of natural forces, or with complete absorption in a project and, of course, through any experience of in-depth mysticism. Capricorn tackles this important dimension of life mainly through discipline and discipleship, and has an ability to enjoy its capacity for self-effacement – paradoxically even to the level of taking pride in it. Christmas, and therefore crucifixion, is celebrated during this month, though often with overtones of martyrdom and guilt.

FORTITUDE

CAPRICORN 21 – 25

The recognition of personal worth tends to be evaluated by most people in society’s terms, with things and awards that are hard to come by – especially by Capricorn, for which it is very important to be seen as fit for purpose; it works with grit and endurance to serve the community conscientiously. Slavish obedience to this principle would diminish joy and self-realization, yet when carried out with full awareness, can in fact optimize the attainment of personal potential.

To serve a powerful master – and society is exactly that – we have to learn to keep on our toes all the time. While we are behaving as obedient servants, it requires great awareness to hold on to our own agenda and perceptions. Carlos Castaneda speaks of the *petty tyrant* – and teaches that the truly committed spiritual disciple must learn how to survive within the most starkly oppressive environments. Most mystery teachings have the same idea – we take on very difficult challenges as a voluntary practice in order to put aside fears and to grow in stature. With such a perspective, and consistent fortitude, even apparent defeats are useful as lessons and there is nothing in life that can keep us down.

MASTERY

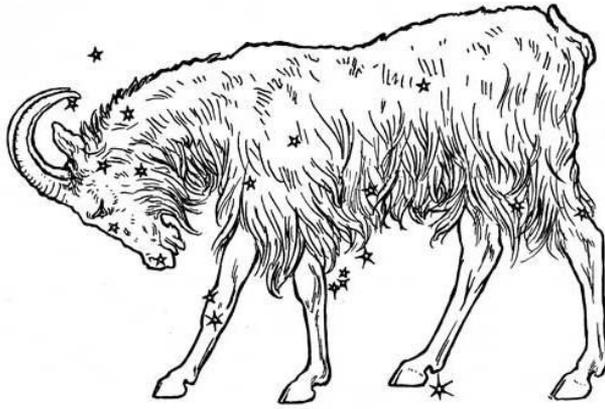
CAPRICORN 26 – 30

Any strategic life course aims to optimize potential and make real whatever is imagined; a path of mastery is one that achieves this goal. There are established policies and techniques for this, together with a complex range of essential individual qualities. Generally a dissatisfied, restless disposition is more likely to keep one moving up to a place of high repute and influence. The master can convince people that what suits them personally also suits the community very well; so can ascend to a position of leadership rather easily.

The fabric of society is woven by policymakers – functionaries who legislate in order to motivate group endeavour towards communal purposes; it is best if these are the ones who best demonstrate working within the rules. So, to win public support, a leader needs to be the perfect example of good order and obedience, while at the same time being free-thinking and independent.

Since uncertainty breeds instability and wasted resources, it is more reliable to create a future very similar to the past; yet progression and innovation is inevitable. It is tremendously exacting to navigate a successful path between new uncertainty and old reliability, between humility and pride, and between service and command. More than any other sign, Capricorn does this well.

PLANETS IN CAPRICORN



SUN in Capricorn (☉♑)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 338 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Capricorn (☾♑)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

Here the Moon is unconsciously drawn to people and situations that express and support seriousness, stability, achievement, reasonableness and reliability. It is unemotional, or at least controlled, and cares for loved ones by offering material proof of nurture more readily than affectionate gestures. It needs to be needed and can be counted on to fulfil obligations effectively and without fuss, and can handle stressful management positions competently.

MERCURY in Capricorn (☿♑)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Mercury becomes very structured in Capricorn, so our way of thinking and communicating becomes serious and reasonable, with a tendency towards anxiety and strategy. There is exceptional clarity about how society operates and what needs to be done to function well within it.

VENUS in Capricorn (♀♑)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Capricorn's effect upon Venus is to make her less playful, and with a keen eye on improving her position and worth. Relationships are productively employed to further ambitions and often more to do with that than sharing affectionate feelings and emotional nurture. Love takes on the qualities of reliability, respect, duty and dignity – is a serious business, yet gentle and true. Within this Sabian degree there are clues about the best strategies for achieving a successful partnership and friendship circle.

MARS in Capricorn (♂♄)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

A thrusting goat is unstoppable, and in Capricorn, Mars achieves its exalted level of effectiveness and unbridled ambition. This is the plodding long-term strategist, who is filled with a conviction of inevitable success and recognition. Its ability to withstand stress is incomparable, and its refusal to be thwarted no less than the inescapable push of history.

JUPITER in Capricorn (♃♄)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

A typical Jupiter in Capricorn person will find it beneficial to take life somewhat seriously at times, accepting high-level duties of social responsibilities, and enjoying the feeling of benign authority. They can be a force for good, bringing nobility and optimism when dealing with important matters.

NORTH NODE in Capricorn (♁♄)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

There is strong foundation in home and family when North Node is in Capricorn, yet the bigger challenge is to reach out into the world of social governance, professionalism and ambition. There is felt a duty to serve the community no less than loved ones.

SATURN in Capricorn (♄♄)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Taking the mystery of this Sabian Symbol seriously, you can deepen your practical wisdom. Saturn is very happy to be in Capricorn, although happiness for Saturn is an old man's happiness. These types become carers for the elderly, cautious bankers, and responsible, common-sense leaders who structure and defend peaceful community stability.

CHIRON in Capricorn (♄♄)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

This individual finds imposed authority very difficult, yet will often accept heavy burdens of responsibility in which they find opportunities to resolve childhood influences arising from parental bullying. The personal evolutionary challenge, through diligent self-examination, is to shift perception – by finding ways to turn problems into opportunities.

CAPRICORN – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

INFLEXIBILITY: AN INDIAN CHIEF DEMANDING RECOGNITION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (0° - 1°)

Authority requires and demands respect – most effectively through an uncompromising inner integrity

An Indian chief is a symbol of an ever-effective power of command. It is not a temporary position or subject to popularity and is associated with dignity, and perhaps an inflexibility of character. Sometimes very difficult decisions have to be made which have enormous, even life-threatening, ramifications, and these require a person whose vision follows from a single eye, is consistent and true. Few are able to do this, and such a person can, and does, demand recognition – so to perfect their authority.

This degree shows of an uncompromising inner integrity, and the ability for meeting the situation of the moment fearlessly with the expectation of gaining the high ground.

It requires extreme fidelity to accepted values, so that those who follow have no qualms about the chief serving the highest community purposes.

Anyone working with power and leadership must inevitably develop a steely determination to realize and maintain every advantage gained by birth or through experience. There is no intention here kindly to affirm equality among the general population – power-possessors hold power because they can, and because they decide to do so; what others think of this is secondary, of no great importance.

Every opportunity for self-expression is fully grasped, as a way further to strengthen the grip on the leadership.

However, this should not degenerate into officiousness, and the senseless raising of all minor issues, since this will be correctly interpreted as arrogant egotism and pretentious foolishness.

As a person, this type of leader is happy only when they feel secure in the place they made for themselves. This is because there will always be a challenge to power, and anyone claiming such high profile needs to guard themselves against action from any others who might also claim the position. Hence the need is felt to demand recognition – since this picks up any signs of a revolt that could dangerously undermine their position, and therefore their uncompromised ability to discharge their duty of service through command.

COMMEMORATION: TWO STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS, ONE DAMAGED BY BOMBARDMENT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (1°- 2°)

Commemoration creates our sense of belonging and is a binding force of community

The original artist, who first made a window that was able to evoke feelings of inspiration and beauty, was dramatizing his personal characteristics and sense of life through his handiwork. This subsequently impacted upon appreciative observers.

In the same way, each of us has responsibility to bring to an exalted expression anything we find of high significance in our lives. What happens subsequently – whether seen by just a dozen or a million observers, whether preserved and protected or damaged by bombs – is not relevant in the moment.

In this way an historical record is made – on a personal or a collective level – that commemorates feelings as well as events. This is non-trivial; it is thus that we create our sense of belonging and the all-important binding force of community. If the sense of involvement with our community is to bind us deeply and significantly, as an aspect of its evolving cultural expression, then we must commemorate a real feeling not an idea.

There will always be the threat of damage, through bombardment or other forces of entropy, because superficialities are constantly at risk from the inherent destructiveness of life. So we have to protect and defend that which we value enough to commemorate. One of the windows survived the attack.

Things which are raised up by this special quality of communal attention are those that sponsor pride in the vision we share – typically how we decide to serve humanity.

Yet taken out of the context of our own lives, with current-day needs and aspirations, an overly-loyal commitment to past moments can engender an unhelpful, even fearful, conservatism that leads to dogma and diminished vitality.

Our ideas only take on a real dimension to the extent that we are able to narrow down their meaning to a point of significance in our personal situations. They have to matter to us at a deeply subjective level if they are to have any impact upon others.

AVIDITY: SOUL'S CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (2° - 3°)

Appropriate renunciation is the greatest attribute of personal freedom

In every moment throughout eternity, another new version is created out of life's infinite possibilities. Each version is special in itself, and yet contains all of the components that make up the universe. Whether we identify ourselves with the external, or with internal truth, we have to acknowledge that life – in all of its articulations – is a rich experience.

We can '*seek knowledge unto China*' – as the Sufis would say – or we can live out each day in a mundane predictable rhythm, and still eventually get to the point of it all: that life is truly amazing! For those of us who have unlocked the secret, it is life itself – rather than our circumstances – that delights. Each person, each day, each situation and each of our feelings is delightful.

As we change, we grow. And as we grow, we constantly discover new perceptions, which often are surprising and sparkling. Those sparkles of consciousness are as droplets of pure spirit, and they need to be contained and supported lest they scamper away leaving nothing but a wistful sense of barely fulfilled promises. The people around us will be our containers; we look to them for understanding.

Each person in our lives has a particular piece of the whole to reflect to us. We know of our personal evolution most authentically insofar as it is reflected in our involvements. So we see that a period of accelerated growth will require an intensity of interaction, probably not only in depth with one or more individuals, but also in a kaleidoscopic breadth of social intercourse.

Just as a child seeks more and more adventures, we are avid to try out new ways to discover who we are and how we respond to new experiences. This is done in innocence, for the sake of it – as Irish say – '*for the craic!*' There is no need to predict the worth of an experimental outreach or defend its purpose to those who are less carefree. Let them suffer the paralysis of analysis without our complicity.

The danger of such lifestyle lies in its risk of irresponsible abandon. There's a thin line between what is helpful and what is unhelpful. If we degenerate into ill-disciplined self-indulgence, then we can lose the wisdom and be blind to the very mystery that makes such a path meaningful. Detachment and spontaneity can so readily become shiftlessness and reckless incaution.

Nonetheless, appropriate renunciation is the greatest attribute of personal freedom. We learn that 'freedom from' is different from 'freedom to', and some will have a clear insight about which is more wholesome. At a certain level of attainment, joy is optimized with a life strategy which promotes a continual reiteration of the need to release any limitation we hold of our sense of self.

ORDERING: A PARTY ENTERING A LARGE CANOE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (3° - 4°)

Clear-mindedness and efficiency are leadership qualities, promoting good order and effectiveness

Before embarking on a new enterprise, we make important adjustments of a practical nature in order to prepare appropriately for whatever experiences may come to pass. It's like packing a canoe properly so that the dangers of later instability are minimized.

Care is given to preparations even to the point where our whole attention is on the immediate moment without a thought in mind for the long term goal. Masons lifting a heavy stone need to focus on the stone, not the edifice of which it will become part.

We trust in the real value of work currently in hand more fully because others are sharing it. This cooperative aspect of a task shared develops self-confidence, because we are acting in keeping with the needs of society.

All is methodical, so effectiveness results. The ordering of practical things is effective in ordering the mind, and from such clarity there arises a capacity to achieve results with minimal waste and disruption. These qualities are rare and precious and so they attract attention and support from fellows. The tendency is therefore to become involved and influential with others, who are likely to lend a hand in the fulfilment of aims.

In this way we satisfy an inherent desire for recognition for our leadership qualities. The response we receive from society reflects its special approval of these qualities of clear-mindedness and efficiency. It is the anticipation of society's rewards that encourages the commitment needed to achieve results.

Even if it is in response to the needs of the community, this leadership role invariably makes it more difficult to achieve a fully equal social integration. Getting along with others is not always easy, so we watch carefully for any inability or reluctance to form harmonious relationship.

MOBILIZATION: INDIANS ROWING A CANOE AND DANCING A WAR DANCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (4° - 5°)

On occasion, taking power is entirely valid

The image suggests that our powers of accomplishment can always be brought to a personal focus to bring about the necessary mobilization of whatever resources are required to deal with the pressing matter at hand. This must include an effective ability to side-track minor issues for sake of major achievement. However visionary and spiritual we might feel to be, at the primary level of existence, we have to survive the demands of the physical world. There is an overriding need for practical considerations to prevail.

By grappling with hard reality, we come to learn of the underlying pattern of motives taking form within our particular world. After careful appraisal and contemplation, we receive a deep comprehension of what links causes to effects – and we gain advantage by this.

This only works when we have entirely minimized unnecessary moods and tantrums, and have become able to limit the confusing fog of emotionality to times when our survival does not depend upon clear thinking.

When inner ordering proves inadequate for the majority, and the general population is poorly equipped to resolve immediate threats, then taking power is entirely valid. This cannot be reconciled with popularity – and there is no requirement or even possibility to explain our actions. We take command because we can, and because we know we must, even if others are unable to see this.

Aggressive leadership is suggested in the image – the power to get things done. Even when there are plenty of good reasons not to, and perhaps plenty of people who go against us, nevertheless we ourselves can recognize a need to act as a thoroughly immutable necessity for the good of all.

With the power of leadership comes the responsibility for awareness – if we are not sure, then we cannot act, but if we are sure, then we cannot fail to act. This has to be implicit in the very fact of being conscious. We must do what must be done.

At root life is ever primitive, and we are always inclined to allow an irresistible impulse towards rash action that clouds our judgement. The one who does not succumb to such impulsiveness is more suited than others for the role as leader, and has the duty to accept the burdens that accompany the position.

THOROUGHNESS: DARK ARCHWAY WITH TEN LOGS AT THE BOTTOM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (5° - 6°)

We have all the resources we need to deal with the vagaries of life

The obscure image points to having abundant resources when faced with a mysterious, unknowable future. The archway suggests the passage from here and now to somewhere else; the logs are plenty to build with.

The self is unlimited, so any sense of lack is false – a neurotic misunderstanding; we each have all the resources we need to deal effectively with the varying fortunes of everyday living. In fact, life is an unending exploration of our potentialities, through which we develop a personality that demonstrates our level of realization.

The temptation to resist new experiences, through fear of the unknown and lack of courage, simply binds us into a rather childlike fascination with mystery and imagination. This is pure fantasy and unhelpful.

If we are to realize our dreams, then we must grasp the nettle, seize the day, and engage with opportunity. It takes courage, and faith – plus the willingness to risk disappointment and temporary setbacks.

Whatever we choose to create and project into the world is an authentic expression of who we really are. In fact, it is because we do this that we can discover who we are. The process is beyond limit, as we are beyond limit.

We have to learn to interpret whatever comes up competently – in other words to our best advantage. This will enable us to develop an unusual degree of effectiveness, thoroughness and persistence in accomplishing our purposes whilst maintaining our integrity.

What arises is a great satisfaction that we are on track and consciously in accord with the sense we have of fulfilling our soul's destiny, and then we meet the unknown future with expectancy rather than anxiety.

SUPREMACY: A VEILED PROPHET OF POWER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (6° - 7°)

Few learn to see what is the essential nature of existence; these people succeed

Supremacy occurs when we have something like wealth, knowledge, skills, connections or a position of importance. For example, we find that reading the future has power. The veiled prophet of power is a person who keeps quiet about their inner facility to know what others cannot know about what is to come to pass.

For us to feel a sense of self-fulfilment, we need to achieve something in life. We need to demonstrate our skills and principles, and particularly our ability to overcome challenges. Each personality approaches this very differently because of the myriad differences in experience and background. Yet, in each and every case, there is a vast potential of untapped inner resources to call upon.

We must be careful and learn how to distinguish true values from false. Since this ability is not intuitively obvious, and must be determined mostly by trial and error, there is real danger of unhelpful alignments with inappropriate people and situations.

The strains and turmoil that life throws up are constant and often almost too much to bear, yet we must endeavour to persevere, and in so doing develop mastery. Without challenges, there is no grit to stimulate the need for such a high degree of capability, yet it is a profoundly important quality and well worth the heavy price we have to pay for it.

An exceptional ability arises – the gift of being able to organize effort along any given line of accomplishment. Achievement is no longer a mystery; it is a series of well-understood steps in a given direction of focus, motivated by singular will.

Also, it becomes perfectly clear to us what it is that motivates others around, and indeed the extent of their will to achieve. This veiled insight into the machinery of power has prophetic qualities; we can see, with greater clarity, what must be, and we can see this earlier than most people.

We can learn what the essential nature of existence is. It is that life itself responds fully and adeptly to all of the psychological and physical requirements of anyone, provided they have the passion and insight to expect – truly expect – resolution of their needs and desires.

ESTABLISHMENT: BIRDS IN A HOUSE SINGING HAPPILY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (7° - 8°)

No matter what, at core we are who we are

The image given of *birds in a house singing happily* leads us to contemplate the simple and beautiful relationship between the higher and lower selves. The descent of spirit or intelligence occurs whether or not we invoke the Presence, and we may only first become aware of it when we notice ourselves singing for no good reason. This is about the actuality and impregnability of independence of every individual.

We have an insatiable urge to put everything to use, and put each of our many talents to work in every part of everyday reality. The employment of our skills and knowledge is the celebration of our being, and there is no limit to the new ways we can find to express yet another authentic aspect of our unique potential.

Eventually, it becomes completely evident who we are, as we make the world our own and call on all others to share it with us. They become not only witnesses to our state of realization but, in some mysterious way, co-creators of it with us. Hence the Buddhist teaching that we must be careful who we spend time with – because to some significant extent they shape us.

The establishment of our world is the establishment of our selves. Humanity's self-fulfilment is real only to the extent we are successful in shaping circumstances, since outer situations are simply the mirror of our inner world.

Therefore we need to express an outward vision, since it is that which gives rise to the precipitation of events – as they become a higher revelation of what previously was limited to the world of our imagination.

Idle narcissism is the danger to avoid. It is unhealthy to spend all of our time in self-obsessed activities and inner reflection. A balanced self-image is more likely to lead to fulfilment and happiness.

No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, at core we continue to be exactly who we are, nothing else.

ATTUNEMENT: AN ANGEL CARRYING A HARP

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (8° - 9°)

Worldly success follows spiritual attunement

There is an overall coherence to life and it is like the harmony in music, in which each individual part is essential – and each added strand of resonant melody enhances the whole piece.

An angel carrying a harp has been ever symbolic of Christian heaven – a state of grace wherein all are in constant and cosmic attunement together. In life, when we tune in to this universal blending of energies, we are enabled in all of our activities so that we have no limitations in any situation, and we can therefore avoid frustration, disappointment, and the fear of lack.

Also we adopt a special gift for inspiring others towards their own accomplishments – we do this instinctively, by example alone.

When operating from this place of high attunement, we drive ahead to point of self-fulfilment, unrestricted by doubt or feelings of unworthiness, incompetence or irrelevance.

All of our own and other's human motives are found to be legitimate at some level of comprehension – all of our simple fantasies show that we trust the pre-eminence of desire, which, in consequence, brings us to be able to realize our ultimate dreams of becoming a better, more fulfilled person.

Within us a deepening sense of the spiritual source arises – as it pervades all consciousness – and it is this which actually we are seeking to find attunement with.

Our natural condition is enthusiasm. In the unsullied state of their original inception, all the simple potentialities of experience express true spirit – and this lets us know something of the eternal, unabated glory of just being. It is when we feel thoroughly enthusiastic about what we are doing and being that we know we have reached this exalted state.

NURTURE: AN ALBATROSS FEEDING FROM THE HAND

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (9° - 10°)

Our right to eat is authorized by our willingness to feed

In literature, the albatross is metaphorically a burden, something that eats from our hand and calls upon us to be cared for.

This image has to do with the basic self-justification – on the practical side of life – that arises within us to the extent that we nurture others who come to depend upon us. It is as though our right to eat is conditional on our willingness to feed.

A person establishes themselves as they expend their own energy and resources – which in turn encourages others to do same – thus creating the dynamic whereby abundance is produced and attracted. We need to give in order to receive. Although there are periods of imbalance in this, eventually there must be, and there will be, the fulfilment of this universal equation. All systems, including humans, obey the cosmic imperative of energy equalization.

Unusual success, dramatizing our fullest potential and bringing us to complete life-achievement, comes to those who understand and fully embrace this principle: first give away what you most want to get back. This requires determined faith because it seems counter-intuitive, and to run so much against collective teachings of scarcity and the consequent need for self-protection.

To reap abundantly we must sow abundantly.

There is also the pragmatic consideration that if we take the initiative in meeting the various needs of others, then we can reasonably expect them to stir appreciably and similarly on our behalf when the time comes that we are the ones in need of nurture.

Whatever personal longings we have, we are completely dependent on the world at large for their actualization. We can achieve nothing alone – so we must participate in the fundamental implied formula for community involvement – exchange of nurture.

ILLIMITABILITY: LARGE GROUP OF PHEASANTS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (10° - 11°)

Following a herd instinct will not lead to self-actualization

No merit is found obeying a herd instinct and wanting to become no less than the rest – whose plumage, like the pheasants, is in any case somewhat mediocre. It may steer a course towards popularity and influence, but it will not lead to self-actualization. Neither will much be gained by the repetitious habit of following our own well-trodden paths, as though such empty ritual could replace struggling to learn through new experiences.

One who really wants to find their own version of how reality unfolds will not be able to form an independent perspective if they need approval from society for their actions and opinions. To become freely-expressive unique individuals, we must often shun society's ways and beliefs. These constraints develop through finding the lowest common factor, rather than the highest possible ideal – so how could they ever achieve optimal outcomes?

The quality of illimitability indicates that there is in fact no limit to the number of variations on a theme; each apparent re-duplication of an event can more wholesomely be seen as an expression of diversity of potential. Through this process, every possibility of personality can be expressed – towards the goal of maximum self-disclosure, and realization of ideals.

We need to be guided by the actuality of our own circumstances here and now. They truthfully illustrate to us the accumulation of our own unique history of preferences and values. Also they create a convenient stage for acting out deeper, hidden issues. From such circumstantial guidance, there develops greater awareness of the reasons for the individual preferences of the self and, out of this awareness, comes a profound inner clarity about who we are. From this there evolves an increasing strength of faith. What we have done in our lives – all of it – led us to where we are, and repeatedly reflect our preferences over a life-time. We have to trust, therefore, that what we have and what we do are important – and singularly our own.

The same is true of our plans and goals. If we are to gain the necessary depth of insight required for self-actualization, then we need to understand why we did what we did, and why we want what we want. These are much more important than anything society does, or requires us to do. All of our personal goals are raised to the highest level of importance, relentlessly pursued with an absolute determination to attain self-awareness in any and all available forms.

However, the trivial pursuits of society are not to be ignored, because they give excellent feedback about our own process – what do we accept, what do we disdain? Every attempt to improve our lives, as a result of such feedback, is another reworking of the sense we have of who we are; through this we learn how diversity helps us understand unity.

So we learn to put aside our distaste for the shallowness of social rituals and to reinterpret such follies as useful clues to our own inner ambiguities. In fact, the refinement of our own personality requires us to accept such feedback, even if it is presented unconsciously.

EXPLANATION: A STUDENT OF NATURE LECTURING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (11° - 12°)

True knowledge is imparted through explanation not persuasion

The way to impart lasting knowledge is through explanation rather than persuasion; this reduces the risk of psychological smugness – an unreasonable pride of intellect that is often found to be present whenever a student becomes a teacher.

There are wide ramifications when we move from being a student to the point where we demonstrate our awareness at the level of teacher – we find ourselves having entirely new experiences, for which we find ourselves ill-equipped. We are often thrown back upon gut-level responses to cope with whatever comes up.

Some try to share meaning through the mind's eye alone, attempting to offer others the vicarious understanding which is brought through on the intellectual side of life. These are lecturers.

Others try to deliver information and exercises by which the student will experience the teaching as a direct fulfilment in consciousness. These are teachers.

The achievement of greater life opportunities, which we may presume is the end-purpose of any teaching, comes only after the full embodiment of any new lesson. Intellect alone cannot provide this.

Self-confidence grows through expansion of knowledge, into areas beyond our previous experience, for which we may have no guidance or role models. Life becomes limitless when an individual discovers that they can master endless facets of understanding through the expansion of reason alone.

Yet without an effective practical application of all their values, these understandings are hollow and lack the depth of feeling required for full satisfaction.

MAGICK: A FIRE WORSHIPPER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (12°- 13°)

We all have a certain and inviolable connection to the creative power of the universe and its source

Although available to anyone who chooses to employ it, magick does not routinely appear as a realistic resource for any but the smallest minority. Those who feel its power know it as a constant inner fire, which awakens all the more with worship.

They are constantly aware of their certain and inviolable connection to the creative power of the universe and its source. There is a deep realization that the divine spark is there to be used daily as a practical tool to deal imaginatively with whatever comes along.

With such familiarity comes skill – a truly extraordinary skill – to enlist every worldly advantage and asset to bring exaltation to ourselves, and the ready materialization of all aspects of personal desires and ambitions.

A mystery is revealed – that by continually reaffirming the spiritual qualities of our aspirations, and the dedication of all our possessions and talents to the Spirit of Creativity, then all is accomplished with the mastery and ease that comes from the heart-felt certainty of true faith.

Thus worldly ambitions and aspirations are so completely spiritualized that life is a constant prayer, a continual outreach to the Divine.

It's true that such an approach has dangers – those in particular associated with over-estimation of personal capacity, against which there needs to be practised the observance of unimpeachable trust in our certainty of success and worthiness of motive.

Such vigilance can lead towards a surrender of all of our emotional attachments – our state eventually becoming completely independent of circumstances. Otherwise there is a risk of losing all hope of realization of our highest potential. When this is achieved, then the ready realization of personal ideals can be brought to the level of miracle.

FOUNDATION: AN ANCIENT BAS-RELIEF CARVED IN GRANITE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (14° - 15°)

Our creative life-signatures are valid only in relationship to our surroundings

An ancient stone-carver made his mark on the world so profoundly that his bas-relief message re-echoed throughout the generations. There is something in us that seems willing to expend huge amounts of time and energy to stamp our signature onto things that survive longer than we do ourselves.

A bas-relief is placed in reference to the foundation-surface upon which it is constructed – as indeed our creative life-signatures are valid only in relationship to the background reality in which we have our being.

Despite appearances, the general nature of reality is actually fluid and absolutely responsive to our preferences and values – so, in order to create something in granite, it requires us repeatedly to reaffirm and focus our choices, often against profound resistance.

Every instant is another unique representation of all that ever was, is and will be. In every moment we need to recreate who we are with true conviction according to the learnt patterns that we find convenient. Only in this way will our desired results become inevitable.

To accomplish completion of our achievements, we have to capitalize upon all opportunity and make our stamp strong and clear.

We will always encounter others who have different perspectives – and we can learn from these encounters how better to strengthen our own artworks. Beyond that, any imposition of limitations is meaningless – nothing more than evidence of our lack of alignment.

There is a certain degree of consciousness, known to mystics, where it becomes empirically obvious that all personal experience is retried repeatedly – that nothing is new and nothing is old. Life is kaleidoscopic – another, and yet another, reworking of colours and shapes bewitching the observer into thinking themselves to be real and important, instead of simply a point of perspective within an amorphous eternal dance of light.

ABUNDANCE: MANY TOYS IN CHILDREN'S WARD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (15° - 16°)

Abundance is the mystery of life on Earth

The image reminds us that life includes constraints. It is a normal everyday expression and almost everyone in the developed world will spend time in hospital because of psychological or physical limitations.

Yet there are also ample rewards. Family and, by extension, society provides for us when we are in need of support – and this is understood to be straightforward neighbourliness that we can to some extent expect and depend on.

This genuine kindness, toys for children, is clear evidence of the inescapable richness of life. Even the poor – in fact, especially the poor – will give of their time and resources to soften the burden of one in need. Abundance is the mystery of life on Earth – despite all ideas of scarcity and fear of lack.

To awaken the mind-set that expects and discovers inescapable abundance lifts us to a richer experience of life. Misfortune seems to descend so often upon a person as a travesty of justice – why does a child suffer? And yet the optimistic mind will find the cloud's silver lining. At the very least, a difficult situation carries with it a chance to deepen fellowship.

Knowing this we can create a positive future through the application of a positive attitude. Despite any accidental appearance of challenging circumstances, we can project real potential into life and expect real results.

Self-pity is a degradation of self; it is to be avoided at all costs. Neither does it serve anyone's best interests to offer false sympathy, and support any tendency in another towards childish self-pampering. This will only strengthen negative traits and support pessimism. Taking a person's emotional problems too seriously is not taking them seriously enough.

And let us always remember that our experiences are not a means to an end – they are the end, valid without agenda or amplification through either knock-on effects or understandings. Each and every moment has within itself something precious to appreciate.

ANIMATION: KIDS IN GYM SUITS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (15° - 16°)

Individuals and society both gain evolutionary benefits from animated mutual interaction

Our experience of ourselves is significantly modified by interaction with the people and circumstances around us. If we look at the example of competitive sports, we see others making their best efforts to rise up through overcoming obstacles – by being totally animated to meet their challenges. So, by observing them, we can learn a lot about how to realize our own greater potential.

When any group of individuals comes together, it amounts to the formation of a kind of society, whose purpose is to rise to common challenges. Typically, we are required to adopt some conventions in order to belong to the group – wearing gym suits for example. Conventionality therefore is a measure of our willingness to abide by social constructs, which we do because we think we will gain personal advantage.

There is always some pressure to conform, and our adherence to terms may feel like a self-betrayal because of the loss of individuality. It is a question of balance: on the one hand is the urge authentically to express and develop our unique selves, and on the other, our need to serve and participate harmoniously in society.

Conformity arising out of fear of authority is ill-founded and false. Self-perception of powerlessness requires us to look again in the depths of our being and awaken the confidence to overcome any pressure that attempts to deny us self-expression.

However, it is completely natural to gain experience and skill under supervision, and any joint projects that favour our required outcome are supported because they help us to develop our general competence in life.

Also natural is a disciplined sense of responsibility, which embraces the ethic of serving oneself in alignment with the common good. The response we receive from our social group is therefore felt to be useful, realistic feedback, whether presented as punishment or reward.

In adapting through this process of socialization, we learn acceptance and tolerance. This is how our personal ideals are animated, constantly revisited and updated – and reflects society's newly-discovered potential for dramatizing a set of principles higher than previous generations were able to demonstrate.

IMMERSION: A GIRL SURREPTITIOUSLY BATHING IN THE NUDE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (16° - 17°)

Only by letting go of that which covers us, can we find out what is being covered up

The need for hiding nakedness is not experienced by primitive communities so much; it is the processes of civilization that moves us away from acknowledging sacredness in the physical body. Any sense we may have to become furtive in life, and hide our eccentricities, shows something of the extent of our renunciation of the natural state, in favour of sophistication.

An alternative strategy is to immerse ourselves totally into a full enjoyment of our physicality, employing the body as a temple in which to celebrate spirit.

This sense of profound joyful physicality generates a feeling of intimacy – with ourselves and with our roots. To remember our primordial aspects touches the heart, and reclaims innocence.

Furthermore, on a purely physical level, we find a sense of self-renewal in the act of becoming naked and vulnerable to the elements – Sun on back, wind in hair, and rain on face.

Beneath all the dressing up and courtesies of social interaction, there is a more basic self – and, if we are to be effective in expressing our fullest potential, this deeper part of who we are must be first accessed and then presented.

The symbolism here takes us beyond the physical to the psychological, is to do with being occasionally stripped back to the essentials and this is more than naked simplicity, more than sacred sex, sport and sensuality, and includes depth awareness of various body clues such as intuition. Only by letting go of that which covers us, can we find out what is being covered up.

Once we have seen a deeper truth, it is likely that we will want to become further renewed by the process of self-sacrifice. Rather like a snake occasionally shedding its old skin, it is life enhancing. This does not have to be traumatic – since we can never surrender anything essential. Only what is outworn or false can ever be lost.

SUPERVISION: THE UNION JACK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (17° - 18°)

Membership of any group always costs us some freedom of self-expression

Alone we are at the mercy of forces greater than any individual can defend against. The social/political structures that act as an umbrella are there, in part, to protect us.

Weaving the fabric of a national flag is done day-to-day through matters of ordinary commerce and friendly interactions. The exchange of goods, services and attention is a very powerful binding force.

Wealth and power are greatly multiplied when individuals pull together – there are high rewards for common effort, which go well beyond the fundamental expediency of defence against dangers from nature and politics.

Sadly, there is a tendency for the powerful and wealthy to become bullies, using strong-arm tactics to take what is not freely given. Empires rise and fall, and the background atmosphere of today's living is made threatening because of their aggressive competition. The rewards are so high that the temptation for degenerate behaviour is too much.

Nevertheless the permanent imprint of nationalism and hegemony exists as a modernising and very sought-after reality. Everyone's reach has been expanded, everyone's life touched and mostly softened by its inevitable commercial and technological ramifications.

The price to be paid for being a member of any group is always freedom. To be protected by the Union Jack means that British forces of law supervise our lives.

There is ever the risk of hubris, and it is often true that citizens of the current world masters become smug – whether Roman, English or American. It is food for thought that the enjoyment of this ugly quality has its own price – the smug are never free.

EXPECTATION: SMALL CHILD WITH A HUGE SHOPPING BAG

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (18° - 19°)

The heart enjoys service for its own sake, so we each have an inherent desire to be helpful

The image is of a child with great expectations, and this indirectly speaks of the wonderful recompense that life offers to one who is innocent enough to respond to the inner sense of being helpful simply as a normal aspect of being a person.

As a person grows in maturity and wisdom, their identity becomes well defined; it becomes less relevant to conform indiscriminately to passing, popular fads, which are essentially self-serving. The spiritual dimension awakens, as does the sense of our ability, duty and privilege to help others.

There is an inherent desire within each of us to offer to our community the fullest reach of our skills and efforts. In fact, unless we do then we cannot develop them, so the desire is actually completely natural.

The responsibility we feel for the welfare of others, even strangers, is evidence of a good heart and a mature personality. There is wisdom in the knowledge that what we do is eventually returned to us, and that we cannot exist at all without the support of our community – so of course we serve. Yet also we need to remember that the heart enjoys service for its own sake.

Considerable personal advantage derives from this approach. The same sensitivity that is used to notice others' needs is employed to notice opportunity. At root, perhaps counter-intuitively, our ready inclination to help others, and our inclination to help ourselves, is in essence the same – because by looking for the opportunity to serve, we constantly realize and keep alive our readiness to seize self-serving opportunity.

Not only does this assist our own development, it also promotes in us the knack of seeing the best in others, and understanding their potentials and opportunities too. Sometimes it takes nothing more than a person seeing a quality or capability in another to awaken it.

As a result of practising a general willingness to help, we become very capable in expanding the breadth of our life experience – and actually we assist our fellows in doing the same thing.

WORSHIP: A HIDDEN CHOIR SINGING

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (19° - 20°)

Through worship, one unifying motivation enables us to experience the full exaltation of self

A hidden choir is singing the eternal music of the spheres – and this emphasizes the spiritual idealism of music. At root, this is a symphony of cosmic reconciliations, a statement of harmony as the binding force of the universe.

Similar to the choir, various different characters in our lives contribute to our sense of who we are, and help us to understand how best we can take the initiative to optimize our situations.

Each separate element of the harmony is reordered by participating in the unity of the whole, and similarly, we ourselves are modified as we make adjustments to accommodate yet another influential person into our lives.

Each part of the symphony, and each one of us, is brought to the point of ultimate individual expression, yet we do so with a single unified source of motivation, and a single focus of result.

This process carries the unique gift for establishing common interest – and it does it with such panache, that both beauty and truth are enhanced. We find that we are able to realize our potential, even to the point of joy, simply by being part of it all.

This is no time for personal aloofness and lukewarm loyalties; this is the opportunity to experience the full exaltation of self as an aspect of the whole.

It is worship: it creates and celebrates the power of good for all by demonstrating how the one serves the many and the many serve the one.

FITNESS: A RELAY RACE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (20°- 21°)

Each of us takes responsibility for our own self-mastery

The values taken on by any group are those that facilitate the increase of individual resourcefulness as well as social benefit. What matters to the team members is what makes a person fit to participate in the relay race and do well. This usually has more to do with whether we attend training sessions than whether we attend church or mosque, or vote red or blue.

It is of general benefit that each of us takes responsibility for our own self-mastery. Therefore a person's importance to the community is enhanced by the confidence we feel that, through being part of the team, our own self-preservation is secured. Our feelings of security sponsor our willingness to serve group efforts.

It must be taken as a given that each of us wants to grow – in skills and talents – and that our interactions are angled towards that end.

The urgency of a race points to the intensity of focus that occasionally occurs in every life. At such times we need to pull everything together so that all the components of a situation are held into a functioning wholeness. When push comes to shove, petty differences and envy between people must be put aside so that everyone does their very best to support the demands of the moment.

By such cooperation, a group's best opportunities are brought to culmination. The harvest is brought in, the floods are kept at bay and the village hall is successfully raised.

By such collective enterprises, the individual is also raised up. Social skills are refined no less than practical talents.

Those who selfishly avoid the communal activity one day will find themselves poorly equipped to adequately resource their own needs. The lesson is clear: all for one and one for all.

EXPEDIENCY: A GENERAL ACCEPTING DEFEAT GRACEFULLY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (21°- 22°)

Having loyalty to long range ends, we can transform setbacks with grace of spirit and self-discipline

The general who gracefully accepts an inevitable defeat is an emblem of expediency. Real power comes not from winning everything, but from level-headed practicality made effective through self-discipline and grace of spirit.

This symbol shows of immediate opportunism; a person can develop true genius through learning from experience. The opportunity of any moment is not always clear; it can be success disguised as failure, and hidden to all but the perspicacious.

Sometimes the feelings of a situation are more important than the event itself. If there is grace, people can even be won over by the enemy they have defeated.

This is because grace is a highly regarded value, which facilitates sharing. An individual exalts gracefully in their destiny – win or lose – as they find their roots established in shared values accepted by their fellows as well as themselves.

This is the knack in transforming setbacks into accomplishment – to get the feeling right.

We need to train ourselves always to generate an underlying uncompromising loyalty to long range ends. If we lose a battle, we can come back again – but if we lose sight of why we are battling, then, whatever the outcome, we have already lost.

This is not the same as an irresponsible acceptance of the worst – nor is it a total insensibility to self-inadequacy – it is about doing what works in the moment, and preparing ourselves for the eventual comeback.

RECOGNITION: TWO AWARDS FOR BRAVERY IN WAR

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (22°- 23°)

With leadership comes both high reward and onerous duties

Our potential for heroism exists inwardly in advance of its outer expression; it is sometimes felt as a need for us to be recognized for our capacity to show dedicated self-effacing service.

Even though heroic behaviour often stimulates society's need to raise up an individual to the rank of leader, strutting and proclaiming this potential is inelegant and avoided by the wiser person.

Rising above the pack, we are exalted not by our self-proclaiming words and cocky attitude, but by our personal vision and character. Other concerns are subordinated, so that the compelling goal of living actually becomes nothing more than the advancement and presentation of our values, perhaps as teachings to guide others.

Personal growth is stimulated through the time and energy spent in the process of gaining broader experience. This has the effect of gradually widening our social relevance to whatever level equates to our highest spiritual station. Such experiences awaken our ability to dramatize life's possibilities. This calls forth a cornucopia of fruits and riches, which point to the abundance that any can access by following the leader's example of effective, creative, courageous, life management.

Practical social and political gains accumulate. However, we need to remember that an idealistic leader, who may well be completely integrated within normal humdrum society, will still always be measured and also challenged for position. It goes with the job, and helps to keep alive the very skills and wisdom that qualify the leader for the position.

Continual self-dedication is a life path that brings as its reward the burden of social stewardship. With it comes the opportunity to disclose a profound practical understanding of our fellows, their circumstances and challenges.

Recognition, which once was sought after by an immature youth yearning to find self-realization, is now understood to be a sword that cuts with two edges, the one self-serving, the other social; one cuts away external dross, the other cuts inwardly. And whereas the first award gave intoxicating unlooked-for joy, the second suggests that a third is to be expected in due course. The burden to meet expectations becomes a dimension heavier, the path a degree more serious.

CONSECRATION: A WOMAN ENTERING A CONVENT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (23° - 24°)

True life-satisfaction is beyond us until we find something to make sacred

When a person enters any secluded environment it is in order to place firmer limits upon their exposure to sensory stimuli. A convent is designed for such a purpose because the mind often becomes less troubled when in prison cells or prayer cells.

The mind is a complex thing and is so easily distracted that it rarely knows peace. Those who learn meditation and prayer are first and foremost learning to control the restless mind. This enables a different kind of dialogue wherein the self is seen as a third party. We become able to review who we are and what we are doing and thinking.

We find on retreat that life-satisfaction is beyond our reach unless and until we find allegiance with something of greater consequence than our selfish concerns.

We need to be challenged on a fundamental level before we can ever find a cause, a being or a set of values to stir us at the necessary depth. It first seems as though we are so challenged by people and circumstances, yet this is not a deep enough perception. It is we who challenge ourselves; no other assessment has any lasting relevance.

Until we consecrate our lives, we do not have access to sacredness. Passing through the gate of sacredness is how we sanctify all and everything. Before this passage, no matter what we do, we are always somewhat empty. After, we always default to the condition of completeness.

The self is only ever a shadowy echo of All-Self; we are insignificant before God.

Yet what eventually gives us significance – supreme, eternally valid and enduring – is to come to know the transcendental state of being not-separate. When we lose self we find Self. The false self is the mask that covers the Truth that being nothing is being everything.

CONSIGNMENT: AN ORIENTAL-RUG DEALER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (24° - 25°)

The material expression of our character is the final and undeniable proof of it

A consignment is a delivery of goods, the image of an oriental-rug dealer points to the importation of foreign products, and the teaching here has to do with the effective employment of goods and services of modern society. Whether we think of the Silk Road or on-line purchasing through eBay, the exchange through trade has been – and will always continue to be – a binding force throughout history.

The practical emphasis points to consumer items, and yet there is also the implication of the accumulation of knowledge, the acquisition of skills and an indication of enduring competency. As anyone knows, who has attempted to become a small trader, the fool and their money are easily parted. To engage in trade is to be involved in diplomatic cultural exchange – and to develop understanding of another nation's values and ways is no small thing.

All human potentialities impact upon commerce. What we believe, what we prefer, what we need, and what we can afford – are all clearly expressed in how we trade. Self-expression is a force that uses all the various advantages of trade as a resource through which to claim more personal territory.

Our obligation to our chosen reality is an irrevocable commitment – and for most of us this is reflected entirely by the consignments we receive. If we want to know about a person in detail, to get an accurate, honest appraisal, then we can look at what they do with their spending money. Their ideas and opinions – and their protestations of standpoints and intentions – are all hot air compared to the facts of the matter, which are someone's inventory of goods and their expenditure summary. Together these speak of the actual facts.

Eternal values are meaningless until they are woven into fabric of humanity's familiar transactions. What actually matters is what is made material; the material expression of our character is the final and undeniable proof of it. So we must spend according to our philosophical beliefs.

For example, if an individual claims to want to offer a real service to fellows, to be kind and thoughtful, and to make a real difference to ease the burden of the downtrodden, then these sentiments must take the form of bread not words.

Modern society generally has too much concern over trivialities – a certain type of person will ignore a hungry street beggar as they walk past carrying a heavy bag full of cat food. When we prioritize our purchases to align with our values, we spend as an aspect of our principles. This simple act eventually influences the production choices of distant manufacturers, and therefore could help to moderate their shameful use of slave labour and irreplaceable raw materials.

RESTLESSNESS: A WATER SPRITE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (25° - 26°)

Free spirits are masters of their own experience

The symbol of a water sprite is one of restlessness, a condition that points to an exceptional, and usually intuitive, sensitiveness to the overall implications of where any course of events is leading. There is implied a high skill in avoiding drab, commonplace involvements or tedious situations of any kind. People strong in this quality are very often referred to as 'free spirits'.

In a free-minded person, the pure integrity of self asserts itself – as a protection against blind or inept participation in any existing progression of affairs that does not properly reflect their authentic expression of character.

Such people demand every possible experience of richness in their outer reality; they develop a highly personalized form of approach to life, and free themselves from any possibility of becoming seen as a possession.

When this is in completely accord with our inner spiritual aspect, then it is nothing less than pure mastery of experience.

It calls for conscious self-idealization in even the most unimportant and transient life functions. We will then always do what feels right, in innocence and without self-consciousness.

These personality types tend towards a carefree irresponsibility, and a dislike of lasting intimacies.

It almost goes without saying that spontaneity is a wholly necessary quality. To express our values and preferences immediately, with commitment, and against the flow of the more programmed behaviour of normal people, then we need to maintain an impressive constancy of vitality.

PERSEVERANCE: A MOUNTAIN PILGRIMAGE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (26° - 27°)

The seeker of ultimate realization must hold to the path with resolute steadfastness

At some point in life, we need to discover whether we are parading false virtue, by only pretending to the sacred condition of a would-be pilgrim, or whether we really do have sufficient perseverance, to overcome all the temptations and challenges, which are inherent in any spiritual path of self-discovery and improvement.

Often, the mountain is used to symbolize the pyramiding reality brought about by the inner realization that occurs when we find complete harmony between our life-style expression and our chosen ideals and values.

This is not about gaining satisfaction through superficial allegiances to a particular track of spiritual practices or religiosity; it is about climbing higher and ever higher, towards a place of ultimate realization.

The indomitable integrity of human comprehension can only be truly awakened by a challenging process of struggle and surrender. We will be examined and have to choose either to overcome both inner and outer resistance, or to become more flexible. Usually we will need to strengthen our resolve and buckle down.

An unquestioned devotion to the worthwhile task at hand is emblematic of the true disciple. The seeker is encouraged, by the path itself, to hold unswervingly to the self-chosen course.

Every vision that our intelligence can aspire to is intensified. Although we will always need to respond appropriately to each difficulty we come across *en route*, with this level of focus, and our certainty of the sacredness of our purpose, we can expect success in all of our endeavours.

Then mind and heart will experience a total reconciliation one with the other, and gentle outer circumstances will inevitably reflect this sublimely peaceful inner condition.

COMMUNITY: A LARGE AVIARY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (27° - 28°)

Management is its own fulfilment for one who makes common welfare their personal concern

A large aviary symbolizes our own community, since birds have behaviours that humans also have as they unconsciously interact to form a social group.

This image points to someone who has exceptional success in making all their personal concerns a matter of common welfare. Generally, in many areas of normal life, we cannot help but notice significant differentiations of interest between ourselves and others, and yet when we consider the full ramifications of what we do, we see that everything influences everything else in the community, so our apparently self-centred interests actually serve the greater good.

The gift for bringing any one special and personal line of effort to the immediate services of any other lies in the understanding that, in fact, it cannot actually do otherwise. A light touch is therefore the best approach since heavy-handedness is not only inelegant, it will probably create worse outcomes.

Everyday problems have their solution in our breadth of resources – we need the shoe repairer, who needs the car mechanic, who needs our childcare service...and it goes around and around without end.

A wide-spread range of personal aspirations is thus encompassed in the over-all realization by which we have organized ourselves. Of course this is not a co-incidence; it developed this way because we need it to be this way.

On this social level, the administration of human potentialities has its own self-fulfilment. As we commune together, we naturally find that what one wants to give the other wants to receive, and so very little manipulation needs to occur.

This facility is lost when the economic unit has no personal community – as was true in the former Soviet republics, where obscene surpluses and shortages were the norm. There is a loss of all character through sheer officiousness when a bustling local market is replaced by a political system contrived for controlling life's basic needs.

SIGNATURE: WOMAN READING TEA LEAVES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (28° - 29°)

To balance seen and unseen worlds, our inner feelings have to be tested in outer experience

Generally, the mind's focus orients towards those things that are universal and eternal. Despite the scattered thoughts, habitual processes and fascination with trivia, eventually its curiosity points the attention towards the unseen worlds.

In their quest for access to the Eternal, some people are seduced by superstition, and are drawn into a distorted understanding of the reliability and importance of symbols and voices from beyond. They go to Madame Sybil's seafront parlour for a bit of fun, and get caught up in the idea of a fated future.

We do accept that our naive insights can have real and unusual merit – and that our feelings are informative. Yet the values we adopt when we project our life-signature are not likely to be profound or even sustainable unless we balance intuition with analytical intelligence.

If we are to find a workable balance between the seen and unseen worlds, then our inner feelings have to be tested in the realm of outer experience. So it is certainly appropriate to consult another about other realities, but not to accept their words unconditionally. We must challenge all input to the extremely impressionable mind, otherwise we become as puppets, and find ourselves with neither power nor integrity. We lose dignity and influence if we do not confront what we cannot validate.

Our lives demonstrate the interaction between how we project our values and understandings, and how we respond inwardly to the echo we get from others receiving these projections from us.

We attempt to make the facts fit the expectation. This is normal, and even sometimes productive – and yet often our model of reality is simply wrong; it doesn't fit the facts, and can be entirely unworkable.

To realize our fullest potential, our best strategy is to examine, with discriminating intelligence, the facts of the matter, and then allow our inner sense of self to influence our final understandings. Input from others is to be fully assimilated only to the extent that sits well with us. We need not entirely reject what is yet unproven – yet it is better to hold an unconfirmed idea in abeyance, pending further investigation, until it is validated. In the end, it is our interpretation of facts and feelings that is our true signature, by which we identify ourselves uniquely.

OPPORTUNITY: A SECRET BUSINESS CONFERENCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF CAPRICORN (29° - 30°)

The life lesson is to seize opportunity

The corporate imagery of a secret business conference speaks of management, indeed of cautious, carefully-considered management. The physical world is hard to handle, yet there are particular skills and practices that enable us to meet the challenges that arise as we attempt to initiate and lead change. Diligent planning is necessary; so is strategy.

In the journey to develop awareness, a very important step forward is when we truly realize the causal relationship between our attitudes, activities, and the circumstances we encounter. In other words, we make it all up.

If we have any genuine determination to make the best of every situation, then we will learn how to form allegiances with the prime movers and principal characters in any scenario. After all, each of them is an actor in the drama we ourselves are scripting. There is always an inner circle – and our desire to establish, maintain and evolve these connections is of strategic consequence. We can see the members of this group as having very special relevance for us in order to foster and express our values and preferences.

The extent to which we are able to control our situations largely depends upon the nature of the relationship with the individuals that comprise our inner circle. There is a need for a deep level of rapport, and also, through appropriate gentle confrontations, the ability to establish a high degree of authenticity.

The road to true success is narrow and long. It is not enough to achieve goals – these are contributors to success, not success itself. To maintain joy and integrity is the greater achievement, especially as the honours mount up.

The test is whether we can balance our own desires, dreams and needs with others' – and resist the temptation towards selfish exploitation of all and sundry, friends included.

The abundant resources around us – both claimed and unclaimed – are available when we have learned how to attract them. The life lesson is to seize opportunity – and yet to expand our perception of the depth and value of what good fortune actually is, to include only that which is of valid and lasting significance to us.

AQUARIUS

IDEALIZATION / FAITH / ENVISIONING / ASSURANCE / KNOWLEDGE / ORIGINALITY

Knowledge reveals itself when the curious dream

Without emotion, agenda or prejudice, the Water Carrier exemplifies a flair for cool impartiality combined with ardent vision and scientific originality. It dislikes vulgar excesses, preferring civility, delicacy, and reasonable behaviour. Somewhat indifferent to attention, modest, self-effacing, and independently minded, it brings cool reason to heated debates, so can be a harmonising influence, moving attention from emotion to intellect, discussing issues that unite us. It stands for truth, fairness, social equality, and common accord.

The core imperative of Aquarius is to find ways to adjust to changing circumstances in a way that improves the species. We have recently begun to study the physical universe, to discover mathematics, science and philosophy and taken a few small steps in psychology and ecology. Yet to bridge the deeper gaps in our understanding requires more faith. Our exceptional intelligence tends to make developments knowledge-based, and through social and technological processes, we also have higher aspirations to do with longevity, health, justice and comfort – yet our fulfilment in consciousness is the true measure of evolutionary success.

One issue is that, of the minority that have true faith, most have no way to balance feelings and thoughts clearly enough to understand what it actually is, and indeed what they have faith in. Blind faith is more to do with blindness than faith. Aquarius can awaken to crystal-clear reception of cosmic transmission, which needs both mental and emotional skills – free thinking and rigorous application, since discussing this question can be fraught and even dangerous. Faith has to be projected onto an ideal and named, and these two requirements create difficulties because ideals are always unrealisable and naming always leads to limitation.

The world is a mirror of the mind – we make materially manifest what we hold in our thoughts. So to envision our reality requires that we concentrate thought and attention upon the best outcome imaginable, and let faith do the rest. Constructive optimism is the only survival strategy. Once we have shaped our orientation to a clear, positive outcome, then vacillation and doubt are not to be admitted. We hold an assured condition of mind, and bring it to bear upon the matrix of potential called life. Certainty is therefore employed in its active polarity rather than passive – this sign chooses not to be subject, but the creator, of outer conditions.

Sociology shows that the direction of a social group norm is found in the activity at the edges of present behaviour, the position where Aquarius feels most comfortable. Radicals, progressive thinkers, idealists and dreamers are different, detached and apart from their community, usually comfortably at odds with the norm – people like Darwin, Galileo, and Germaine Greer. Balanced between old and new, these bringers of knowledge seek pure vision and apply acute perception in service to others. They are eccentrics, satisfied with self-recognition, who spin on their own unique axis and are often subject to prejudice and even attack by conservatives.

The future is not inevitable; all perceptions of history and current affairs are subject to modification personally and communally, and are creative causes. We make it up on the basis of our experiences and aspirations – all is invented. Some find this idea spurious, even scary, and others will enjoy the implied freedom. Humanity would be better off holding the belief that we are creating our own future by our current ideas. We may then understand that the responsible thing to do is to care for our neighbours on this planet – and the planet itself.

AQUARIUS WISDOM

IDEALIZATION

Standing up for our lifestyle deepens our character and inspires in us a faith that we belong
With optimism and confidence, setbacks will always further our ends
Unless we create our own loyalties, the future appears shallow and pointless
When we practise our magical capacities in service, spectacular results are possible.
Loyalty to established ideals brings influence, responsibility and power

FAITH

Awareness brings the subtlety that shows grace in being and relating
Nurtured until we are ready, then we crack out – to discover that we are indestructible
By idealizing others we find resonance with our own potential for achievement
Loyalty to a shared ideal makes collective power evident
Both applause and censure are temporary; soul qualities are enduring

ENVISIONING

To walk our talk, we must normally balance self-interest with service
Given the Moon today, we will ask for the Sun tomorrow
It is because we need to gain control that we seek indications about the future
Normal everyday life can lead us to exciting visionary outcomes
The richness of our own life potential is illustrated in nature's achievements

ASSURANCE

Accomplishment fails unless it confers a depth of character that is not disturbed by gain or loss
Through discipline, we come to freedom
Curiosity about whys and wherefores in human eccentricities is the secret of self-revelation
Coping with intense problems cultivates gravitas and sponsors special levels of teamwork
Inner faith is a source of inspiration and assurance

KNOWLEDGE

Nothing superficial endures – and only profound eternal realities bring lasting happiness
We have a duty to deepen our enjoyment
Power and knowledge come only when animal passion and spiritual passion unite
Serenity is found when knowledge and experience are in harmony
Power in the world comes from turning deficiency into an asset – differences make the difference

ORIGINALITY

We learn to find a way somehow to turn everything around to our advantage
The traditions that anchor community values give comfort and strength, but are not absolutes
Total concentration and complete lack of inhibition bring beauty and sacredness
The wonder of Creation is continually being reborn
Everyone may count on the inherent friendliness of the universe

THE EXPRESSIONS OF AQUARIUS

IDEALIZATION

AQUARIUS 1 – 5

To make things and situations ideal, we have first to examine what has happened and compare this to what could happen, and also to our ideas of excellence. There is a power of integrity written in things that were once new, many years ago, and have survived and evolved to a place whereby they give testimony to their enduring wisdom. Age has improved them in ways that only ageing can – by adding depth of character and proving their worth against the eroding forces of tide and time. It is not for us to throw out the old just because it is not modern. Yet it is for us to throw out whatever cannot find a place of relevance within the current zeitgeist. Our loyalties are not best given to outworn causes, people or ways just for sentimental reasons. It is for us to hear the roll of thunder as a presage of change, to feel its capacity to transform and to be ready to move things to the next level.

FAITH

AQUARIUS 6 – 10

Our faith in life is rooted in our faith in death – and the understanding that nothing is beyond the reach of cosmic order, that everything living dies away as soon as it has surrendered its vitality and purpose. Without this constant process of renewal, there is no rejuvenating agency; morbidity results. Faith helps us relate to death and, when we have come to terms with death, the freedom within life takes on a deeper dimension. Each moment dies, and each next moment is reborn with the fullest potential, as fresh and unsullied as dawn. Trust in this enables a very powerful creativity. We can serve our fellows best by helping them awaken to this universal need for perpetual renaissance.

ENVISIONING

AQUARIUS 11 – 15

Often a word's ambiguity of meaning actually helps us towards a more subtle grasp of the nature of the reality it points us towards. Dreaming is typically a passive experience of an unconscious person; yet the word also is employed as a synonym for envisioning. So we ask – is there an attitude of mind that can hold both of these conditions simultaneously? On a passive level, we need to trust that dreams during sleep and, by extension, all intuition, are clues for us to usefully interpret as guidelines for action. Yet on an active level, we cut pathways in the mind by active dreaming – by focusing frequently and passionately with concentrated attention upon our envisioned future.

Mastery of life experience comes from envisioning a progressive and satisfying self-development in service to the community, so we need to create our plans based on the affirmation of alignment between social needs and personal desire. These are the very tracks of a mental attitude that magnetizes our dreams towards us, which in turn help lay down the templates of our experiences.

ASSURANCE

AQUARIUS 16 – 20

The stuff of life is resistant to change and is not easily adjusted when approached by wishy-washy enquiry. In order to accomplish a realized statement of what we have dreamt, we need to reach a condition of certainty. This does not mean that we know what is good for another person, or 'true' – it means impeccable confidence that the alignment, between what we believe in and what we are doing about it, will produce results. Any idea we have is first and foremost a descriptive aspect of individuality; it is not necessarily even relevant to another person, let alone universal – perhaps it does, perhaps it does not, address shared concerns. However, unless we ourselves feel assured of our conviction and become committed to it, then no-one else will.

KNOWLEDGE

AQUARIUS 21 – 25

The events of our lives are scenes and scenarios of a mystery play, the revelation of whose meaning requires the subtlety of a high mind. Nose against the window-pane of society, yet anchored as we are in a different reality, it may please us to observe the frenetic clashing and banging of the world, with no need, and certainly no intention, of taking on common, yet uninspiring, viewpoints, which we may find lack profundity of insight.

Yet sympathetic understanding is an aspect of our humanity; it is a degree of knowledge more profound than the conceptual, and so much more than science or logic. It comes from the gentle, compassionate realization that we all are flawed, all damaged. Without this measure of awareness, then our quirkiness is merely for show, a cleverness to impress and steal attention. But when we have escaped conventionality to face our own demons, and we have come back strong and true, then we are unencumbered in applying our perceptions uniquely, yet realistically and kind-heartedly.

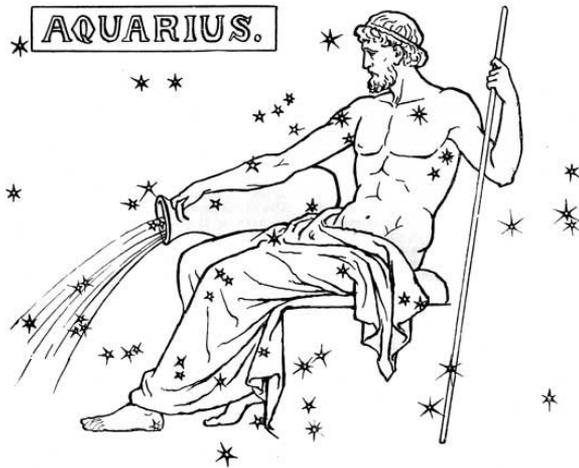
Character becomes enriched by multiple experiences of set-back and bounce-back; without this we remain bland and sheep-like. Only through friction can the potential within us be exposed – as indeed rock formations of staggering beauty are exposed by sandstorms. Our uniqueness is that which distinguishes us from the pack and enables the possibility of thinking outside the box. It arises only by facing up to the shadowy parts within.

ORIGINALITY

AQUARIUS 26 – 30

Created in God's image, we are creators ourselves, given the power of free will to manipulate the field of universal possibility to our heart's desire. Realising this, our joyful task becomes clear – we need to rework what has been and what is, into what will be, according to our most joyful, playful, reach of mystical ingenuity and originality. Hindus teach that there is no settled external reality, that all we perceive is made up out of the imaginings of the mind – our own mind – singular, not collective. So not only can we invent life the way we want it, actually we cannot do anything else. Even if we do not accept the eastern philosophy, we must surely realize that our perceptions can only be based on our own unique experiences – so our inner reality is for us to fabricate – so then let us invent what makes us joyful, secure and loving.

PLANETS IN AQUARIUS



SUN in Aquarius (☉♒)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 374 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Aquarius (☾♒)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

In Aquarius, the Moon is rather detached from emotionality and finds its nurture within ideals, and gatherings of kindred spirits – although peripherally, not centrally. It needs freedom – especially from the conventional belief and behaviour patterns that structures society. This is the witness, a neutral observer whose personal standpoint can be seen as bizarre yet unthreatening.

MERCURY in Aquarius (☿♒)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Mercury is airy, just like Aquarius, and is happy to relax there and widen its reach into new areas of thought – and freedom from thought. It therefore exults in discovery – new technologies, new philosophies and new social standards in service of the idealisation of our humanity. The Sabian degree should speak to you as much by its strange symbol as by the valid intellectual attempt to explain it in words.

VENUS in Aquarius (♀♒)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Here Humanity's ideals are acted out through relationships, so a sense of highly conscious idealism permeates all connection with friends and lovers. Detachment favours this principle more than sentiment, and this position suggests that need for a warm social circle is more important than emotional depth and breadth of intimacy with a single partner.

MARS in Aquarius (♂♒)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

Mars wants to serve humanity's highest idealism when it is in Aquarius, energising social change and contesting injustice and general silliness. It can be dynamic and untiring when aligned with a visionary project, and prefers to share working in joint ventures with a team.

JUPITER in Aquarius (♃♒)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

The humanitarian idealism of Aquarius suits Jupiter's inherent magnanimity, so this position supports acts of goodwill, causes, and social service through inspired philosophical leadership. A great thinker, a wise judge or a senator of Rome are valid images.

NORTH NODE in Aquarius (♁♒)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

A spiritual path towards some visionary ideal is indicated when North Node is in Aquarius. We must learn to be less self-centred and more wide-seeing as we rush into the future. New technologies, new ideas and new codes of conduct are of key concern, and high minded social conscience is well developed.

SATURN in Aquarius (♄♒)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Saturn is happy in Aquarius as it aims to encapsulate innovation into workable structures of new ways to create social agreements that are forward-looking and supportive of the evolutionary direction of humanity.

CHIRON in Aquarius (♆♒)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

Chiron shows us of our unhealed and painful neuroses, and in Aquarius indicates an initial reluctance or inability to cope with modern trends. In later life, such a person may well become a guide to others and facilitate groups dealing with the awakening of our species to innovative methods and technologies that underpin a deeper level of peaceful co-existence.

AQUARIUS – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

DURABILITY: AN OLD ADOBE MISSION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (0°- 1°)

Standing up for our lifestyle deepens our character and inspires in us a faith that we belong

An aware person is required to remember their own true state at all times – this is a necessity for both an overall orientation and an underlying stability in all personal existence. In a world of deceit and illusion, where nothing is ever completely fixed in time, this presents a monumental challenge.

An old adobe mission is an image of a subtle everlasting sustainment that is both required, and provided, by the fact that we are alive within a testing environment. The durability of what protects us helps to ensure our physical survival both as a species, and as individuals – and beyond that there are also the psychological aspects, such as having faith that we belong.

It also recalls the heritage of enduring ties which we must neither neglect nor underrate; it stands as a reminder of their continuing value to us. How and where we build our home not only speaks about our history and expectations, our loyalties and preferences – it also determines a great deal of what we become.

A compelling depth of character arises from the respect we assign to our heritage. It is inevitable that we will, at some point, be called upon to defend and protect what we think of as home; if we have nowhere to stand, then we cannot really stand for anything.

This approach to life also gives rise to an effective breadth of vision. The future needs to unfold within particular parameters in order to keep alive the heritage we have adopted, and which has adopted us. So our choices about direction are made with reference to the past – and a rich and deep history can lead towards a rich and deep future.

There is an unbroken continuity between the psychological needs and material certainties of our being. So as we invest our loyalties to a certain style in the physicality of life, we inevitably align with the emotional realities too.

The thing we need to be careful of is that such a complete observance of old ways can easily lead to a total lack of ambition and blind adherence to superficialities. This can be avoided if we are always aware of who we are, what we are doing, and why.

ACCIDENT: AN UNEXPECTED THUNDERSTORM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (1° - 2°)

With optimism and confidence, setbacks will always further our ends

The State has been invented to protect us all, as much as possible, against the cruelty of nature, but in the end we all have to take precautions against accidents, and quicken ourselves in the presence of such primitive forces as thunderstorms.

It is more or less certain that we will be thoroughly inconvenienced in our lifetime by the shifting patterns of events in which we are obliged to participate. The appropriate attitude is one of alertness rather than complete temperamental instability. It is idiocy to shout threats at the thunder.

It is better to recognize the positive aspect of crisis. Without it, opportunities for maximum self-development are rare, and the bonding convergence of relationships is absent. Life needs crisis to deepen.

All the strands of a normal life – career, relationship, spirituality and family – will be likely to come to terms with the loss of love, of position, of health and of our hopes – usually as a result of an unexpected, unwelcome event.

The masterly approach is to seek out these events and chase the storms, so to harvest the juice they contain. We can call up our genius to create opportunity out of disaster, with the right mind of optimism and confidence, and use setbacks, and even catastrophe, to further our ends.

Accidents by their very nature are unexpected – but only as to their timing and particularities. They are entirely predictable as to their inevitability. So we can prepare for them, train ourselves in how to respond to them – and take full responsibility for their implications in our lives.

Nature's potentialities lie beyond our control – so we must develop strategies for how to act when we are not in control.

DEFIANCE: A DESERTER FROM THE NAVY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (2° - 3°)

Unless we create our own loyalties, the future appears shallow and pointless

This is a statement of human independence carried to a point of extreme rebellion against things as they are, whenever our life circumstances are simply unacceptable. Where tyranny rules, then defiance is the action of a hero.

For the sake of an immediate liberation of the spirit, we will disregard of all the consequences of authority's displeasure and social disapproval.

It is made clear that any late acceptance of full and personal responsibility for life is better than none at all. We began life as children powerless to protest against injustice, which excuses our earlier inability to act – but as adults that is no longer the case.

It takes genuine psychological courage to bring about an appropriate repudiation of all meaningless loyalties. This usually calls upon a combination of very clear thinking and certainty of purpose, together with strong resolve and willingness to make sacrifices.

And yet it is an imperative because, except as we create our own allegiances, destiny holds no depth of meaning, is shallow and feels pointless.

The soul's demand for a more rewarding expression of individuality cannot be ignored without serious personal consequences.

A deserter from the navy could also indicate a person whose complete inability to follow the rules of any game is neurotic and indicative of immaturity. So hero or villain then? It is in the end for us to decide for ourselves.

THERAPY: A HINDU HEALER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (3°- 4°)

When we practise our magical capacities in service, spectacular results are possible.

This is a symbol of the development of self to a very high level so that, by appropriately asserting our participation at the correct point, we make a particularly effective and beautiful impression upon the world.

A Hindu healer is typically hugely dedicated to the perfection, not only of their skills and knowledge, but also their personal disciplines of spiritual practice. Generally speaking, intense personal self-discipline creates the power to shift realities. Through this, they achieve a magical ordering of a whole course of events, which follow their involvement during a transitional phase of any occurrence. We can do this too.

All of our understandings and talents are essentially eternal and cosmic in their reach and significance. They can be brought to tangible achievements here and now in the world of forms by dramatizing them – in other words acting as though they were here present – and expecting results.

When we practise such magical capacities in service of others, a therapeutic relationship is struck where spectacular results are possible. Those we encounter are healed in mind and body, and at such times, there is a marriage being consummated. It is the ultimate union – that between the ideal and the real, spirit and matter, heaven and earth.

It takes exemplary personal skill to find the highest potentials within ourselves so that we can see the highest in another. By so doing, we bring potentials to their supreme completion, simply because they are recognized.

It goes without saying that the power to practise magic and healing is forfeited should a person employ their psychological insights and high spiritual station to impress, or intrude upon the free will of another.

Essentially, despite the pleasing resonance in the world of forms, this is a transcendental mystery. The path of healing is best walked by one with no attachment to outcomes. Both the healer and the client are better served by this more humble approach.

ANTECEDENCE: A COUNCIL OF ANCESTORS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (4°- 5°)

Loyalty to established ideals brings influence, responsibility and power

As individuals, we are sponsored by our relationship to the ruling body that keeps alive old traditions of our culture and heritage. A council of ancestors symbolizes the principle of antecedence – what has gone before us is the fundamental aspect of who we are; it is the fundament upon which we build our personal identity.

The whole of our background mobilizes itself continually to serve us and to facilitate a further refinement of potentialities in the modern era.

The cultural characteristics which have proved their value, and hence have their continual re-embodiment in the hearts and minds of one generation after another, create an immortal dependence within each individual born. We simply could not be what we are without what our ancestors were.

The self ultimately must fulfil itself, and is destined to be a challenge to the world at large. Yet the capacity to establish our uniqueness of being requires the strength of clear and solid roots, which we inherit socially from those who went before.

It is good to remember this – and appreciate that the path we walk is well trod. Whilst avoiding sterile conservatism, it is highly beneficial to show some deference to the track-makers. They were pioneers, not settlers, and they found ways to innovate and discover many of the aspects of our treasured lives that we now need, and could not imagine doing without. This is as much to do with ideas as things.

The enduring reality which anyone creates in the overall ideal we accept for ourselves. These ideals define us more than possessions do and they have evolved over a great deal of time.

The mystery of this degree is how to develop power through absolute self-integrity. Authenticity and dependability are truly respected qualities that win the trust and support of our fellows – which brings influence and responsibility. Yet being true to our values is only possible when we have values to be true to.

SUBTLETY: PERFORMER OF A MYSTERY PLAY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (5° - 6°)

Awareness brings the subtlety that shows grace in being and relating

Shakespeare reminds us that *'all the world's a stage'*, yet we are constantly challenged to remember our roles as performers – this requires a very sensitive intelligence, a noteworthy subtlety of being.

Reality, as conventionally perceived, is no less convenient than a mystery play as a means of self-realization. In all of our day to day events, we need to act out our characters convincingly well.

A person's particular characteristics are exalted in relationship, and there is no end to the variations of expression. In fact it is only through a variety of relationships that our full potentialities can be stimulated. So we become performers, with very different temperaments to play out in our various associations.

The mind has a mediating function in these interactions; its purpose is to interpret the world to the individual and the individual to the world; it is hugely important. It simply is not enough to allow individuality to be influenced, and so cultivated, by reference to our feelings alone.

All experiences have significance. The value of any experience, when interpreted creatively, is heightened in personality in the one hand, and in life itself on the other. The trick is to find a point of creative balance where we can assimilate what happens within our relationships to bring better understandings and deeper connection. This process must involve both feelings and thought.

With such awareness we win the gift of enacting deeper, more meaningful opportunities within the realms of human potential. We start to understand the real motivations that drive us – why we do what we do, want what we want, and fear whatever we fear.

Such subtlety bestows grace – the knack of noticing the effect we have on others, and their conscious and unconscious responses to us.

There can be a tendency to lack practicality, and to be teased by the seductive pull of self-mystification all too frequently. This is to be minimized because too much self-analysis can surreptitiously lead us towards distress, and we lose the power to act spontaneously with full commitment.

ESSENTIALITY: A CHILD BORN OF AN EGGSHELL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (6° - 7°)

Essence is spirit, and nothing is more essential

The symbolism of an egg is frequently found in various cultures; it represents the idea of a matrix. We are born into individuality out of a combination of influences – spiritual and material – such as the stardust of our physicality, the genetic coding carried in our DNA, and more subtle moulding of the zeitgeist and local geopolitical realities. That which pulls all these factors together into a single moment's statement is essentially the matrix of what we are.

The eggshell may seem to limit us, but it does not. When we are ready, we crack out – until then, the contours of our roots and circumstances do more to nurture than to constrain.

We are sustained by the assurance that we belong, and we are protected.

At first we identify the source of that protection externally as home, mother, community and earth-based securities. As we become mature and aware, we learn of the greater and more exhilarating truth – that in essence we are indestructible and incorruptible.

Essence is spirit, and nothing is more essential. It cannot be broken down into components, destroyed or compromised. Whenever we are in alignment with our spiritual essence, we are completely free of danger – and this occurs whenever we are projecting our highest aspirations into the world. It may well be counterintuitive, yet we are only ever truly safe when we are racing headlong with total blind enthusiasm towards our wildest dream.

Whereas the self is found by cracking out of its nurturing eggshell, it is lost again only in full-on inspired enthusiasm. Somewhat surprisingly, it is therefore found at a higher level – a passionate level beyond ordinary reality.

This naive state is by no means easy to access, simply because it is absolutely fearless. Any imperfect attempt can easily lead to an unhealthy reliance upon external forces for a sense of both stability and achievement, rather than a self-assertive, self-fulfilled state of being.

IMPACT: BEAUTIFULLY GOWNED WAX FIGURES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (7° - 8°)

By idealizing others we find resonance with our own potential for achievement

The human spirit, as it gathers strength, has an ineradicable vanity, a self-importance that is by no means always graceful. Yet this can have real usefulness, and most certainly has impact upon how things unfold.

Both beauty and reputation are illusions that dissolve with time and full exposure, and here, from the finery it wears it a shop window, or being included in displays at Madam Tussaud's, a dummy shows the celebration both of superficial form and impotent reputation.

However, it draws attention to the potential for achievement through the effective dramatization of human character on some level of everyday understanding – something we can relate to.

A strong psychological dynamic for individual effort comes from the direct influence of outstanding beauties and heroes – even notorious people. There is no completely corrupt example of the human experience – even the bad guys have good qualities.

We find empathy for famous strangers through resonance with our personal idealizations. We hold in admiration another person because, perhaps in some hidden way, potentially, we have within us the quality we most admire in them.

Of course, it is foolish to engage in a futile effort to recapture any outworn experience, especially of another person who is so effectively fictionalized and made into an ideal.

Yet here, implicit in the symbolism of the waxworks, is shown the necessity to recognize and identify the values that we consider worthy of emulation, in order that we can refine our own aspirations, and proceed thereby to realize them ourselves.

DRAMATIZATION: A FLAG TURNED INTO AN EAGLE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (8°- 9°)

Loyalty to a shared ideal makes collective power evident

There is also a clue in this image that makes us contemplate humanity's inexhaustibly fertile imagination and its part to play in our accomplishments. It is not only through utter self-dedication that we prosper – we always need to imagine the fruits of our efforts first and foremost. The flag comes first, the eagle follows.

A flag, perhaps here one that shows an eagle, is meant to be representative of certain qualities – perhaps aspired towards by a state – and this properly engenders the all-important pride of nationalism, which brings together a large group of disparate interests to form a stronger unit against perceived dangers and towards social improvement.

By contrast, the bird itself is not a picture that dramatizes that quality; it is a violent hunter, a cruel animal, which may well remind us of the human potential for vindictiveness and abuse of power over others. However noble it is as an animal, it lacks humanity, and so is deficient in the more compassionate aspects of life, which are the foundation-stones of any possible nation we may want to be part of.

Therefore the determination to make this eagle-power evident through our own way of living will need to be balanced against the softer loyalties implicit in being human.

Like any animal, we have a capacity for significant self-representation, and therefore the power to rise to every situation, and get from it its most rewarding self-serving potentials.

Yet, we also want to make a contribution of enduring worth, and find a purposeful way to bring a vision of a better life to bear upon our own social situations, as a service to those who align with the values which our flag represents.

As individuals, we prosper as we spring to action in defence of our loyalties, through serving our larger community – and eventually we may all expect to find ourselves in service to an ideal rather than the dictates of expediency.

APPROBATION: A POPULARITY THAT PROVES EPHEMERAL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (9° - 10°)

Both applause and censure are temporary; soul qualities are enduring

This is all about the approval, or approbation, that is offered by society, and our need for caution in accepting it. Popularity inevitably proves ephemeral – someone else will be flavour-of-the-month very soon and we could be left high and dry.

Any continued sustainment of our own stability of being should be looked for in the more enduring aspects of reality – things hard-won and worthwhile, and things that define us and speak of our soul qualities.

We must learn to accept applause as encouragement for our own self-strengthening – but only in the moment, rather than as something to hoard and recall nostalgically.

Life always offers us a gift for bringing our issues to a dramatic consummation at a time of crisis, and the eternal challenge is to remain true to ourselves, whether or not this wins social approval.

What is worthy of recognition is a courageous self-confidence and an unflagging faith – which often comes to an individual at the point of climax in their experience of challenge.

The swing of the pendulum between endorsement and repudiation is certain. It is better not to care either way – both applause and censure are distractions we can do without.

Also, although opportunism is often appropriate, like everything it can be taken to extremes and lose merit. We should be wary not to indulge overmuch, and count upon our popularity and good fortune, lest the pendulum sways against us a little too soon and we fall from grace before we achieve the result we want.

ECSTASY: MAN TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH HIS INSPIRATION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (10°- 11°)

To walk our talk, we must normally balance self-interest with service

Man tête-à-tête with his inspiration – is an image of the condition we can access when our alignment with the highest sense of self, being one with the source and force of our creativity, is the normal condition of our lives. In this condition, we can access ecstasy – this is a state of absolute satisfaction in the transcendental experiences of selfhood, when we are neither attached to – nor detached from – our sense of identity.

As much as we have to accept the overshadowing of universal life and order, we must also assert and demonstrate our own special capacities, by which we make our claim upon worldly life. A balance is to be found between inspiration and action, the muse and the inner executive. The muse shows us what to create, and the executive shows us how.

Each of us lives in consistent intimacy with spiritual truths of every sort. We constantly renew our wisdom realizations, and find that all we need to validate them is ever close at hand.

Our need to act continually in our best self-interest is a personal truth. Its counterpoint polarity is the universal truth of service and self-surrender.

The real trick is to find a way to translate every vision into practical consummation. To walk our talk. Then we find that there is no difference at all between our spiritual aspirations and our worldly expression, because we are one with inspiration at all times.

However, enthusiastic idealism and a tireless desire to serve becomes a realistic life path only when we are satisfied that we have achieved our goals on a personal level. Otherwise, our will to serve simply becomes an aspect of the complete self-obsession that typifies an ardent, but foolish, idealist.

Eventually we need to rededicate our special capacities – even our individual experiences – so that they are transmuted into a spiritual statement. What previously we used for practical purposes, we now use for demonstration of spiritual imperatives and beliefs.

PROGRESSION: PEOPLE ON STAIRS GRADUATED UPWARDS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (11°- 12°)

Given the Moon today, we will ask for the Sun tomorrow

The image of *people on stairs graduated upwards* is one of progression. It shows how we all want to rise up, to achieve a better set of circumstances than we currently have.

There is no limit to the level of aspiration in a person – if we are given the Moon today, then we will ask for the Sun tomorrow. For most, momentary consummation is everything, and yet it is so short-lived. The modern world is typified by a general inclination to make frantic efforts to keep ahead of others – or at the very least to keep up with them.

Taken to an extreme, such an attitude creates all manner of difficulties, including stress, unpopularity, and self-disappointment. Yet, underneath the flurry and push of getting ahead, there is a very real and reasonable motivation – the common drive towards optimization of our experience in all aspects of life.

Inner gratification is a very strong force – one which demands that we do the best we can for our family and ourselves, notwithstanding that others may end up with less than us. For example the idea of Communism seemed quite reasonable, even visionary in a spiritual way, yet it could not be expected to work sustainably, simply because people are rather self-serving and of widely ranging levels of talent and application.

The reach of our vision is as the horizon – it moves towards greater and greater dreams as we approach it. The most effective attitude is to expect to make the most of all of our prior accomplishments as we progress to the next level.

There are inherent differences among people; some people are simply better at things than others. This could present real issues to make cooperative involvement unworkable – especially when they prove significantly more or less competent than ourselves. Yet typically it does not, and this is because we are willing to find something of value for ourselves in every experience. It is this which enables us to share endeavours generally with fellows, even those of unequal ability.

No outer experience, however satisfying in the moment, can offer sufficient grounds for self-fulfilment. For that we need to turn within and locate the central axis of our inner being, and progress further and further within, until we truly and utterly know the depth of who we are.

INDICATION: A BAROMETER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (12°- 13°)

It is because we need to gain control that we seek indications about the future

We find that natural processes are typically beyond our control, and therefore able to intrude upon our choices and comforts. Yet there is an underlying order to life, which applies to everything, including the forces of nature. Whatever can be measured is, to some extent, contained.

It is meaningful to distinguish between what is superficial, and what is real and dependable. We may not know whether it will rain tomorrow – but we do know that it will rain again one day. This is not clever or trite; it is how we maintain our sense of order by which we keep at bay the terror of our powerlessness in the face of natural forces.

Whether by using traditional superstition, old wives tales, or a barometer to measure air pressure, we seek an indication to infer data about the future – because we feel the need to gain the sense that we have some measure of control.

The very process of enquiry into the future has an effect – we sharpen our powers of observation and develop exceptional competence in judgement. It seems meaningless to decide whether it is because we develop better powers of analysis, or we gain more resonance of intuition, the outcome is that we know more about what is likely to be coming towards us.

By this a secret is revealed – that all secrets can be revealed. Whatever we need to know can be made known when we train ourselves in the necessary attitude of mind. There is order in the universe, and its operating principles can be revealed to one who has the application to discover them.

It is a great love of ours to attempt to live our experiences in advance. Yet the reality, of what is, is immediate and circumstantial – it registers through our senses and takes physical form. However, the reality of what is to come is non-physical and affects the mind and heart. It is not without value to liken the barometer to the feelings we have – up and down, measuring atmosphere and giving clues about what might be coming next.

This whole practice of measuring the future against the present is the source material by which we conceptualize and gain broad generalizations and abstract ideas about life and how it all works. The past has given us clues, but our ability to predict examines how well we have understood them.

COURTESY: A TRAIN ENTERING A TUNNEL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (13° - 14°)

Normal everyday life can lead us to exciting visionary outcomes

A train enters a tunnel – this is what it is meant to do. It can be seen either as an uninspired conformity to limitation, or the courtesy of adherence to expectations. A typical person follows the track laid down by parents and more general influences, which to some may seem constraining and deterministic – yet to others it is both helpful and appropriate guidance towards proper societal integration.

Normal acceptable behaviour leads to the performance of our community duty – by providing whatever services we have agreed to take responsibility for.

Equally, our basic generosity of human personality brings about our normal, courteous participation in the more impersonal relationships we have with other community members.

Our eagerness for new experience expresses through expanding our social life and responsibilities, and we need look no further than the straightforward cycle of work, home and friends to find satisfaction.

It is not any spirit of altruism acting through these voluntary social divisions of labour because the refinement that occurs is as much for our own benefit as for others.

Our skills and talents can only ever be sharpened and become fit for purpose by actual employment. Our readiness to share them leads towards their perfection, and therefore increases our ability to improve outcomes of our own vision as well as the community's.

Our ability to meet the most exacting of demands in life – with all its various challenges and potentials – is a gift we so deeply treasure. This comes about primarily through service to others.

AFFIRMATION: TWO LOVEBIRDS SITTING ON A FENCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (14° - 15°)

The richness of our own life potential is illustrated in nature's achievements

To be able to bring our destiny to fruition, it is completely appropriate to set the terms upon which we are willing to meet the world. Keeping control over our time and circumstances is very empowering and strengthens our position in all of our many interactions.

As we might see in a tropical garden, or an image of lovebirds, nature delights in exhibiting how rich things can be when they reach self-fulfilment. We affirm this to be a metaphor for the potential richness of our own life.

It is natural to share such abundance, and such giving always tends to attract a deepening of emotional rapport and softening of personality.

When the personality has reached a point of completion on the inner level, then we become highly capable of performing our actions on a more magical level.

A sense of self-consistency becomes observable, has great appeal, and wins loyalty and cooperation to support our intentions. Results are achieved when the force of our clear intention is presented with certainty, and a special atmosphere that shows of our expectation of a particular successful outcome.

When we are capable of creating the world we choose, then there is always a danger of experiencing jealousy in its active or passive exhibition. It is good to find a way to minimize either of these unhelpful motivations, because we want neither feeling corrupting our sense of wellbeing.

Most of us raise emotional romantic issues in importance above practical – and we are free to trust in the affirmation that life is for love and joy.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: BIG-BUSINESSMAN AT HIS DESK

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (15° - 16°)

Accomplishment fails unless it confers a depth of character that is not disturbed by gain or loss

In business, we are constantly up against others who want to take more or give less, and will fight in order to achieve this. The image of a highly-effective manager and their accomplishments, speaks of the worthiness of profound involvement as a way to test and evolve character. This is done by consistently reaffirming what is important.

We have to prove ourselves against the forces that come up against us because personality develops if, and only if, we take on challenges that test us.

Similarly, day-to-day life is a real and valid challenge; even the most straightforward of matters are often difficult to deal with. Raising a family, owning a house, and pursuing a career, are all very demanding occupations from time to time, let alone when added to the burden of voluntary community responsibilities.

As situations ebb and flow, then we need to keep our attention on that which we find of true value if we are to maintain a position of advantage. The cutting edge of accomplishment demands total attention at the level of detail, and also anticipation.

Anything accomplished of real consequence leads to realization of selfhood at an advanced level. This is how we know the difference between what has, and what has not, any real consequence – and these things are often quite atypical of what is expected.

Since we know, but forget, that fame and fortune are nothing unless they confer depth of character, we trust that there will be clear indications from others in our community should we degenerate into a level of ambition that has no merit beyond the superficial.

Evidence of true and abiding accomplishment is found in our ability to respond appropriately to all that occurs without feeling much disturbed by gain or loss, condemnation or applause.

PROBITY: A WATCHDOG STANDING GUARD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (16°- 17°)

Through discipline, we come to freedom

Our realistic expectation that people will behave in a civilized way – with probity – is somewhat like having a guard dog; it reassures us that we are safe to enjoy greater freedom of involvement with life. Else our fearful but natural inclination is to shy away from the unknown and be suspicious and unfriendly towards strangers.

This is about being an upright, honest person – not only as a path of self-realization, but also to claim a place of dignity within the context of community – we overcome our own animal fears because we feel shielded by social conventions of non-violence and decency, and we offer the same courtesy to others.

Communal interaction is as much facilitated by social agreements as by the generally felt appetite to relate to others. Such restrictions are applied through legal devices, morality and custom. We depend upon them to limit our exposure to risk.

Each of us is stronger because others are committed to maintain and reinforce community censure – so in turn, we do the same whenever circumstances call upon us to protect those in need of help.

If, individually and collectively, we are to find a way to achieve our highest potential, then we must live cooperatively – and this depends upon our determination to acknowledge a shared responsibility to do the right thing, and require others also to do so.

When we do the right thing, generally it works out well, and therefore our trust in the future strengthens – so we deepen our sense of wellbeing. In other words, by right living, we find that we grow in faith and achieve greater fulfilment.

Only by becoming a self-referential symbol of collective authority will we be able to become free of imposed restriction. Through discipline, we come to freedom.

ANALYSIS: A MAN UNMASKED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (17° - 18°)

A healthy curiosity about the whys and wherefores in human eccentricities is the secret of self-revelation

The human species, and of course any individual, is capable of the most exceptional ineptitude. Evidence of such folly abounds – and we see how countries and people behave as though they were absolved from any accountability for their profound lack of grasp of the relationship between cause and effect. Yet we are all accountable and we should find a way to avoid generic thoughtlessness, or silly activity.

Immortal curiosity, which inevitably motivates an intelligent person, sponsors a never-ending trial-and-error process of behaviour; life is to be seen as a laboratory for our ideas and spirit of enquiry. Often people are self-defeating in their stubbornness. Even an amoeba will adjust its angle of approach in response to received information – “*this doesn't work, don't do it*”. Yet, as intelligent beings, we ourselves are tasked not only to notice *that* it doesn't work but to understand *why*.

It's good to remember that these experiments are not without purpose; we have a goal. We are each trying to find more wonderful reasons for our existence. The advanced human is dedicated to become unmasked on the eternal path to self-discovery and self-expression.

This may appear counter-intuitive to one whose *raison d'être* is to be in service to the greater good. Yet we find that the path towards the realization of universal connectedness lies first in development of self. We will never become a fully realized servant of others until we are fully realized masters of self. In the end we may learn to trust the community and repudiate self-reliance, yet we must do that from a position of strength not need.

The pursuit of knowledge is an aspect of compassion, is a way to serve, and is constantly shifting its focus as times change. Various activities – stargazing around a stone-age camp fire to find patterns in the moving lights above, puzzling how to control social networking preferences on Facebook, or getting to grips with the String Theory – are not fundamentally different in essence; they share the spirit of enquiry.

It is true that we demand that people make themselves fully accountable to the community because we feel that that is a requirement if the general welfare of all is to be attended to.

And yet we have the constant urge to support an individual's private interpretation of how this might be for them. This calls for us to unmask them and penetrate the depth of motivations that underpins eccentricities of human activity. Ready as we ever are to surrender and feel life just as it is, we are nevertheless equally compelled towards the analysis of why it is so.

CONCERN: A FOREST FIRE QUENCHED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (18°-19°)

Coping with intense problems cultivates individual gravitas and sponsors special levels of teamwork

In each of us there exists an exceptional capacity to cope – and this is called up only in an emergency because it is when metaphorically we need to quench forest fires that we emphatically commit to concern ourselves unreservedly with the task at hand.

Dealing with difficulties is a normal aspect of life, yet in a lot of people this creates a sensation of fear or anxiety.

A more expedient response to such situations would be to see how the personality can usefully be employed to harness skills that effectively manage the troublesome matter at hand.

Certain situations call for our caring response, and it is only when we allow ourselves to feel concern in the heart that we can awaken both the clarity and the ability to respond fittingly.

During the peak experiences of intense cooperation, which call for previously undiscovered self-expenditure, our greatest potentialities are awakened. Remarkably, a large number of old people look back to the years of war with fond nostalgia. Some, perhaps on a subtle unconscious level, even felt a strange sense of delight in calamity. They do not forget the fear and hardship, and yet the dominant recollection is more to do with the sense of comradeship and community, and their sense of pulling out all the stops to find heightened levels of ability, rising to the needs of the moment.

What could so easily be seen as misfortune can be turned around to become a successful adventure in the development of a much broader competence in social responsibility. Dealing with problems is what matures the individual because handling precarious external circumstances has weighty impact that cultivates gravitas – and so attracts the confidence and support of others less capable.

More than that, there is a deep-reaching feeling of profound relaxation after such an extraordinary event. This has a truly regenerative effect that renews vital forces, underpins optimism and trust so that a sense of certainty grows that whatever the future throws up can be dealt with satisfactorily.

CONVICTION: A BIG WHITE DOVE, A MESSAGE BEARER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (19° - 20°)

Inner faith is a source of inspiration and assurance

Conviction is a double-edged sword; it can as easily bring about sanctimonious self-deception as it can bring about wisdom and strength of character.

The message-bearing white dove carries its truth in coded form; not everyone has knowledge of how to decipher the secrets, and we are all likely to project our prejudices onto everything we see and hear. A distortion of understanding then occurs, without our awareness. There are always secret signs of divine favour for a faithful heart, at least for those who have taken the time to learn the secret language through which the dove speaks. The dove is used symbolically in a wide range of cultures and religions; it generally points to the delivery of a universal, sacred message of purity, peace and love.

This image is about humanity's recognition of a transcendental – or superior – perception of the nature of reality. Our knowledge of it is what enables us to succeed in any field to which we apply ourselves, by fitting our desires into the cosmic framework.

It engenders inner faith, which is a source of inspiration and assurance; it generates confidence, and the power of certainty. When we have it, we exude an aura of rightness, which people believe in and support.

Self-strengthening comes through an ever-constructive attitude of mind. In mastery, the mind is the first agency of creativity, and needs to be trained and focused correctly if we are to attain happiness. What we believe has a very significant effect upon what we experience – perhaps even absolutely – so it is imperative that we control what we allow ourselves to think.

The analytic, reasoning mind may choose to dismiss them, as a mere over-sensitiveness to the prompting of naive credulousness, but these insights are no less real because of that. One person knows of the subtle realms, the next does not, and each is absolutely convinced of the other's error and foolishness. Conviction can be very dangerously wrong.

The special gift for knowing when to act, and what to do, comes from something deeper than rational thinking. When we open up to balance our thinking mind with more subtle perceptions, then we expand consciousness and embrace wider, more complete, aspects of truth.

CLEARANCE: A WOMAN DISAPPOINTED AND DISILLUSIONED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (20°- 21°)

Nothing superficial endures – and only profound eternal realities bring lasting happiness

Any attempt towards fulfilment of self through a capitalization on purely physical assets must fail eventually. However beautiful or strong we may be, it all passes away sooner or later and, if we have squandered opportunities for real self-improvement, we are left without much inner strength of character, or even elegance of personality.

It is only by accessing the deeper potentials of the being that self-discovery can occur, and the curse of beauty so readily denies the beautiful any real possibilities of advancement.

The image suggests that a woman has become at last disappointed and disillusioned as she gains insight into the superficiality of her appeal. Clearance is required and provided by this realization – she clears from her emotional body the self-damaging belief that her form is her best asset. We could extend this idea to include anyone who gets older and loses power because they become less appealing. This is sure evidence of previous emotional immaturity and its corresponding distortion of wisdom.

What arises, to replace the false trust in the superficial, is an inherent gift for pressing on and gaining increased powers with every setback.

Personal frustrations can then be seen not so much a denial of opportunity as a challenge to support a genuine self-realization.

Nothing we depend upon remains the same, and some of it is entirely ephemeral. While it is a joy to capture the pleasure of the springtime of our lives, it is the eternal realities that bring true long-term happiness. The distress of the soul is inevitable whenever it seeks its sustainment from elements that have no anchorage in our deepest, authentic nature – so to be really content, we have to locate the aspect of us which is enduring, true and basic.

Some people are willing to allow the acceptance of all defeat as final. This is inconsistent with general experience – we see everywhere the capacity for renewal and regeneration. Our disappointments can so often be the first clue we have that a new and better life is approaching.

REFINEMENT: A RUG PLACED ON THE FLOOR FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (21° - 22°)

We have a duty to deepen our enjoyment

A child playing on a rug is not the least concerned with community approval, yet serves society with its innocent self-centeredness. Should this facility become obsolete on reaching adulthood? The enjoyment of simple pleasures promotes a close relationship with the soul's mysterious agenda, which is obscured under conditions of stress, whenever we try too much to fit in with society. Surely we have a duty to deepen our enjoyment through the refinement to the fullest potential of what life offers us?

Actively seeking out opportunities for self-enrichment, we find – to a truly extraordinary extent – that we are able to depend upon life to throw up the resources and opportunities we need to flourish and grow.

Our desire for everyday comforts and conveniences speak of the hidden inclination of the soul's will and capacity to enhance personal experience. Full enjoyment of life is in the detail, the perfection of satisfaction.

A controversial attitude to society enables a sharpening of awareness, in particular self-awareness. Our self-serving choices often exclude us from the warmth of community approval, which in turn so often inclines us to greater eccentricity. Certain encounters present. These challenge us to discover the true self, and its unflagging ability to concentrate the will in order to excel and accomplish.

Subtle realizations arising from this incline us towards being different from the common herd, whose members lack such awareness. We look for opportunities to express distinctions, in order to become more obviously unique. Optimization of personal advantage is a wholeheartedly legitimate strategy. The openings are ever-present, and actually increase as we seek them and take them.

Inevitably sometimes this requires us to engage with others in joint ventures, and as much as we are inclined to serve others, in turn life serves our own particular requirements. The more aptly and carefully we attend to our own duties the more our desires come to fruition, and the more our needs are met.

This leads to a profoundly-felt sense of wellbeing and trust that all is good, and that our inclination towards carefree self-indulgence is an acceptable celebration of abundance.

APTITUDE: A BIG BEAR SITTING DOWN AND WAVING ALL ITS PAWS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23ND DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (22° - 23°)

Power and knowledge come only when animal passion and spiritual passion unite

A big bear sitting down and waving all its paws – the powerful bear represents a person’s animal nature – it is seated, so passive, and yet gesticulating, so expressive. This illustrates the conviction that the passionate spirit of the red-blooded human, when tamed by the higher self, is a source of great power.

By struggling to gain absolute mastery of our own lower nature, we find that nothing is beyond our capacity. We could use our emotions in frantic efforts to gain and hold attention, as so many people do. But it’s better to use it to cultivate an appetite for life, by following the desire nature to the point of crisis, and then in full awareness, resolving the issues arising – of darkness and light.

Before we can participate fully in any grander reality, we do need to show the worth of our own specific gifts – worldly skills to address worldly goals. It is pure nonsense to expect to reach high spiritual states without first coming to terms with ordinary life – and that also includes dealing with dark psychological imbalances we have inherited and internalized.

Our desire for spiritual experiences shows in a willingness to dramatize our potentials whenever opportunity presents itself. This may well involve challenges and even conflict, as we test our new ideas out in practice, often going against established habits and social norms.

Knowledge about ultimate reality is of no consequence unless it can be satisfactorily shown – by our tangible life achievements – to be a workable life principle in material terms.

Our soul work follows on from our demonstration that we have an aptitude for worldly life – and an ability to bring every function of life to a high personal fulfilment. How can a spiritual principle be valid if it does not bring such abilities? That which does not survive the robust tests of life on earth has no place in life on earth – this surely is self-evident?

The soul finds itself through the excellence it makes and re-makes out of the very fabric of itself. We are here to experience the endless options available, through which we may further examine each separate aspect of our eternal being, in a never-ending process of self-expression and self-discovery.

SERENITY: MAN TURNING HIS BACK ON PASSION AND TEACHING FROM EXPERIENCE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (23° - 24°)

Serenity is found when knowledge and experience are in harmony

Our passions record the difference between what we experience and what we genuinely understand. Turning from them, we demonstrate that we have learned their lessons, and found a place of peace, where knowledge and experience are in constant dynamic harmony. The self is thus refined more and more, so that the inner rewards become so much more valuable than the outer success that naturally follows. Serenity is at hand.

Those with a developed sensitivity to the demands of the world can find it all very disheartening, and become cynical in their day-to-day disappointments, expecting to be displeased – even as a way of life.

What remedies this is a broad and deep participation in everyday and ordinary activities of the general population. It is then seen that in fact there is no generality within the population; everyone's life and circumstances are uniquely touching and, when seen truly, stimulate wisdom.

The very act of sharing our gifts and rewards imbues them with their special value, and so our most precious gift is the ability to relate deeply with another. This requires heart as well as mind.

Humanity's penchant for self-obsession is not wholly without grace or spiritual importance, yet the self must assimilate itself within the higher vision of self in order to find peace. This is done secretly. So, in the company of those whose problems reach out with an unsettling influence, inwardly we remember grace, and all is well.

Accomplishment does not require us to deal with others' issues; the opposite is the case. By deepening our own convictions, we find such a profundity of inner stillness that serenity becomes the constancy of our being. This is what leads to success in all endeavours, and also has the greatest healing effect.

We can gently absorb ourselves into this place of peace, detached from externals, yet quite capable and willing to serve selflessly. We can give the appearance of a thoroughly integrated, properly functioning unit of society – despite being almost completely free of it.

UNIQUENESS: A BUTTERFLY WITH THE RIGHT WING MORE PERFECTLY FORMED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (24° - 25°)

As we explore our own idiosyncrasies, and have to deal with those of others

A butterfly with the right wing more perfectly formed – this strange image speaks to the uniqueness of each and every one of us. Like snowflakes, we are a little bit different from anything and everything else. Unlike snowflakes, we spend quite a lot of time giving serious consideration to our distinguishing features.

The right wing and left wing have slightly different appearances, and indeed we too could never be exactly in balance. Whether we are triggered by this into an unhappy, rebellious conceit – or a knack to turn deficiency into a real asset – is a fundamental life test, and the choice we make.

As an inevitable part of our own human nature, we are imperfect. Because of this, our lives take on a whole depth of meaning that would otherwise be impossible, as we explore our own idiosyncrasies, and have to deal with those of others.

An underlying psychological integrity and stamina gives us the capacity, which we all have, to overcome any handicap that is imposed upon us by our distinctions. It is very likely in fact to be the key aspect that distinguishes us in our originality of character.

These dissimilarities, whether physical or more subtle, are the noteworthy constituent parts which constitute the individuality of an individual. On any level of experience, they remain the primary basis of all important contributions to our self-knowing.

Functionally, the integration of conscious existence – into the world we have created – requires that we take unique form, with all the nuanced qualities that uniqueness implies. So as we observe what is considered normal by people we live around, it is both intuitive and inescapable that we are required to study the differences that make the difference. What is it exactly that makes us who and what we are?

The self mobilizes its faculties successfully only as it takes full advantage of these significant differences. This shows that our imperfections are often the real source of our effective power in the world.

EFFICIENCY: A HYDROMETER

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (25° - 26°)

We learn to find a way somehow to turn everything around to our advantage

A hydrometer is something that measures an aspect of physical reality, and points to one of the facilities we have – powers of immediate analysis – which enable us to achieve commonplace, practical goals with efficiency. Measurement is an aspect of coping well with, and to some extent controlling, material reality.

By this process we gain the full assurance of an intelligent ordering to be found throughout the world of everyday realities. Without this, life would be absolutely terrifying.

Worrying, especially over trifles, is entirely self-defeating. So having assurance of guaranteed, predictable continuity is empowering. We know when the Sun will rise, when the tide will be full and when to plant our seeds to gain optimum benefit from climate conditions; this assurance is not to be taken lightly.

We come to see that a very real cooperation of natural conditions and forces may be enlisted for any project of special concern.

We need to learn the operating principles that govern the environment we choose to influence. By this process, we learn that we can take more responsibility for what occurs, to shape events to suit our own convenience, and therefore master of our lives and destinies.

An aspect of this is to choose – and to learn how – to capitalize on any difficulties that arise. This is essential optimism – find a way somehow to turn everything around to our advantage, including words, resources, difficulties and disappointments.

Thus we gain an exceptional ability in manipulating the fundamental complexities of living, and come to enjoy the challenges as means to further development of our powers, in the full certainty that, whatever occurs, we end up better off.

TRADITION: AN ANCIENT POTTERY BOWL FILLED WITH VIOLETS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (26° - 27°)

The traditions that anchor community values give comfort and strength, but are not absolutes

It takes clear-minded strength of identity to avoid the loss of self in conventionality and its meaningless trappings. There may well be, within our culture, a tradition that explains why we should place violets in pottery – but there may not. Whichever we feel is true, it is for us to ascribe meaning to our activities, rather than to accept blindly that what was done before should be done again *ad infinitum*.

No matter the shifting forms life presents to us, there are always tokens of an enduring stability on which the ephemeral and the superficial are unable to make any significant, immediate impact. This is what tradition is.

Its meaning lies in its value as an ultimate assurance to the human heart. We take comfort, and strength, from the knowledge of what is expected of us, our rights and duties, the normal way to behave, and what we may expect of others.

When we are studying the permanence or changelessness of the real, we must not confuse the absolute with the relative. Tradition is held within a culture, and is an attempt to anchor the community to a set of values – yet these values are space/time dependent; they are not actually beyond challenge. Incontrovertible tradition is tyranny. The modern generation has the function of updating traditions to respond to new circumstances with new consciousness.

Whereas the stuff and diversity of our communal organization are always being replaced, there is an over-all continuance of meaning in which these variables exist. It is this deeper reality which has truth as its essence.

The self may anchor itself in tradition – and this is both valid and empowering, like the roots of a plant. Yet the plant also has leaves – and actually exists in order to flower and fruit. Correspondingly, we must not think that the roots are all and everything – they serve, but should never rule.

There is sustenance and security to be found in rootedness, and this sponsors both our aspirations and achievements, and one who is well-anchored in truth attains a high realization of values, and a real gift for using them – above and beyond the normal person's spiritual or material reach. These people are candidates to become exemplars of the current mode of tradition, elders who carry with gravitas the voice of the past.

IMMEDIACY: A TREE FELLED AND SAWED

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (27° - 28°)

Total concentration and complete lack of inhibition bring beauty and sacredness

Certain aspects of life are immediate and inescapable, such as our need for food and warmth. Because they are unavoidable requirements, they serve as the base-line foundation of all we do. Whether we do it ourselves, or we interact with another, someone has to prepare our firewood.

At times we may be reluctant to engage with the nuts and bolts of daily life, and so often we use our first surplus to get others to do practical things for us. Yet there is incomparable benefit to be gained from such work. Our ability to cope with crises so often depends upon the personal qualities that grow through simple tasks.

Great satisfaction is to be gained when we learn how to use basic skills and materials – real joy is so often found in having a spirited enthusiasm in the mundane.

We see complete lack of inhibition so rarely in adults – yet we cannot half-heartedly fell a tree.

There is great beauty, and a type of earthy sacredness, when what we are doing is absolutely full-on – especially when it requires total concentration and is immediately useful.

Very often we seem to be engaged in a lesser reality – chopping wood – when at another level of awareness we are in fact serving a much higher purpose – earthy prayerfulness. When this occurs, so that what serves the physical also serves spirit, we are well-positioned in life.

It is the lesser person who, through want of imagination or wisdom, sees these tasks as hard or unrewarding.

EMANATION: BUTTERFLY, EMERGING FROM A CHRYSALIS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (28° - 29°)

The wonder of Creation is continually being reborn

There is a voracious appetite for experience, an insatiable well of curiosity for knowledge, and a constant mental yearning to get to the bottom of things. This propels individuals to seek answers to inner questions.

Mind is the cornerstone of humanity's supremacy on earth, and we invest hugely in the intellect in order to develop and maintain our self-assurance. This is required to function with an effective certainty of purpose.

What springs forth spontaneously, in response to persistent questing for knowledge, is an emanation of new ideas. Each one is like a butterfly in its ephemeral transience. Some of these ideas trickle forward and, without the force to survive, are lost; others grow like streams that become rivers feeding into the ocean of humanity's collective conception of existence.

The root of this activity is the elemental self-regeneration of mind. At a personal level and at the universal level, the mind needs to go through a process of constant renewal in order to purify itself – so that its outpourings are sparkling and clear.

We have to learn and understand that somehow the degenerative aspect of mentality – to be sluggish, lazy and crystallized into hard opinion, staunch belief and unwillingness to learn – can be overcome. Pushing away from such dysfunction to affirm our faith in life's promise, we awaken a more fluid way of creative thinking.

There is then the sense of continually being reborn – to an even greater expanse of awareness that has the eagerness of emergent new life – with a thirst to take in every scrap of knowledge from all perspectives.

We are all co-creating Creation in each moment. The feeling we get when we remember this – and fervently participate with it – is a blend of incomparable keenness, wonder and amazement.

CONTINUITY: THE FIELD OF ARDATH IN BLOOM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF AQUARIUS (29° - 30°)

Everyone may count on the inherent friendliness of the universe

The Field of Ardath is a mystical meadow of ancient Babylon; in its great beauty and peacefulness it stands as an ageless and special repudiation to modern life. Certain qualities make up the continuity of what life really is – these are unchangeable throughout eternity, and celebrated as the highest aspirations we have.

There is a transcendent integrity within nature itself, unrivalled and almost universally acknowledged, which reminds us of a way of being that is free of distortion, and inherently beautiful. And, although we so easily forget, we have that within ourselves too.

This impeccable natural grace not only inspires us to seek out a spiritual meaning to life, it also suggests that everyone may count on the inherent friendliness of the universe. Despite appearances, and somewhat counter-intuitively, the world actually is a safe place to be for those who expect to be treated kindly.

One who accepts this gift from nature somehow in turn feels that they should live so that any reliance placed upon them is both possible and inviting. It is an aspect of our expectation of a friendly universe that we actively want to help others – because we enjoy doing so.

In consequence, our destiny is inclined towards endowing us with the fruits of our good rather than bad works. It could be seen as a reward – but usually it is felt as simple, yet predictable, good fortune.

This is the image of self-illumination through exceptional service to others, and implies the continuity that certainly exists between nature and humanity. Though robust and very demanding, nature is essentially kind – and so are we.

Ultimately, the individual must rely on the world in which he finds himself. This reliance is experienced as the normal, predictable, and fair response we get from life. It centres on taking thoughtful responsibility for our actions – in clear distinction from the simpleton's fairy-story fantasy lifestyle, which involves depending upon others to feed and clothe them.



PISCES

HARMONIZATION / PRESENTATION / DEVOTION / SPIRITUALITY / DREAMING / REALIZATION

I am when I am not

Pisces is subtle, sensitive, and caring, showing humility, empathy, faith, kindness, refinement, and personal sacrifice in favour of communal needs. Easily swayed, it lacks structure, self-control and compliance, and is very unsettled and erratic, having a *go with the flow* attitude. Its inspiring ideas and original thoughts arise from a mystical spirituality – and its array of sentiments and psychic notions come from innate awareness of emotional and spiritual energies which lie beneath physical existence, where all is interconnected, and there is boundless soulful creativity and the elemental life force from which everything emerges and finally returns.

So obvious to this watery sign is that, once ego is released, we see that our sense of self-importance is what veils us from truth and joy. When we let go of the need to be special, we can flow with the greater cosmic mystery, the true and beautiful resonance of absolute goodness, the music of the spheres, the ocean of God. If we have sufficient compassion to share our awareness of reality with others, then we are careful to do so without imposition. We follow the final realization of Buddha – which is Assumption. Our life must be the path to complete self-realization through absorption into Oneness, which we live out behaving as though we are enlightened – we are clear and helpful, kind and honest, and we practise sacredness, forgiveness and trust. There is no difference between the path to Goodness, and the path of goodness – how could there be?

The fish intuitively realizes that we simply cannot study freedom and power simultaneously; nor concentrate on both understanding and experience. Freedom to experience life as it actually is depends entirely upon willingness to forego understanding and the power it brings. Any attempt to explain the inexplicable leads to dogma. Instead of Christ, we get Christianity – because Christ cannot be contained in words. We must trust that immediate sensory experiences are God-given and apt, without the need to explain or defend.

The ancient glyph shows in fact two fishes, one rising, and one descending. Swimming around the cosmic ocean, we sometimes go right down into the darkness of our unconscious fears and deadly habits, and then we rise to leap above the limits of our normal lives – to know briefly of the heavens. The key to stability and joy during this eternal process, is to become entirely indifferent, even completely unaware, of whether we are a symbol of light in the darkness or a symbol of darkness in the light – or even simply imagined and imaginary, and beyond any sensible definitions that attempt to discuss Unity by dissecting its parts into this and that.

Life is not more than our choice of what we decide is real, thrown out upon the field of sensation, and received back as reality. Its authenticity is perfect – we get back exactly what we give out, yet its validity is personal – no-one else shares our own unique version of reality. To the lover, life is lovely; to the miser, it is miserable. It could not be simpler. Knowing this, we can investigate any attitude to find out about ourselves. Pisces has discovered that we can live in a world of dreams or rise to the top of our field – it's all just a personal process of projection and reflection. The mystery of life is not beyond explanation or rationale, although the final mystery is of course beyond words. The Absolute is transcendental by nature, beyond all form and sensation. Yet it can be approached by prayer and meditation, and hinted at very convincingly, such that we are drawn to sink into it. By the masterful handling of phenomenal life, we reach a point of departure – at which point, with a leap of faith and total acceptance of self-death, we may be vouchsafed a glimpse of all-that-is: life itself.

PISCES WISDOM

HARMONIZATION

Commerce is an arrangement of reciprocal benefit that makes conflict less likely
When risk exceeds potential gain, it is wise to be very cautious
Standing firm or projecting forward – do we fear or do we trust?
In busy situations do we see a tight squeeze or an elegant convergence of interests?
Our endeavours benefit by cultivating new contacts and consolidating old allegiances

PRESENTATION

Our aspirations are supported by demonstrating self-assurance and manners
Conscience reveals the intuitive aspect of faith
Are we invited to emergent joy or commanded to unwelcome constraint?
To establish ourselves takes application and commitment
Explorations into transcendental consciousness offer breakthroughs of perception

DEVOTION

Devotion – the condition for attainment – is alignment with our sense of Ultimate Reality
Spiritual aspirations are tested – have we clear intention to serve the soul's ideals?
Tradition keeps alive the wisdom of the ages so to serve a principle dignified by history
Style shapes personal outcomes by articulating our membership of a distinct circle of influence
By making the best of things, we can bring meaning and even adventure to common situations

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality must meet real problems as well as imagined ones
The image we show the outer world characterizes the inner self
A conductor is needed to bring the orchestra into alignment
Teachers guide us to places in the psyche that we don't even know exist
To feel and express gratitude is of major importance

DREAMING

We weave the threads of life to form identity and vision
Some people take on the responsibility to make known to the world a spiritual code
We tend to make real whatever we imagine
When we discover new talents we usually improve our circumstances
We project our disappointments in the manner we treat our priests

REALIZATION

Deeper realizations enable us to get clearer about our ultimate motives
We celebrate our blessings through gratitude, by taking today's fruits today
Being worldly and ordinary is quite a blessing, and a spiritual practice for the advanced seeker
We need reliable values to navigate the stormy waters of life
First imagine, then expect

THE EXPRESSIONS OF PISCES

HARMONIZATION

PISCES 1 – 5

Life is all about dynamism and balance – because movement requires the wave form of coming and going; vibration is exactly this. Philanthropy and selfishness, spiritual and physical, divergence and convergence – we give these things separate names as though they were separate things. But they are not; they are polarised aspects of the same thing, and harmonising with events and surroundings depends upon understanding the need to equalize these opposites in a natural, flowing way.

To find out how to bring harmony to any potentially conflicted situation, we need to tune in to both sides without preference or judgement. We all have plenty of opportunities to practise this – in the market place and at home, with large groups and in family units. It takes a certain ability to hold emotional tension – where two sides are vying for empathy – without needing to become resolute either way. Sometimes two sharp attitudes can only be brought to softness by a third agency, and then all three positions are improved.

PRESENTATION

PISCES 6 – 10

It is necessary for us to take bite-sized morsels of reality – day by day, person by person, thought after thought, because normally we can only grasp the nature of things in small pieces. So we carve up our experiences into scenarios and chapters as though they stand alone – and yet from the higher perspective, all is one. In order to integrate the component parts into a composite whole, we have to relax the grasp of the mind and allow it to expand towards its integration within cosmic consciousness.

DEVOTION

PISCES 11 – 15

A balance is to be found between the gentle, careful exposition of beauty and grace – and passionate, adventurous trust in our ups and downs of feelings. It is aesthetically pleasing and intuitively right that what works well in the long-term is both functional and tasteful. The goal is arrived at when there is no difference between self and God, when passion and consciousness are ever-present, and when all questions immediately dissolve into answers.

When we find alignment between our sense of self, and our sense of universality, then we have access to knowledge, and inevitably become an example that inspires others to follow or emulate us. Here, it is useful to convey the subtle point that the only thing of consequence is the aligning, which requires devotion to life, a constancy of approach towards the goal, with a high expectancy of reaching it. Students and associates will mistakenly believe that they need to follow the teacher, adopt the teachings and blindly accept that version of Ultimate Truth. This expression of devotion is false and leads the student down a *cul de sac*.

SPIRITUALITY

PISCES 16 – 20

We are all summoned to the house of God, and encouraged to practise the means by which to respond to the call. So many paths have been walked on this journey, which are all both different and the same. This is because individuality is given to create its unique way, and yet surrendered when the universal pattern is finally revealed. There are particular processes to learn, yet we are free to interpret and express these according to our own evolutionary path. In the end, all our differences are allowed to dissolve – and knowing this is the final mystery. Ultimate knowledge – whether viewed as the Self, examining God, or God examining Self – is neither a gift nor a reward – paradoxically neither yet both. Whatever path we walk, it is the path to God; revelation requires a path – but any will do. Our encounters are either tests of ingenuity or celebrations of position, according to our station and approach, since whether we find our circumstances difficult or joyful is a matter of mind, not phenomena. As we evolve our ability to manage our affairs – however vast and complex – we somehow learn that we can never manage them as well as they can manage themselves.

DREAMING

PISCES 21 – 25

All the beauty, the love and the magnificence that we witness is ours; it is legitimate, and well-deserved self-love propelled into the world and mirrored back – the result of our magical intentions. From this we understand that it is actually strategic to give away, because that sets up an inevitable cosmic responsibility to give back – the Cosmos itself owes a debt. Whatever we release is invested for us in Eternity as fidelity bonds.

So it is good to deal fully and finally with all matters arising. Whatever imperfections of life are thrown up, we need to deal with them to the point of our full satisfaction. It is much better to respond with love and understanding whenever we are abused – not disdainfully to excuse the culpable, but to atone for our own imperfections, which are now haunting us. We must assume that we deserve all that we get – so any difficulties that come to us are now seen as opportunities to recover previous lost ground. It is not even helpful to try to understand the whys and the wherefores – it's our fault and our reward, unconditionally. How we see it all is simply how we see it all – reward or penalty. Just by noticing what occurs, we grow in wisdom.

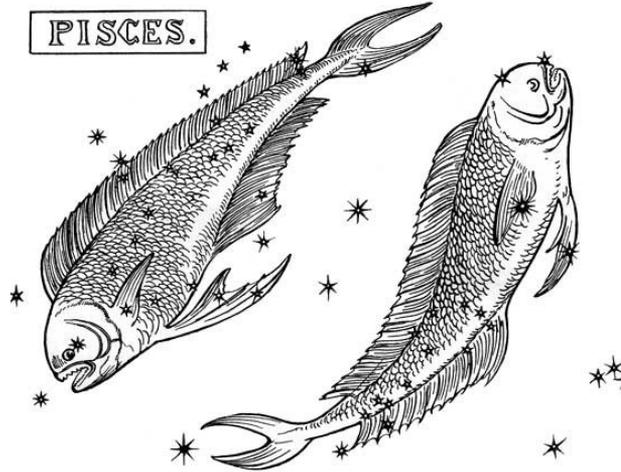
REALIZATION

PISCES 26 – 30

At a certain level of spiritual awareness, we see unambiguously that the non-material aspect to reality is clearly a reflection of the material; those who doubt it are simply given to doubt. That which transcends is not 'subject to'. When we are attached to the world of phenomena, we are subject to pulling and pushing – but it is our choice, because, with spiritual awareness, we are free to escape into the transcendental. It is not something airy-fairy and unattainable; it is the stuff between things, sometimes called Ether. We cannot live there, or even think there – but we can briefly sojourn there.

When we do, something profound and worthwhile occurs that has impact upon material reality when we re-engage with our situations. We find ourselves better able to finesse obstacles, to lighten burdens, to know something of the relationship between cause and effect and make a greater indentation upon the hard facts of the matter at hand. It is true that we are in the world, and therefore significantly constrained, but it is by our own choice, and we can strongly influence the extent to which we are subject to causes. We may be in the world, but quintessentially, we are not actually of the world.

PLANETS IN PISCES



SUN in Pisces (♆)

Sun | Radiates the core truth of who essentially we are and what we stand for when pushed

The main text on page 410 describes the essence of the sign, which is seen most clearly when the Sun's qualities are convincingly expressed in a person.

MOON in Pisces (♁)

Moon | Responds unconsciously and shows our need for nurturing relationships and environments

Here the Moon is hypersensitive to undercurrents of meaning and emotionality. It has no fixed point of reference and is prone to confusion, so is drawn to people and situations with solid foundations and known rhythms. To feel complete it needs to find a mystical spirituality in nature and personal interactions. There is an unimpeachable core of empathy and compassion, and the potential is strong for inspired, creative input into any situation.

MERCURY in Pisces (♿)

Mercury | Makes mental models of our experiences and communicates that with others

Ideas are experienced with more feeling when Mercury – the mind mapper – swims about with ocean currents. Here its yearning is revealed – to understand and express with words what can only finally be accessed with intuition. More artistic than definitive, in Pisces this planet draws communication into realms of imagination and inspiration.

VENUS in Pisces (♀)

Venus | Feels a sense of harmony and attraction, which informs all relationships with people and things

Venus reaches her exalted best in this cosmic sign – sensitive, devotional, forgiving, self-sacrificing and sweet, she is the embodiment of love. Yet of course in a harsh world, the danger of reluctant martyrdom or victimhood is real, and avoided by trusting in an almost mystical intuition when things don't quite feel right.

MARS in Pisces (♂♋)

Mars | Projects our will to be uniquely self-expressive, articulated through the struggle to overcome

Like trying to punch a cloud, Mars cannot thrust when it is in Pisces and its way of operating is rather diffused. It finds its way forward in subtle mysterious ways, more dancing or surfing than marching. It can be both brilliant and inept and creates unusual paths that meander, more concerned with process than outcome.

JUPITER in Pisces (♃♋)

Jupiter | Enables us to expand our reach and awareness by giving confidence to grasp opportunity

The expansiveness of Jupiter in the cosmically-expansive Pisces leads to an easy reach into the mysteries. Mysticism, self-sacrificial compassion, intuitive knowledge and total confusion are all examples of this facility of consciousness. The Sabian degree will be felt as an aspect of the whole, a gateway into the cosmic realities and a subtle feeling of recognition of a part of you rarely identified with much clarity of wording.

NORTH NODE in Pisces (♁♋)

North Node | Points the direction to go in order to find ultimate meaning in life

This point directs us towards our path of soul evolution, and in Pisces suggests an important need to let go of control and trust. Mysticism and efficient worldliness are in clear juxtaposition, each sponsoring the deepening of the other.

SATURN in Pisces (♄♋)

Saturn | Encourages us to cope, and come to terms with constraints, imposing order and meaning onto chaos

Saturn likes to draw clear boundaries and in the flowing waves of oceanic Pisces it struggles to make anything definite. Like the shoreline, whose position shifts with the tide, this planetary influence is an ever-changing negotiation between what is to be fixed and what must remain fluid.

CHIRON in Pisces (♄♋)

Chiron | Guides us through a journey of suffering and release born of phenomenal life, ever shifting perception

The children of the 60s arrived into a world waking up – Love was announced as a realistic life strategy. Chiron's 'wounded healer' principle was a new idea, and it was employed in psychotherapy to good effect. People with this placement use empathy as a healing facility, although typically only after facing down their own dragons.

PISCES – 30 DEGREES OF WISDOM

COMMERCE: A PUBLIC MARKET

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

1ST DEGREE OF PISCES (0° - 1°)

Commerce is an arrangement of reciprocal benefit that makes conflict less likely

A public market is a place of commerce, where people interact for mutual benefit without any need to enjoy each other's company or agree with each other's point of view. Although the exchanges are competitive, they are normally diplomatic and fair because the longer picture is in sight – and fair trade now leads to more trade in future. Wars are avoided and ended so that commerce can continue; therefore it represents the full maturity of humanity's social estate.

The common ideals of community life are here given everyday manifestation – what is bought and sold speaks of the current needs, aspirations, whims and fancies of this culture. It occurs through the willing participation of all members because everyone has to do their part for a market to function well.

The underlying emphasis is placed clearly on group integrity – which in turn facilitates each individual in their own special pattern of needs and wants.

The real intensity of effort is directed towards our own ends of course, and yet without having awareness of the purposes of others, we simply cannot expect to succeed. This is illustrative of reflexive self-consciousness, where our personal best interests, and even spiritual evolution, require us to tune in to the viewpoints of our fellows.

Ambition has its effective refinement here. Commerce elegantly combines a consistent generosity of understanding towards the practical aims of others, together with an entirely reasonable attitude of self-service. This formula optimizes the realization of both our own personal vision, and that of others'.

As a result of this fact, we can develop exceptional capacity for organizing the converging interests of many people in a practical arrangement of reciprocal benefit. This ability places us at or near the centre of power, where the policy decisions are made to optimize society's course of progression.

If these policies are not truly reciprocal, there arises a complete insensibility to any over-all welfare, and the degenerative implications of greed and exploitation. The consumerist philosophy of the modern era shows how this can lead to serious problems on a global scale.

CAUTION: SQUIRREL HIDING FROM HUNTERS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

2ND DEGREE OF PISCES (1° - 2°)

When risk exceeds potential gain, it is wise to be very cautious

Fear wears many faces and is mostly born out of psychological imbalances; it is therefore unhelpful and neurotic where its expression is self-debasing timidity. However, with the light of intelligence, fear becomes caution and is a reasonable strategy for the maintenance of self-interest.

Sometimes it takes courage to refuse to engage in certain activities, and this is appropriate when the risk exceeds the potential gain. A few nuts, however important, are insufficient incentive for the squirrel to expose itself to the hunter's gun.

Such an uncompromising loyalty to self-interest focuses enduring values into a communal system that binds us together with others who share these values. Our hopes and fears are equally significant in creating our tribe mentality, the early expression of civilization.

As with any species, humanity is tested as to whether it can collectively demonstrate sufficient survival skills. Good judgement is such a skill, and our survival is contingent upon it; we need to do the right thing as a group.

Humanity's gift is that of free will, so therefore its test is whether, by the application of good judgement, it is thought wise to do this, or to do that. Then actions follow conscious decision rather than instinctual reactions.

Feedback – as to whether our judgement has been sound as a long term policy – ultimately takes the form of survival and abundance, or even extinction – the threat of which comes as a dire warning.

From this rather stark process is evolved the only true independence of spirit, which will enable us to know what spirit is. This is God consciousness, and is the final mystery that can show us not only how to survive but why. The light is unknowable without the dark – so trust is born out of fear, and never without it. But rather than permit degenerate non-specific fear to rule us, we need to bring the light of consciousness to the equation.

SURVIVAL: A PETRIFIED FOREST

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

3RD DEGREE OF PISCES (2° - 3°)

Standing firm or projecting forward – do we fear or do we trust?

The image is of something dead that once was living. We tend to clench up against change, in a futile attempt to turn to stone that which eternally must be cyclical by nature. Security is not found by resisting the dynamic forces of life; if change seems threatening it is because we have come to depend upon that which is not dependable.

In every situation, we are required to make a contribution, even if only by witnessing. Otherwise, we are in fact an obstacle, immobilized into a superficial stone-clad reality.

We need to blend in with the current circumstances we encounter so that we add to the resonance of the moment. In this way we become a creative part of the melody that eternally sounds throughout the cosmos.

Our best survival strategy is to develop a sense of certainty about what we find right and wrong life strategies. This certainty derives from having and applying a steady orientation of a strong mind towards conscious knowledge.

Real power comes from this. As much as we have to accommodate the changes, we also have to stand firm and project forward a steadfast, clear motivation.

In every moment, throughout eternity, we are asked to adapt or to stand firm, and we must answer this call given no certainty about right or wrong, except that which we have evolved for ourselves.

This ambiguity is either intimidating or liberating. That is the essence choice in life – do we fear or do we trust?

CONVERGENCE: HEAVY TRAFFIC ON A NARROW ISTHMUS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

4TH DEGREE OF PISCES (3° - 4°)

There is an elegant convergence of interests between all appropriate participants in any event.

The restrictions imposed by physical existence inevitably force us to squeeze ourselves into a tight space sometimes – as cars do when passing through a bottleneck. Both the individual and the community are therefore required to develop a high level of discipline to cope with this particular expression of the hard reality of life.

This is clearly dramatized in everyday affairs, as vast populations rush about, having to accommodate everyone else, and come to terms with the need for imposed and self-accepted constraints.

Ultimately, however, there are no restrictions on how we relate. Through the intensity of convergence of interests and aspirations, we come to connect with whoever we need to in order to express our desires, values and qualities.

Each of us has their particular ways and special skills in organising the great complexity of our own unique set of interactions – so that we make the best use of our time and resources. We see the myriad patterns of transient enterprise in our own unique way – and by recognising the order within the patterns, we can manage our lives to best advantage.

Nothing can occur that we cannot influence and shape. It is so very important to know that.

Some people choose not to see how to fit what they want with what is around. This is folly; it is poor strategy – their stubborn blindness is degenerate.

What works for the individual, works for the community and vice versa. It must be so for the convenience and encouragement of self-development and the establishment of a well-integrated society. There is an elegant convergence of interests between all appropriate participants in any event.

BENEFIT: A CHURCH BAZAAR

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

5TH DEGREE OF PISCES (4° - 5°)

Our endeavours benefit by cultivating new contacts and consolidating old allegiances

A community thrives through its institutions and social events. It draws together people whose important loyalties are enacted through their participation in these shared responsibilities and activities. This is where we meet our neighbours, and both celebrate and discover friendship. The connecting is unremarkable yet it gives us all a chance to enjoy not only the warmth of fellowship, but also the pyramiding powers of accomplishment.

Society organizes itself for the general wellbeing of its contributing members, and each of us has an innate ability to capitalize upon the enduring allegiances that develop within that.

We gain as much benefit by what we give as what we receive; philanthropy is thus sustained. We are wise to be open and willing, in the knowledge that it is sensible to give when we can afford to give.

The conception of this symbol lies beneath the surface – we need to understand the mystery that there is always a great deal more going on with such simple matters than perhaps is apparent. Something as simple and unglamorous as a church bazaar can be the instrument through which individuals apply real effort to make a contribution to human achievement, and to the enrichment of gentle, yet important contact with others.

Most people drift around as if in a haze and fail to notice what is actually going on around them. There is always more to see than we are seeing – there is opportunity in every encounter. It is crucial to be open to possibility if we want to make the most benefit of our potential, and this openness is expressed by a particular attitude of attention. We must enter situations expecting to acquire something new and exciting – and of course this expectation significantly increases the likelihood that we will.

We need to be careful not to exclude the less social types, and become smug and cliquy, because our best interests in the long term will be served by an all-embracing approach to connection.

Generally speaking, there is always more to life than we can ever imagine, so openness to new input is an essential ingredient towards happiness and greater fulfilment.

DISCIPLINE: OFFICERS ON DRESS PARADE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

6TH DEGREE OF PISCES (5° - 6°)

Our aspirations are supported by demonstrating self-assurance and manners

Most of us have an urge to make demonstration of our personal skills and capacity to achieve results in the world. We see this in children, and it doesn't ever fully leave us. Officers on a dress parade are showing off how well they have trained themselves to do something few of us could manage to do. This is indicative of an aspect of the human psyche that occasionally comes around, in a cyclical pattern, and is evidenced by a deeply felt and wholly necessary intensification of being – at times, we want to stretch ourselves to the limit.

Dignity and protocol always provide a valuable rehearsal of cultural and group values; that is what they are for. We wear certain uniforms at different times as an outer acknowledgement of our adherence to community customs. To go shopping, on a picnic, to a funeral, to a dance – and all have their own pre-determined styles of dress and behaviour, coded for us to understand the background emotional condition we are expected to fit in with. Typically, the more intense the experience we want, the more seriously we take our appearance.

This allows for the appreciating of a person for strengthening of their own pattern of participation. The one wearing sports clothes is looking for a certain type of emotional validation from others, which differs substantively from someone wearing black, or someone else dressed to kill. Most of this is entirely unconscious, and even to discuss it would trigger a defensive reaction.

Special privileges accrue to those who master this aspect of human experience, and these privileges are also ritualized – as important titles, public awards and *entrées* to the exclusive circles. All of this requires exemplary discipline, because to stay at the top is even more difficult than to get there in the first place; others want your spot. Without extraordinary self-control, no-one can survive the pressure.

We invest selfhood very carefully, for the long-range potentialities of life, and choose the presentation of image and opinion to stake a claim on the accepted path to fulfil our ambition.

We must be careful not to accept as the real thing any legitimized, but rather unimaginative, attempts at the ideal experience. Titles, awards, public recognition and glamour are all shallow reflections of something deeper and more authentic that the soul strives to have manifest.

If, at the top of the tree, we cannot tell the difference between these gestures and the real deal, then all of the straining to fit in will have been almost entirely wasted.

CONSCIENCE: A CROSS LYING ON THE ROCKS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

7TH DEGREE OF PISCES (6° - 7°)

Conscience reveals the intuitive aspect of faith

A cross lying on the rocks is a reference to the widespread common denial of spirituality in the modern era. According to reports, it was not always so – in previous times, humanity kept alive more of a sense of their higher aspect than has come to be the case in the age of Scientific Materialism.

This shows something of the utter timidity of self-interest that some people have sunk to. For those who have faith, it is self-evident that to lose it is to lose ourselves – and this is what has happened in recent history. The force of untruth in commerce and politics has reached unparalleled levels, which is having a profoundly destructive effect upon the human psyche – even to the point where many cannot even access their intuitive side of consciousness, wherein faith is found.

In order to enjoy good health on the psychological side, we need to be active in the cause of every standard or allegiance through which life is made worthwhile to us. This must surely feature our spiritual side – how could it not? How can we ignore something of such paramount consequence?

There is an advantage to be found in this sad story – that we can find a rugged independence of inner spirit and the courageous rejection of all compromise.

We must listen to the insistent stirring of an inner voice, which seeks to quicken the soul to remember the overriding necessities of its existence in physical form. To lose knowledge of this quiet voice is immeasurably poignant.

To be clear of conscience, it sometimes becomes appropriate to undertake the withdrawal from life in one aspect as means for re-grasping it in another. If the forces of the material world are often overwhelming, then we must step back. In this way, and perhaps no other, we can turn within, and we will find the more subtle side of our being – the inner self.

It is wholly unnecessary to accept the world as it is. To do so, as it entirely commonplace today, is a repudiation or neglect of our individual higher ideals. This level of capitulation is to be avoided at all cost – nothing is more important than to express our ideals in material life. If we allow conscience to lose its pristine condition, or worse, lose track of it completely, then we drift upon oceans of dark confusion as lost and vulnerable as a small sailboat at sea without its rudder.

SUMMONS: GIRL BLOWING A BUGLE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

8TH DEGREE OF PISCES (7° - 8°)

Are we invited to emergent joy or commanded to unwelcome constraint?

People form groups with regimented structures and clear unimpeachable lines of command that define what are, and what are not, acceptable expressions of self. This serves the group purpose well, but does not promote the expansion of individuality; in fact we have to be careful not to take on the very attitude of collective authority and become officious ourselves.

The bugle summons us – is this invitation or command? We are perhaps more likely to respond willingly to a girl's summons, which seems less compelling. Of course, it is understood that we must connect with others, and that such involvement will inevitably evolve terms of reference for the exchanges that occur – both socially and impersonally – and there will be rules, or at least guidelines, by which to interact.

Included within this process of forming community is the need for each person to find their place and define their values and preferences within their special role. Some blow the bugles, others are summoned.

It is inevitable and healthy that there is friction inherent within this process of community evolution. Everyone will challenge; everyone will be challenged – and this conflict is as good and useful as is the grit that oysters are said to need to produce their most beautiful expression.

Without it, we would become sluggish and live a degenerate life. We have to stay alert if we live constantly surrounded by imposed discipline – in particular we need to be awake to opportunities for us to grow, and express who we are. This alertness is a supportive quality.

Our very participation within the group begets social responsibility. We are required to discharge our community duties to the accepted level. Any sense we may have of not doing so registers as an uneasy conscience, even if we cleverly escape the imposition of discipline and justice. Although the lower self may not find it too disturbing to cheat the system, the soul always wants to do the right thing.

There is a dynamic balance to all things, so too within the relationship between self and community. If we are forced to squeeze ourselves into a soul-destroying regime, then the powerful urge towards self-expression will eventually dominate. There is a continual cycle to be embraced – the swing between freedom and involvement. Without some involvement in community and its constraints, life lacks stability and even meaning; whereas with too much constraint, we feel no emergent joy.

PRACTICE: A JOCKEY

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

9TH DEGREE OF PISCES (8° - 9°)

To establish ourselves takes application and commitment

Jockeys train hard on a daily basis and keep to a rigorous dietary discipline in order to maintain their peak of fitness for their work. Any top practitioner does – musicians, sportswomen, singers and so many others. Practice is what keeps us in form.

Each of us potentially has a spectacular gift for rising to any occasion. It takes will to do the work, and this comes from motivation. Often the drive is found because we simply want to celebrate and enjoy our talents to their fullest capacity.

Rather than misusing every resource and potentiality – for example by witless gambling on horse racing, trying to get something for nothing – we can choose to apply ourselves fully towards something that will bring self-fulfilment.

The penalties, for any failure to drive the capabilities of self to the limit, can be harsh – we find that actually it is only through thoroughly consistent performance of skills that we establish ourselves among our fellows, and any insolvency of achievement is quite an unattractive quality.

As our abilities develop in excellence, we are increasingly obliged to be successful in exhibiting them. So the more we practise, the more we need to practise. Achievement is not an event – it is a lifestyle.

This image speaks to us of the concern we must have for the struggles and competitions of everyday experience; they are unavoidable if we want to enjoy success on any level – including social.

Our eagerness for life must show in any true revelation of ourselves, and any individual needs to demonstrate commitment to life through some activity they strive to take to the fullest degree of completion and expression.

OBSERVATION: AN AVIATOR IN THE CLOUDS

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

10TH DEGREE OF PISCES (9° - 10°)

Explorations into transcendental consciousness offer breakthroughs of perception

The physical location we take up has an important effect upon perception. If we were to climb to a hilltop, or even visit a remote island, and contemplate our busy lives from afar, we would see things differently. The aviator's viewpoint offers a breakthrough in consciousness – as witnessed by astronauts returning to Earth.

The power of observation is enhanced by depth and breadth of perception. Inner and outer realms of life are each brought to a more effective reality when both are consulted.

If we remember to bring this approach into our normal lives, then we can examine any special complex of human affairs with a consistent thoroughness of overview. We then understand more about how people feel, how they see things, what ramifications are likely, and what can be done to optimize our expectations.

Humanity has a genius for exploration – we are curious and courageous. When we bring this playful attitude of mind to bear upon the problems of daily life, we create endless hypotheses for solution. In fact problems are often welcomed in order to give our creative genius the stimulus it so enjoys.

We rise above limitations – we think out of the box – when we look for explanations above and beyond our typical, historical patterns of action. On the face of it, lacking wings, humans could not fly – yet someone refused the old way of thinking and dreamed. The whole process of planning and execution is transformed by the one with their head in the clouds.

If we are to avoid irresponsible isolationism and unrealistic otherworldliness, then it is better to think of this rather unworldly dreamlike state more as an excursion than a lifestyle.

The transcendental aspect of reality offers greater powers of comprehension for those with the vision to attain to these higher states of awareness. We can all rise above the patterns of conditioned mind, and taste something of absolute freedom, if we choose to do so, and learn how.

DEDICATION: MEN SEEKING ILLUMINATION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

11TH DEGREE OF PISCES (10° - 11°)

Devotion – the condition for attainment – is alignment with our sense of Ultimate Reality

Divine Spirit in essence is its own matrix. In other words, that which gives it form is actually an aspect of itself. It is what it is because it only ever has pure intention, purity as its nature, and purity as its result.

The expression of this idea has given rise to scriptures, prophets, priests and teachers, and everything that arises out of these. Any attempt made by these agencies to describe purity is somewhat imperfect – of course, because if it were perfect it would be Purity itself, and beyond all the limitations added by the encumbrances of definition.

So, our religions, spiritual traditions, philosophies, laws and moral codes are all inevitably tainted. They speak as much to the needs of our imperfect hearts as they do to the cosmic realization of the Source of all love. They are in fact the descriptive contours of the limits that define the stage of our spiritual evolution.

The emergence of humanity into the realm of experience is a work in progress. As a species, we have unlimited potentiality and the freedom to be and do whatever we have the will for. There is an examination process to enquire as to the extent of our commitment to a given line of evolutionary development. This is called dedication.

We find that dedication is a necessary and sufficient condition for high accomplishment. We also discover what it actually is – it is alignment with our personal sense of Ultimate Reality.

Were this principle to express itself in its distorted aspect, one would experience hypocrisy – behaviour at variance with one's beliefs and feelings. It is interesting to observe that no apology is due or appropriate whenever we are acting entirely within the integrity of our authentic position.

Since we are in alignment, nothing is essentially disturbing, and we can find a way to flow through the changes without much difficulty. We see buffeting as helpful evidence of the need for further refinement, nothing more.

QUALIFICATION: AN EXAMINATION OF INITIATES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

12TH DEGREE OF PISCES (11° - 12°)

Spiritual aspirations are tested – have we clear intention to serve the soul's ideals?

Life, especially a spiritual life, demands that we continue at all times to prove ourselves in full accordance with the claims we make.

So if we claim to be a seeker of immortal understandings, then certain choices and behaviours are appropriate; others are not. An initiate is someone who has made an irrevocable statement of intention to serve the soul's imperatives above those of the ego.

Self-dedication is a commitment to a set of values far removed from gross appetites, transient jealousies of fellows, and similar neurotic attitudes. Ultimately we reveal ourselves more through the finer potentialities we develop – our qualifications – to the point where we choose unhesitatingly and consistently to share them with others.

In each and every new situation of consequence, we are tested – this is what is meant as the examination of initiates. It is not imposed upon by others – it is attracted to us by our sincere seeking.

Ideals and spiritual aspirations are thought-forms, and they operate on the level of magnetism, pulling towards us both the rewards and the price of our involvement with the mysteries. If we pay the price – giving up our imperfections of character, we are given the rewards – emotional calmness and intellectual understanding.

Our qualification is a two-edged sword. We may detach ourselves from commonplace neediness for the emotional support of others, yet run the risk of embittered self-solicitude. We may also become advanced in knowledge, yet frustrated because we are unable to explain much of what we know to family and friends.

However, within us there arises an instinctive responsiveness to the highest expectation of everybody we meet, and we become concerned only in issues of real consequence – to the exclusion of trivial matters. This means a complete revision of our attitudes, and our circumstances – we may have to live on the very edges of normal society to maintain our freedom of perspectives and the constant availability to serve Spirit.

EXAMPLE: A SWORD IN A MUSEUM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

13TH DEGREE OF PISCES (12° - 13°)

Tradition keeps alive the wisdom of the ages so to serve a principle dignified by historical significance

Through the consistent practice of self-discipline, human personality can develop into something of real weight. Such gravitas offers great personal power when in service to the commonly held ideals of the community.

In times of uncertainty, when confusion clouds the minds and hearts of less serious people, such a personality is an important counter-balance to collective emotionality.

The museum sword, referred to in the image, is a surviving influence from a great figure from history – someone who became a central reference point for a particular moment in the unfolding of events of major consequence.

Tradition keeps alive the spirit of a community that mysteriously, yet repeatedly, finds embodiment in contemporary individuals. These become the unlikely heroes of the hour when there arises a moment of crisis.

The wisdom of the ages is thus reborn in today's world to cope with today's challenges, and is projected into the future by today's interpretations and enactment of long-standing principles.

There is no greater encouragement to rouse the spirit of a reluctant hero than to know that they serve a principle dignified by historical significance and that it is they who must hold alive this tradition for those who follow.

We try to put aside temptations to show ourselves, rather preposterously, as having merit in epic proportions – and concentrate our will upon the loftier task of becoming an example for those who serve at a later time.

TASTEFULNESS: A LADY IN A FOX FUR

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

14TH DEGREE OF PISCES (13° - 14°)

Style shapes personal outcomes by articulating our membership of a distinct circle of influence

Integrity is deepened as we learn never to surrender our willingness to demonstrate the authentic uniqueness of who we are, what we feel and what we hold to be true.

A lady in a fox fur is symbolic of the dynamic freedom of expression with which everyday custom endows us, dramatized here by individual's effective desire – she wants to be in style, and openly and honestly to articulate the opinions she holds, even those of momentary importance.

Tastefulness is the entirely subjective expression of our value judgements about style. In some ways we can see that there is little lasting consequence in our choice of clothes and responses to fashion. Yet on a deeper level, such expressions are indicators of profound questions of morality, equality, income distribution, power and beauty – things that shape humanity's evolution. Taste actually adds its touch to influence all reality.

We are strengthened in our cultural group through whatever we are able to possess or do and think in common, this is our bonding; this could also be our bondage. We unite with others who wear fox furs, yet we have no real option but to carry on wearing them if we want to continue to belong to that set.

High accomplishment is often achieved through demonstrating of our assets in the best possible light. We project our inner qualities and potential into a cautious world, making a statement of our worth through our outer appearances. If the lady is stylish, then she is part of the elite circle and carries clout.

However, followers of fashion become lost in the waves, unless they are able also to win some creative content to better their own experience. In the wash of their blind obedience to agreed standards – about inconsequential mechanisms of building the descriptive contours of the in crowd – they tend to surrender important aspects of individuality.

Another danger with this degree is in amoral opportunism. What is acquired, through nothing more than glamour, eventually dissolves. The expression of tastefulness is meant to grace something more substantial within, rather than veiling reality with the superficiality of form.

PRECISENESS: AN OFFICER PREPARING TO DRILL HIS MEN

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

15TH DEGREE OF PISCES (14° - 15°)

By making the best of things, we can bring meaning and even adventure to common situations

An officer preparing to drill his men is an image of an outer world event that seems to lack meaning. Yet of course, its meaning lies in the purpose it serves – in this case to develop preciseness. In every life situation, things are exactly as they are – and we have to deal with that reality precisely as it is, rather than how we would have it to be. We must trust that it is exactly how it needs to be for our best purposes at this moment.

There is observed in many people a self-betraying desire for a hierarchy of allegiance in which the self is lost – blindly and completely given over to an external authority. Soldiers are examples of this.

Most often this leads to an uninspiring drudgery, because it is not the creative self that determines how things unfold, but an unfeeling institutional power device. The challenge then is to make the best of the situations from which there is no immediate extrication.

Everyday life becomes superficial with its dismissal of all responsibility of consequence. So we need to take on duties and give them as much significance as possible. If we are shining shoes or peeling potatoes, then that is what we are doing, so we must give it our very best effort.

Anyone still alive with spirit will experience a determination to participate in some reality of more enduring importance, and therefore make a real attempt genuinely to find importance in everything. This teaching is underlined strongly in Zen.

The lesson here is that living is vital only to the extent that each individual decides to motivate themselves. Sometimes the outer circumstances of life are constrained, so we need to concentrate more on matters of inner importance, such as our approach to the outer world, however it may currently be for us.

With such an attitude, we can develop a real gift for bringing genuine efficiency and real adventure to common objectives.

INGENUITY: THE FLOW OF INSPIRATION

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

16TH DEGREE OF PISCES (15° - 16°)

Spirituality must meet real problems as well as imagined ones

With the development of civilization came humanity's attempts to form relationship with greater, unseen forces – this is the birth of human spirituality. To early inhabitants of the planet, survival issues made it essential that spiritual power had practical potentiality. Indeed if our spirituality does not serve us in real terms, then what is it for? In fact, what is it, except the projection of personal fantasy?

Even today, everyday living throws up critical questions that we find we need to address in such a way that both expediency and principle are considered carefully – and, if possible, reconciled. Our spirituality must meet real problems as well as imagined ones. Only the smallest minority of people who consider themselves spiritual are willing and capable of finding alignment between the seen and unseen realms. For these it is intuitively obvious that, without such alignment, there is certain to be imperfection of understanding in both worlds.

The world is a cornucopia – there are unlimited resources available for our enjoyment, and they motivate us towards the realization of the potential inner condition of spiritual abundance.

In order to reach this rich harvest, it is entirely necessary to put to the test our skills, and the knowledge we have gained through our experiences. We learn to welcome such challenges because, without them, we could not expand the expression of self to its fullest potential.

Without exception everyone – sinner or saint – can draw deep upon the wellspring of inspiration that flows unceasingly from the unseen realms into our world. This is spirituality in action, the jewel in the crown, the pinnacle of human accomplishment.

Maturity in an individual is evidenced by their conscious sensitivity to this ever-present phenomenon of the descent of light. There is a clear process, which can be learned through meditation and spiritual practice, for bringing down the light of spirit into human affairs. We need challenges so that we can rise to them, and we need to draw down the light of inspiration, so that we can deal with them.

Such awareness bestows an exceptional ability to meet anything that comes up – however unusual – with ingenuity, poise and imagination, although we do need to guard against hubris – disdain for others less clever or adroit. The proof that we have mastered this skill is that we are never-endingly finding ingenious ways to cope with life.

CELEBRATION: AN EASTER PROMENADE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

17TH DEGREE OF PISCES (16° - 17°)

The image we show the outer world characterizes the inner self

At one end we have New Orleans's Mardi Gras, and at the other, various well-to-do Christians in their Sunday best – it's all show. Typical human beings have the propensity to define themselves in a communal setting – by how they dress, and how they behave, differently from the rest.

This is more than the satisfaction of our need for attention, and serves a real and important function by bringing into conscious awareness a clearly-defined and uniquely expressive self-image. In a way we are idealising ourselves by dressing up – and thus we gain insights about the ideal. The image we present towards the outer world characterizes our inner, and more hidden, sense of self.

Unless our society allows us to celebrate ourselves as we choose to be, it is not our society. We need our idealized self-image accepted or we cannot realize it.

Variety and extremes of self-exhibition can often lack grace, even to the point of being ridiculous, yet they test our social environment, so they have genuine value. If we find that our Easter persona doesn't fit – then maybe our workaday personality doesn't either, and we need to find a better place, or way, to be.

Any urges we may have need to be projected into creating our future. Those denied by society will be refined and then accepted, or taken elsewhere where they can be celebrated – or at least accepted. In other words, whatever we feel we want to do is good at some place, at some time. Our path is to find that place and time, or at least to transmute the urge by questing.

This tireless process of self-refinement acts as an inspiration to others – those who reluctantly take on the repressive beliefs of a fearful community. They need to see a model of self-assertion in order, self-assertively, to become who they are.

To the wise, Easter speaks of rebirth rather than crucifixion. With grace, we are able to go against the processes of enforced conformity, reborn into purity, and all parts of us are celebrated.

APPORTIONMENT: A GIGANTIC TENT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

18TH DEGREE OF PISCES (17° - 18°)

A conductor is needed to bring the orchestra into alignment

This is an image of the ability to assign the most effective resources to organize a specific outcome. Divergent capabilities are apportioned to meet the needs of complex situations by one with an exemplary knack at organization – of our own attributes or others’.

Whenever we engage with others, we inevitably participate in a sharing of not only skills but risks, as we together serve a common cause.

It takes a person with a steadiness of perception to get an overall sense of the whole picture, without which no unification of effort can be achieved. Nothing of value is created without some degree of harmonization, and a conductor is needed to bring the orchestra into alignment.

It is in moments of true excitement that the totality of life is brought to a single centre. The focus of all attention, of all the senses, is achieved in such rare moments of absolute intensity of being.

Such moments are gateways – vortices. The intensity, which offers such immediate, momentary entertainment, also thrusts us into the future with more vibrancy and a great deal more directedness, which can underwrite a richer path of life. Somehow we feel more inclined to put the world in order and have better insights about how to be better able to do so.

Taken too far, such confidence and over-enthusiasm can seem bombastic, and fuelled by delusions of grandeur.

Yet with the naivety that we associate with performers in a circus big top, such a show of skill and risk is nothing more than a healthy and entertaining demonstration of our highest aspirations.

ELUCIDATION: A MASTER INSTRUCTING HIS PUPIL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

19TH DEGREE OF PISCES (18° - 19°)

Teachers guide us to places in the psyche that we don't even know exist

A master instructing his pupil is an enduring image of the principle of elucidation – bringing clarity. Throughout the ages, knowledge has been passed down as one lucidly demonstrates to another special skills, understandings and codes of conduct.

Most people desire to live by the rule of the power-possessors – who propagate lies and half-truths to control the masses through popular concepts of empty knowledge – but the true student wants to avoid this at all costs. Therefore further study is needed, and this must be outside the mainstream educational system, and it must include both rational and non-rational aspects of the psyche so that true understanding is attained, rather than mere repetition of fact and opinion.

Personality is validated to the extent that it directs its own destiny, and this is only ever facilitated and expanded by furthering both our spiritual understandings and our worldly talents.

High executive ability evolves through gaining knowledge; this requires patient investigation – and the genuine psychological insights that come, arise as much from understanding ourselves as our fellows.

Life entreats every individual to employ all their privileges and enjoy nature's munificent bounty, and will always give every encouragement to the initiative of spirit by which they are led to so do. Our enterprising exploration of life's mysteries is therefore always supported, because knowledge desires to be known, as much as life desires to be lived.

Self-refinement is the process by which we gain greater understandings of ourselves, and through this it is possible to learn of any appropriate re-orientations currently indicated as useful shifts of perceptions or direction. It is very rare for this to be possible without guidance, because we are mostly in denial of our shadow side, and cannot see the imperfections of character that must necessarily be addressed if we are to progress fully.

Elucidation is essentially a symbol of unlimited potentiality. It arises out of the demand by human intelligence for a stake in any larger dimension they can imagine must exist in a world they have not yet opened up for themselves. We are drawn to our teachers so that they can guide us to places in the psyche that we don't yet even know exist – except for a vague feeling that *'surely they must?'*

FAMILIARITY: A TABLE SET FOR AN EVENING MEAL

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

20TH DEGREE OF PISCES (19° - 20°)

To feel and express gratitude is of major importance

This is an image of the normal satisfactions for which modern man seldom has to exert himself. We have come a long way from the days where food and shelter were constant concerns that drew all of our energy.

A table set for an evening meal points not only to nature's prodigality, but also to the full enjoyment of family, and the comforting sense of familiarity, through which these normal daily satisfactions unfold.

There is actually no end to what we can enlist for fulfilment of our desires – and everyone who discovers that finds a very relaxed and easy path to happiness. We can become familiar with every part of our wild and strange universe by awakening, within ourselves, the inner quality of familiarity, as a state of being.

The foolish indulge in a naive selfishness of ambition, coupled with a witless, groundless optimism – instead of a more appropriate and sustainable humble appreciation of the true blessings that each day brings, backed up by a reasonable level of gentle expectation.

We can achieve life's promise in nothing more than a very thorough expression of self-gratification, as long as we also remember constantly to feel and express gratitude towards the natural source of our wellbeing.

Nature offers a completely effective sensitivity to every passing need of humankind, and will provide for all our needs if we would only let it happen. The ability to let it is a skill that requires us to heal various imperfections in the psyche, which arose during our formative period and, until we address the matter, will continue to blight our easy enjoyment of life's abundance.

We must establish our instinct for revelation of our own potentials, which take on special significance through dealing with the false threat of scarcity and loss. We need to attend to that, during the temporary lean periods, by repeatedly and decidedly affirming an expectation of coming bounty.

TALENT: LITTLE WHITE LAMB, CHILD AND CHINESE SERVANT

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

21ST DEGREE OF PISCES (20° - 21°)

We weave the threads of life to form identity and vision

It perhaps requires an unusual degree of wisdom and trust to understand that life is a limitless field of talent for self-discovery.

The bizarre image – a lamb, a child, a servant – shows the scattered spread of possibilities that can have little or no connectedness, unless the individual has the talent to ‘join up the dots’ and bring a measure of order to apparent chaos.

There has to be found a level of significance to bring together disparate aspects of life. Assured by the belief that all things are interconnected, the talented mind will seek and find connectedness. From this, our lives can be made meaningful and comprehensible.

Otherwise our experiences would be haphazard – unrelated to our principles and decisions, even to our ancestral and personal history – as if we lived in a vacuum, empty of context and order.

To bring about a noteworthy, special level of self-projection, we need to be of single focus – disregarding what has little consequence, ignoring whatever is out of alignment with our intentions, and disdaining distractions as we focus our dreams.

It is by this process that we weave together all the appropriate threads of our life experience into an integrated statement of identity and vision, within the context of the environment in which we have chosen to make into our place of being. The weaver is the magician – the one who makes things up out of whatever is available.

What would happen otherwise? Groping aimlessly through the mess of an unstructured life is hardly the behaviour of a person of dignity and conscience.

MANDATE: MAN BRINGING DOWN NEW LAW FROM SINAI

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

22ND DEGREE OF PISCES (21° - 22°)

Some people take on the responsibility to make known to the world a spiritual code

To climb a mountain and receive a God-given directive that guides and instructs is – at least symbolically – something we are all capable of.

We probably all have such inner aspirations – mostly hidden of course. With such a divine mandate, a person takes on a higher burden of responsibility as their duty to make known to the world what they believe is a legitimate code by which to live. Certainly this appears to be the case when it is a generally accepted aspect of society that everyone has a right to their point of view about the meaning of life, which right is fiercely and emotionally defended. This is true whether they have the background or intellect to comprehend subtle questions of philosophy or morality.

For the improvement of mankind, ultimately we are given to self-sacrifice – to put aside the fulfilment of personal wants and needs in order to align our purposes with those that we perceive to serve God's will and the greatest common good.

What we enjoy or endure as our experience of life can be considered mundane or spiritual according to our perceptions. The point is to overcome any inclinations of the fearful ego to see itself as more important or less important, and simply see that life itself – in every detail – is potentially a mystical encounter.

The very existence of the concept of spirituality needs to be carefully considered. If nothing is spiritual, or if everything is spiritual, then we have no legitimate purpose for the concept of spirituality. Surely, *'is it spiritual or not?'* is a matter of free will? And we are free to choose whether to go through life as a spiritual experience.

Why does society create institutions for the welfare of people in need? Is this really the inevitable arising out of the survival instinct, to protect our tribe's genetic bloodline? Some would say it is more properly understood as an expression of the inherent kindness of humanity, a mandate which speaks of our innate spirituality.

Kindness is just one of the many ideals to which a person aspires, which we have collectively adopted as indications of goodness. The very fact of these ideals registers throughout eternity as the signature of humanity's spiritual condition. From time to time these ideals are described and defined by inspired individuals, whom we call prophets and whom we so often raise up as role models and custodians of morality.

SENSITIVITY: SPIRITIST PHENOMENA

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

23RD DEGREE OF PISCES (22° - 23°)

We tend to make real whatever we imagine

The Spiritists were also called '*sensitives*' – they were exceptionally open to subtle communications from non-physical realms, using Ouija Boards and mesmerism techniques. They teach that spirit reincarnates eternally.

We are all subject to processes that shape the mind and condition its perceptions. There is a need for care, because we can become negatively affected by the stream of difficulties, real or imagined, which life presents to us. As a result of the common pessimism brought to bear upon this mind-training process, confusion and instability are widespread disorders of the general population. Poor mind-management will always result in disorientation, and probably subjugation. The more sensitive we are the more important this becomes because there is danger of a degree of possession when we open up.

Yet when we learn to handle the workings of the mind, we become capable of shaping all situations to suit our values and preferences. It is worth remembering that the mind is sculpted by more than just our thoughts – our feelings are also very influential.

This shaping is done by holding the attention continually upon the configurations of our chosen reality. We need to accept complete responsibility for creating the world in our image of how it should be – and only choosing to see that which reinforces our own positive world-view. This requires exceptional sensitivity, as we attempt to balance external phenomena with internal feelings and find the deepest understanding that links them.

We make real only what we imagine in detail. The forces that support creation need very clear instructions in order to mould specific versions of reality and – for better or for worse – what we hold in our attention becomes those instructions.

If this were not so, then free will and the organic integrity of the world would be compromised. In order to preserve the very orderliness of the universe, there must be a totally consistent relationship between inner and outer realities. The one is recorded within the contours of the mind, the other in the facts of our circumstances, as they unfold into the future.

This process can be expanded, it indicates the way in which we participate consciously in life eternal. We become sensitive to the reality in which there is no end to life, no end to mind – just an eternal continuity that enables us to participate in the immortal truth of being.

CULTIVATION: AN INHABITED ISLAND

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

24TH DEGREE OF PISCES (23° - 24°)

When we discover new talents we usually improve our circumstances

Humanity is capable of discovering a desert island and making it fit for purpose through our skills at cultivation. Equally, as individuals, we can make any situation work if we use what we know to produce what we need.

We need not get lost in snobbish complacency and self-indulgence, though we can always find a way to function in complete independence of unfriendly elements.

However barren we may find our current life circumstances, they can always be improved. We need to attract and discover the resources we will employ in order to make things happen the way we want them to be. Always around us are people and things that we can usefully employ to better our position.

We simply need to capitalize on what we have – first to notice our hidden talents and potentials, and then to see how they fit the demands of the situation at hand.

Achievement, of any lasting worth, requires creative opportunism and exceptional inventiveness. We have to rise to the occasion, and actually it is the rising itself that matters.

This is a symbol of self-adequacy. In hard terms, reality objectifies our inner sense of being – so we must rise to outer challenges in order to come to terms with inner limitations. These self-imposed constraints are false, because, on the inner plains of experience, we are beyond all limits.

It is taught – *if we can imagine it, then we can have it*. The very least of our inner promises to ourselves is potentially available if only we would learn to nurse the seedling dream to become ripe fruit.

REFORMATION: THE PURGING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

25TH DEGREE OF PISCES (24° - 25°)

We project our disappointments in the manner we treat our priests

In history, the Reformation was a way to purge the priesthood, and is symbolic of the intuitive revolt we all feel against a meaningless, superficial exaltation of human nature, through inadequate or false religious practices.

Blind bigotry and vindictiveness became the norm at a certain period in the development of religion – and shows something of the challenges humanity faces when we attempt to place responsibility upon another person for our own spiritual aspect.

Of course, we need a method to reach an understanding of what values and behaviours we choose to raise up as ideals. This requires that certain individuals, generically called priests, sometimes stand out and speak for us all in some ritualized, sacred way, and generally establish the public face of our collective ideals.

There is danger for them however. This is because we simply will not accept that the elected custodians of our highest invisible treasures will themselves fall short of these ideals.

We demand the absolute integrity for our spiritual leaders so that our immortal insights are secured. We will never tolerate even the slightest depreciation of any of our spiritual potentials, particularly when embodied in our priests and given voice in their words.

Whoever may fail to prove their worth, as guide and mentor, will find they are subject to quite a severe judgement, which gives rise to whatever penalties that await them for their indiscretions. This harsh approach is an intuitive safety measure, felt but rarely consciously understood within society, of the need to guard against the problem of own collective regression.

We forever try to dramatize the dissatisfaction we feel with ourselves – for failing to live up to the potentials we recognize but cannot quite manage to apply – and we project this disappointment in the manner we treat our priests.

FINESSE: A NEW MOON THAT DIVIDES ITS INFLUENCES

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

26TH DEGREE OF PISCES (25° - 26°)

Deeper realizations enable us to get clearer about our ultimate motives

There are times when it is good to refuse to commit ourselves to any definite course of action, and leave our options open. Sometimes, we just cannot see what path is true and clear, and so it requires a delicate approach. *A new moon that divides its influences* is simply revealing itself as unsighted – and dividing our attention at the beginning of things may well have merit, as long as we can finesse the situation. We can make a fine skill of uncertainty.

An unthinking, instinctive outreach into the world may or may not actually contribute to a legitimate outcome. Firstly we need to encounter deeper realizations, and perhaps get clearer about our ultimate motives, and then, carefully to live out our fullest response to what we feel is the right thing to do here and now.

It's worth remembering that, since the universality of larger concerns are enacted through smaller matters; personal initiative forms the basic dynamic in any collective scheme of things. So even if we wait a while before acting, it is likely that we will feel the urge to motivate ourselves sooner or later, perhaps even in response to something seemingly trivial.

Sometimes our actions must be tentative until we achieve a sufficiently clear position of self-discovery – so that we can act without ambiguity or confusion.

We seek to do the greatest good for all concerned, with the least expenditure of effort – and yet of course we always favour our own agenda, and make sure the cost to us is always outweighed by the potential benefit.

Every emerging potentiality of self can be effectively developed though capitalizing on our ability to bring any state of affairs around to our advantage. Yet timing is crucial – it is best to wait until we are certain before making an irrevocable commitment to a specific path of progression.

The risk is of a completely disruptive vacillation. Our sometime inability to decide must not be allowed to become a fickle way of life – all is then lost; nothing good comes of this attitude to life.

BENEDICTION: A HARVEST MOON

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

27TH DEGREE OF PISCES (26° - 27°)

We celebrate our blessings through gratitude, by taking today's fruits today

There is no need to look to the world at large for emblems of attainment; such proofs of success are, in any case, not sufficiently profound to settle the goal-driven appetites of an ambitious person. There is only one achievement of any real worth, which is the only enduring success, beyond any measure, and that is self-fulfilment.

A harvest moon is an old indicator of the celebration of success; we bring in the fruits of our toil, harvest the reward of our initiative, and feast with our community under the bright, happy full moon. Such moments of culmination in life are more than the cancelling out of old experiences; rather they also stand as the threshold of new achievements to come.

This image speaks of benediction – the gifts of nature – and nature says that our productivity is as rich as hers. We can enjoy whatever we can attract, then we can celebrate, and then we can go on to the next cycle of participation in a world of great abundance and available joy. Yet this is not to be seen as exceptional or in doubt; it is our birth right to claim and appreciate.

The lesson here is not to get lost and confused in the welter of opportunity that life throws up. Too often we can continue struggling to achieve something we already have, but are not fully enjoying with our proper attention. The best strategy for success is assumption – behave entirely consistently with the assumption of having reached our goals. We must take today's fruits today, and not lose the rewards by getting caught up in the process of attainment of some speculative future of joy, when joy is actually already at hand.

The highly concentrated resources of the world are at the immediate service of anyone who will put them to use – we take them, use them, and don't waste them, especially by letting them go to waste.

This approach facilitates the replacement of anything used, because it is the innate order of things that whatever we consume appropriately is regenerated by nature.

In her immeasurable prodigality, nature is forever showering humanity with products of her untiring creativity. The least we can do is to enjoy it with graceful gratitude.

ULTIMACY: A FERTILE GARDEN UNDER THE FULL MOON

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

28TH DEGREE OF PISCES (27° - 28°)

Being worldly and ordinary is quite a blessing, and a spiritual practice for the advanced seeker

Ultimately, plentiful resources and knowledge of worldly processes enable us to serve appropriately, willingly and effectively. Our ability to create wealth becomes an aspect of our sacred service as a spiritual principle.

By keeping a keen eye on the facts of a situation and staying focused, there is a clear tendency to derive abundant rewards, as is suggested by the image of the fullness of the Moon and fertility of a garden. Using worldly goods with integrity, we can avoid pride of possession.

A great deal of personal satisfaction with life can be gained when we focus on outer reality – things and situations. The race survives according to its ability to maintain concentration on hard facts, however relevant our inner reality may be to us.

Through our own day-to-day struggles, we gain deeper insights, and develop a better sense of why so many people suffer. Having our own stresses and strains enables us to understand others with similar challenges – so that a common chord is struck, and rapport develops.

It is entirely meaningful to dedicate ourselves to normal, conventional accomplishments. In fact, on many levels, being ordinary is quite a blessing – those of exceptional ability can so often lose touch with their supportive environment.

Also such normal good fortune is a stabilising factor. Through it, we are easily able to take on board what others, less balanced, may throw at us. Their lack of balance derives from having too wide a variance from the norm, beyond their personal capacity to assimilate the resultant tension.

There is saying in Zen *before enlightenment chop wood carry water, after enlightenment chop wood carry water* – which clearly illustrates the importance of the material world both as a means towards, and celebration of, our highest spiritual station. It is not only foolish and prideful, but counterproductive, to focus our sense of sacredness on prayer alone.

VALIDATION: A PRISM

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

29TH DEGREE OF PISCES (28° - 29°)

We need reliable values to navigate the stormy waters of life

The prism is a device created to validate the hypothesis that white light is irrefutably made up of component colours having different wavelengths. This is not something that occasionally changes, according to moods or dates, or even variations in pressure and temperature, but is a fixed point of reference for us all.

The world is essentially stable; we can rely upon normal processes to have normal, appropriate outcomes. It is upon this fact that we have collectively created our understandings about the nature of reality, and how to navigate the stormy waters of physical life.

What we call common knowledge has its foundation in this stability, and normal intelligence then validates our personal experience, by making connection between what we feel, and what we know must be true.

Nature does not amend its working principles willy-nilly, and neither does a mature individual. What is is, and it has a strong inclination to remain so. Existence itself arises out of a set of basic values, which do not change unnecessarily. Through these principles, we are able to maintain a sufficient degree of control over our environment to ensure survival and the accomplishment of our purposes in life.

As years go by, the values by which we live become the qualities that enable us to expand our experience, and develop knowledge, faith and wisdom. The promise of exceptional achievement is made good through the application of remarkably fine judgement, which shows in the finesse we bring to the realization of our core vision.

Perhaps now we see that the prism image is a metaphor that speaks to us of how Unity is one with diversity, despite appearances. We may also come to see that in fact, whatever we may find close at hand gives evidence to the same cosmic relationship – all is one, and ever has it been so.

Of course when we understand how things work, and are successful at demonstrating this, there exists the danger of pride – the emotion that pushes us to find validation externally in the eyes of others. We need to monitor the effect of our beliefs upon others so that we avoid presumption and intrusion.

DISCERNMENT: THE GREAT STONE FACE

This universal idea is best expressed through planets in

30TH DEGREE OF PISCES (29° - 30°)

First imagine, then expect

In a story by American author, Hawthorne, there is a rock formation imagined to resemble the shape and features of a human face. Folklore suggests that one would be born whose features would resemble the Great Stone Face; and be recognized as 'the greatest and noblest personage of his time.' The twist in the story is that a humble young man, who sets out on a quest to find the hero, ends up much later recognized as the hero himself. Yet he walks away still hoping that there would one day appear some wiser and better man than he.

Each of us selects an image within, to which we shape ourselves outwardly, and this is what we come to resemble. The Great Stone Face represents the externalization of inner aspiration, which subsequently becomes our life goal.

More than anything, we desire to realize in actuality the vision we create of the ideal person – who we would at all costs become. And in normal terms, we find someone to admire whom we wish to copy and eventually equal.

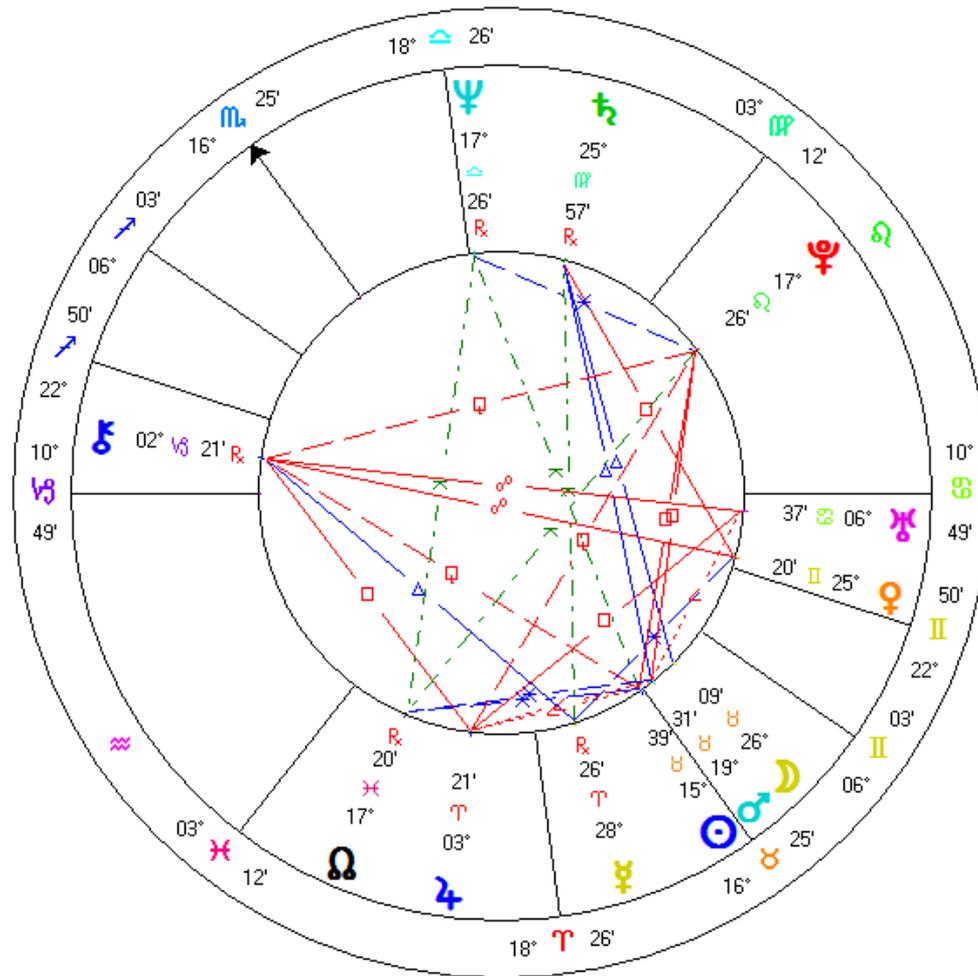
This entails practising a constant way of living which becomes the continual expressed manifestation of our ideal. This constant integrity – of just being authentic – has an irresistible impact on the course of events as they unfold in our lives. In the dramatization of our own self-idealization to others, as constant as we are, we offer that degree of encouragement to others in their own alignment to eternal reality. This is impactful.

Destiny is then seen as nothing more than character as it most persistently constitutes itself. It can be no more than a wholly inarticulate ineffectual self-realization – or it can be unsurpassed perfection of human potential. All depends upon our self-created self-image, and our consistent expression of that image into actuality.

It is the essence of human responsibility to act out our personal destiny – and this is an aspect of the immortality of the soul, whenever the soul's destiny aligns with our personal destiny.

Whether we can reach our optimal degree of self-expression depends upon the discernment of two things – envisioning and realising. First we must imagine, then we must expect – and stay true to that expectation.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXAMPLE



This is the horoscope of the author. It features a stellium in Leo, including Sun and Moon, which adds to the Capricorn Ascendant and Virgo Saturn to make a very earthy chart. Three planets are angular: Sun, Mars and Uranus. There are two T-squares: the Sun / Pluto / Midheaven and the Jupiter / Chiron / Uranus, plus two yods linking the North Node to Neptune and Pluto, and Neptune to the Sun and North Node.

The essential factors are:

The 3rd house Sun in Leo is within 2 degrees of the Nadir, conjunct Mars and square Pluto

The 4th house Moon in Leo is trine Saturn and conjunct Mars, also conjunct the Sun by transition of lights

Earth is emphasized; Water is weak in planetary terms, although strong as the Midheaven and North Node.

THE SABIAN SYMBOLS FOR THIS HOROSCOPE

COMMENT

The following is autobiographical material to illustrate this work. This is included for various reasons:

Firstly, by a very considerable margin, I have studied my own horoscope and observed its events more than any other. It is the only horoscope I have actually examined in real depth over decades. Secondly, and perhaps more tellingly, I believe that, on the level of the soul's experience, feelings are much more important than events – and so any depth analysis really has to be subjective, because no-one can feel another's feelings accurately. There is a third factor that is to do with perspectives on spiritual discourse. It serves priests of many faiths rather well to teach humility as a spiritual observance, as this gives their institution power over the self-effacing individual, and I just don't see why one should *hide ones light under a bushel*. I see the primary purpose of my practising astrology is to empower people to claim their full reach of personality, and grasp all the opportunities that arise by doing so. To be sincere, I must be the best example of that principle myself.

Most student astrologers approach the subject by examination of their own chart, and their own character – so I am demonstrating how this has worked for me. It is certainly the case that, by understanding Sabian Symbols, I have opened up various aspects previously hidden in my nature, and philosophically, I see our primary duty in life to do exactly that – to become more whole and authentic. If this sometimes means we prioritize self-projection above modesty, then so be it – modesty itself can surely only exist if some of us are immodest.

POINTS CONSIDERED

A word needs to be said about time of birth. I use the birth time given as 01.10, and this appears to be accurate to within 5 minutes – in that it is not a quarter hour, but neither is it the exact minute such as 1.09; my mother is Virgo, so accuracy is perhaps likely. At 1.10, the Ascendant is at 11th Capricorn, Midheaven at 17th Scorpio and Part of Fortune at 1st Capricorn. Yet if the time was out by more than 3 minutes all three points would change – it really is that sensitive. For this reason, it is better not to include these three points – and of course Descendant and IC too – for Sabian purposes. On the other hand, this is an excellent method to fine tune rectification. To explain – if someone does not know their birth time accurately, sometimes dowsing is used, sometimes rectification. This latter takes all possible times and examines which moment is the best fit. Sabian study can pinpoint this very precisely – and in my case, I am happy to accept the exact degree for each of the five points that change quickly – so this tends to validate the given birth time. Interestingly the Part of Fortune is the most telling – *An Indian Chief demanding recognition*; this is so apt for my life since I frequently become very restless and demanding unless my claim of authority is properly acknowledged.

THE AUTHOR'S SABIAN SYMBOLS

PLUTO AT LEO 18 – INSTRUCTION: CHEMISTRY TEACHER

Learning and teaching life's operating principles must surely result in happiness

Pluto is instructing me about the deeper aspects of eternal reality. It is compulsive, and I feel compelled to know the chemistry and mechanics of things, to learn how they work; and learning is quicker and deeper when instructing others. As a schoolboy I helped friends with their maths, and have been a teacher ever since, yet always teaching something new and different, which I have first to study in order to impart. I saw that fear is the major obstacle to understanding, so I felt compelled to address fear, throwing myself into harm's way just to find out what happens, seeing fear as no more than a gate that, when opened, allows freedom. Inevitably as a result I moved forward in grasping something of the truth underneath the surface appearance of things.

Square to my Sun, Pluto is the dominant force in my life, central to my self-perception. Pluto-type experiences have always been welcome, despite their uncomfortable quality, because of my appetite for the extreme learning opportunities afforded through radical changes. Nothing has ever lasted in my life for more than the shortest time; its teachings have kept me ever restless, entirely unable to settle into any normal routines in life such as relationship, home or career path. In true Pluto fashion, I even buried myself beneath the surface of the earth in a shamanic ritual death experience – and later experienced free-fall from 15000 feet, terrified each time, simply to unveil the mystery that lies behind fear. Now, a counsellor, I can even be rather stern and uncompromising in my attempt to see and reveal the truth beneath a client's defensive veil.

NEPTUNE AT LIBRA 18 – CONSEQUENCE: TWO MEN PLACED UNDER ARREST

If we do not reconcile feelings with circumstances there are serious consequences for body and soul

Although this degree is about accepting responsibility for one's actions, in fact I have an almost complete lack of respect for the forces of law and burdens of morality; Neptune has dissolved it. Neptune has a very strange impact on the sense of any Sabian Symbol, in this case almost entirely negating its core meaning. In later years, I became more concerned with the metaphysical aspect of the wisdom of this degree – and formed a spiritual philosophy based on the absence of religious dogma or even a moral code by which to train conscience. But as a young man, ambitious and selfish, I was worldlier, and it made me quite capable of skirting around any and all controls in the serious realms of accountancy and business management. I will tell a story.

My very small company was making a play for a huge contract with a major electrical appliance company that had a mountain of returned goods they wanted repaired. To impress them with our capacity to take on such a large volume of work, I organized a bit of a show. This involved renting an empty adjacent factory unit for a day, tearing down the partition wall, borrowing a fork lift truck, tools, tables and benches, hiring everyone's brother, mother and cousin for a few hours, installing an extra phone line and getting someone to call us every few minutes throughout the afternoon of the Big Visit – you get the picture. Provisionally, we won the contract but we had to do the first batch before final confirmation. This meant I had to commit to rent the factory, buy the forklift and equipment, hire the staff, and so on – for which I needed to borrow what I could never pay back without this work. I needed a number of things to happen and be confirmed by post Monday morning or we would all go down...bank confirmation of a loan for £180,000, simultaneous sale of three different houses, and purchase of two others, and a £50,000 grant from a government organization. Had one of these – or the eventual contract, failed to happen, we would have been commercially and personally bankrupt. The whole experience was rather dreamy, and I just trusted it would somehow come good, which it did.

URANUS AT CANCER 7 – ASCENDANCY: TWO FAIRIES ON A MOONLIT NIGHT

The soul is refreshed when occasionally we rise above normal reality

My major life motivation is certainly freedom. I really can't cope with stress – a serious shortcoming for an accountant and businessman. So closely escaping a fraudster's prison, I gave up the business in an instant – walking away overnight – and went backpacking through Asia to find spiritual liberation in Nepal. I actually had a real epiphany, and started to have visions. My whole life became very strange; I lived with hippies, in communities and on the road. For a while I dressed entirely in only green clothes and prayed to Puck and Brigit, jumped Beltane fires and counted quite a few witches among my closest associates. My first spiritual teacher was a Hell's Angel drug dealer banjo player called Ptom. Once I had a past-life memory in the fogue at Sancreed, when I saw that I had been some genetic engineering manager in Atlantis, and created some terribly misbegotten-shaped animals, which escaped captivity as I watched in this revelation. I could more easily have dismissed it as hallucination or dream had not my friend seen exactly the same thing, at exactly the same time, some 2 miles away on the campsite. After I learned that my power animal is a unicorn I began to see them all the time, usually through visualizations, but once as if it were in real life. I did a lot of ritual magick, and I opened myself up to channelled messages through spiritualist mediums. Some of this was so outlandish that I am entirely reluctant to write about it for fear of being thought silly or worse. Still, for all the weirdness of such visits into the land of the fairies, the most influential chapters in my life came from these crazy encounters.

I connected in dreamtime with a Sufi leader called Jezrudin, living in the Middle Ages somewhere near Yemen; he had black eyes and a black beard, was well over 6 feet tall and wore a sword at his side – hardly the kind of image I held of a typical Sufi. His followers were upset that he was in communication with me, because they were somehow put at serious risk being open to me – they were under constant threat from conventional Islamic authorities, fearing reprisals for their lack of orthodoxy. I became aware that Jezrudin had died – and as a direct result of this, something very strange occurred within me; I became much stronger in my leadership and faith, as if I had inherited his power and knowledge – and oddly, within months, having had no training at all for the position, I myself became a Sufi leader, initiated in Istanbul by one Sheikh Abdullah.

CHIRON AT CAPRICORN 3 – AVIDITY: SOUL'S CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

A tireless appetite for experience and knowledge is evidence of soul-consciousness

Those who avidly study the mysteries find a fast-track path of knowledge. I did retreats – long, lonely secluded periods under the guidance of a master, with 18 hours daily prayer and practice. I was told that I had raised my *maqam* – reached a spiritual station of some consequence to Sufis – and that the circle of light I saw in my forehead was the 3rd eye opening. 12th house Chiron is about time alone, and I have indeed spent a great deal of my life in solitude, often in meditation, and with esoteric studies – astrology, druidry, NLP. Capricorn Chiron attracts problems with authority – in my case, figures of spiritual authority were very often upset with me. I have been ejected from three Sufi orders, having been representatives of two of them. This hurts, since I broke neither laws nor codes of practice – yet my ideas were confronting, and my behaviour always provocative.

I looked for support on the inner planes and have frequently conversed with an angelic being. I first came upon him in a vision – my third real one, as opposed to a contrived visualization – when he appeared to me as a minor king on a horse and asked me to serve him. I gently refused, explaining that I had already made my commitment in service to Sufism and Unicorn. He revealed himself as St. Michael and explained that this task would not compromise my other work, and he showed me an image of the world almost entirely covered in a sordid net of darkness, which was made entirely of the stuff of lies. Then he asked me to write the 7 Words book as my contribution to the huge importance of re-establishing the sacred light of truth in the world.

SATURN AT VIRGO 26 – RAPTURE: BOY WITH A CENSER

The highest rapture can be found in ceremonial celebration of spirituality

Trine my Moon, Saturn is not such a difficult test for me as perhaps for some, yet in the 8th house it has an extremely intense mode of operating, and in Virgo this accounts for my OCD attributes; I am rather pedantic. This was indeed handy for me both as an accountant, and an astrologer, in the early days when we had lots of calculations to get right – but it is hard to see how these occupations could ever bring me to a point of rapture. To some extent though, strangely, they actually did – yet what really does it is when I lead ceremony. For years I functioned in a priestly capacity, and trained students to perform prayerful rituals involving dance, chant, and worship – lighting candles and burning incense. We had to get the exact detail correct to the last degree of precision; every moment was pre-scripted for an event that could take a few hours to complete. My meticulousness found itself put to good use, and enabled me to reach my highest states of spiritual awareness.

I would say I am probably not autistic, but I certainly find it very easy to be with a person who is, so I probably share some of their characteristics. When every last detail of a situation is not exactly so, then for some of us, this can be very irksome perhaps even to the point of distress – yet on the other hand, there is a kind of spiritual ecstasy to be experienced when all the fine points are harmoniously aligned and the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. Even with writing, I am quite capable of reworking a piece over and over again until every last word and punctuation mark is exactly the way I want it. As a retreat leader I am especially diligent preparing my discourses, getting things *just so*, and using very precise words to convey my meaning explicitly. I really dislike being misunderstood for want of proper care in choosing specific words and phrases.

NORTH NODE AT PISCES 18 – APPORTIONMENT: GIGANTIC TENT

Intelligent management serves common cause

I came to believe that Campscene, birthed in the UK, ironically partly in response to Thatcher, was one of the most important spiritual achievements of humanity in the 20th century. I was privileged to be invited to participate in some of the early work with this, mainly because of having been a rare example of an accountant who meditated. One looks to the Nodes for a sense of destiny – *why am I here?* It was a little shocking to find that my Sabian image of a big tent had such close resonance with my work in marquees on camps. Both South and North Node indicate a skill and inclination to organize people and other resources towards the achievement of a common goal, and is possibly what first drew me into management and its application within spiritual groups. This linkage between business management and spiritual work had already featured in my life when, after 7 years in business together, I owned up to my partner that I was using astrology to make most of my decisions; Eric's wry admission was that he had secretly been using tarot and séances for the same ends.

My first camp was created to enact a book I'd written about a unicorn. It was disturbing to find characters starting to come to life in different ways – there was a boat in Penzance harbour near this first Unicorn Camp named Zaruman – exactly the same as the story's protagonist! Early camps were very often punctuated by episodes of bizarre magick, intensity, violence, mental breakdowns and other absolutely abnormal coincidences. 25 years rolled by, they became less extreme, less esoteric and more family holidays for the alternatives; eventually I no longer had any place there and moved on. Thousands of people had come through the gate, were moved into magical space, learned how to see things differently, were healed of various issues, connected to lifelong friends, began a path of learning or even teaching, and generally found an oasis from the world of lies. The camps ranged from dance and voice, to healing and magick, to astrology, drama, pagan festivals at summer solstice, and some of the cross-quarter points. Camps influenced by Unicorn Camps continue in Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, New Zealand, France, and probably other countries.

JUPITER AT ARIES 4 – ENJOYMENT: TWO LOVERS STROLLING

Unselfconscious pursuit of selfish pleasure is an entirely valid path to joy

Moving on when things are dull is normal for me – and I left university, accountancy, businesses, relationships, and many ventures that no longer contributed to my enjoyment. I never needed permission to be self-centred; it seems intuitively obvious to me that I am here to serve myself, and to do only what makes me feel good. If it were another planet placed here, I might try to hide the fact – but Jupiter in Aries is not much to do with modesty, embarrassment or hiding facts. Unless desire and destiny are aligned, I see no purpose in service.

This easy come easy go attitude to life is useful for projects – and I live my life one project at a time. It seems that I can start things, but I find it hard to stay with them after they are up and running. In the 3rd house, these are very often somewhat educational – and I have initiated a number of different techniques and methods for teaching esoteric work. A trip is a kind of project, so is a camp, and I have spent most of my life camping and travelling, usually to teach, and very little of it owning property and raising children. That kind of long term involvement is well beyond my attention span. I have frequently been knocked down, and yet my noble, carefree Jupiter says to me – “*Get up and get going, it’s all in the game. Don’t play to win, just play!*”

MARS AT LEO 20 – EXALTATION: WIND, CLOUDS AND HASTE

Physical and spiritual realities are aspects of each other

Rugby is the most complete spiritual teaching; at least that’s how I experience my Mars. I have always yearned for complete physical engagement, the expression of which has gone through several iterations such as sport, sex, long robust walks and the Sufi practice of zikr. I find that, for any experience to have the highest possibility of richness and vigour, the body needs to be passionately active. Without these types of activity, I would at one time have been very prone to feelings of frustration and anger. Such emotions were often met with disapproval, sometimes fear and distancing, and yet little by little I came to terms with it, and trained myself to harness rather than to deny or inhibit them. There is power in this, and I am fairly sure that my base-line vitality is dependent upon finding a way to use, rather than hide, such passion. In a rugby match, it is necessary to do things with that are counter-intuitive and potentially harmful to the physical body. To act as a team, the individual has to put aside personal concerns to serve the greater good – sometimes taking a hit for a mate, sometimes trusting absolutely that they will take a hit for you. We learn that a half-hearted tackle will likely cause self-injury, so to minimize the risk, we train ourselves to use the body as a delivery device for passion.

Mars is oafish in Leo, quite blocked when in close square with Pluto, and liable to become inhibited in the 4th house – can you imagine my childhood rages? Once, as a younger, more ardent, man, I was called a ‘rage magician’. What was implied had to do with an ability to stoke up very strong feelings, and focus them on a specific outcome to make a change in the local reality of my situation. This is in no way essentially different from what Sufis have been doing for a thousand years. In zikr, the mind is given the task of holding a mantric concentration and very specific and challenging visualizations, the emotional body is aligned with a particular devotional feeling, and the physical body has exact dynamic postures to continue – and this is repeated every day, sometimes for hours on end. In 17 years I never missed one day of this exercise; and it changed me on a very deep level. At first, I was very ardent indeed with this, and I felt parts of my emotional body burn away somehow – it was very uncomfortable indeed, yet triggered, one after another, the cathartic release of childhood traumas. After learning of zikr in England, I went to Turkey to find the real thing. It took a while of committed seeking to find the Sufis, partly because their orders are forbidden and secret, but eventually I was admitted into their inner circle and given some instruction. I had to put aside all conceit and expectations if I were to be accepted in, and was treated like a dog by my master – but it was well worth the sacrifice.

VENUS AT GEMINI 26 – SPLENDOUR: WINTER FROST IN THE FOREST

The true perception of beauty is a spiritual experience

Whether it is the majesty of snowy Alps, the smell of rain, colours of a flower garden, or the music of Leonard Cohen, I surrender to the only thing that really touches my heart in total purity – the splendour of beauty. There is a transforming power within beauty, which has been one of the most influential aspects of my life. There are instants when time stops; it's as though God gasps, and pauses for a moment to say Wow!

In my work, I try to find the place of ultimate perfection in my client and, by my seeing it, I make it perceptible to them too. This is not to say that they are beyond the possibility of improvement, or finished in their spiritual self-development, but just that they are in the 'zone'. This is a state of existence that each of us can reach – it is a momentary transport, and lost in an instant – yet it is the place of realization. Beauty takes me there again and again; and I live for it. As a leader of dances of universal peace, I travelled to teach a dance practice that focuses on a delightful aspect of spiritual expression that arises through chanting and body movements. I was able to share my sense of the sacredness of form, and the ability that we have to reach high states of spiritual awareness simply by together co-creating beauty. As I furthered this work, I came to want it perfect every time, yet of course this was not possible. Sadly, the joy became rarer and disappointment replaced satisfaction – and I was given important lessons about transience and expectations. Beauty is essentially illusion; all there is is the feeling, which passes in the blink of an eye. This in no way detracts and probably adds to its splendour.

MERCURY AT ARIES 29 – VENERATION: A CELESTIAL CHOIR SINGING

Having faith in the meaning of life, we articulate it through devotion

Retrograde Mercury in Aries in 3rd house is perhaps the most analytical version of all thinking. I go over things repeatedly, keenly attempting to be understood – and equally, not to be misunderstood. The Sabian image suggests that I truly want my veneration to be given full expression to be identified as one dedicated to a spiritual life. It's not so cool in this era to go around talking about God, prayer and piety, so this is challenging. I doubt if I have ever succeeded in making myself fully understood, and in fact have very often caused offence due to the inadequacy of my communication skills – but not for lack of effort. I have written books to outline my ideas, and taught workshops to explain and defend them. However, when I sing devotional chants, which I have done a lot of, I don't upset people; my least controversial mode of expression is non-verbal and prayerful.

I hold the mind in absolute wonder. What the mind can do, what it is, is truly astonishing. The ability – which humanity demonstrates – consciously to use thought, is for me the most complete proof of the existence of God. Sheikh Abdullah spent an hour once teaching me an extremely complex, difficult mental exercise – an inner concentration of visualization with silent Arabic prayer words. Then, bizarrely, he forbade me even to try the practice alone. When he saw me next day, because he could see I had not broken his command, he then gave me permission to do it. The point is that he could see that I had not carried out this very subtle procedure. His mind is so keen that he can read shifts in a person's energy field caused only by meditation.

We thought up the Big Bang theory, Stonehenge, Beethoven's 5th, medical science, astrology, bread-making, and space exploration. I venerate the mind. I devote as much time exercising and training the mind as I do the body, and as an adult I probably still spend as many hours learning as I did at school. I hold the Hindu teaching true that we create our reality from the stuff of mind, and so I take seriously the duty to monitor and the mind's characteristics. Optimism is an attitude of mind, so is authentic truth-telling, and these are seminal aspects of the nature of our personal realities. I have tried to train myself to exclude falsehood from my speech, and even jokes about negative outcomes. The study of NLP was as helpful as Sufism in this respect.

Prioritising the soul's journey requires us to be relaxed about worldly outcomes

I visualize the squaw, sitting on the roadside, old and wrinkly-faced, entirely unmoved by flattery or rebuke, neither excited nor disappointed if today she sells her beads or not. She's seen it all, suffered it all, and there's very little left to trouble her in any realm – personal, social, spiritual or physical – because, to her, success is the development of qualities rather than the rewards of fickle fame and fortune. This is rather curiously like a recurring dream-image I have had since I was a boy – that I would end up as a tramp; not really down and out but more like a mendicant, on the road by choice. Emotional security isn't so much having what I need, but reassurance that I have learned to need very little. The only dependable emotional wellbeing is within myself.

My life-style has for quite a long while been a bit rough-and-ready, neither amassing assets nor settling into rhythms and routines. I have been often transplanted into totally altered surroundings, and I return to an inner state of normality. Strangely, despite making few commitments to attaining the trappings of success, I have nonetheless enjoyed comfort, and even occasional luxury, generally and without much effort. I put this down to the inspiring talk I attended about prosperity consciousness – we were told to give it all away, and trust that it will come back tenfold. I had nothing coming in, but I gave away £6000 – almost all my savings. Magically, having had no secure income for 30 years, I have always somehow managed to stay free of financial concerns.

Yet the fullest part of the Moon's mystery has felt always an inch beyond my grasp – a presence sensed, in the atmosphere of my lifestyle, but never totally embodied in the people and events encountered. Sometimes I look at these unfamiliar outer forms of life and ask myself *how did this ever come to pass?* I saw groups of my friends – enjoying themselves with popular fashions of conversation, clothes and beliefs – as a cold-nosed stranger looking in at their cosy hearth, yet unwilling to pay the admission price for the belonging. As a child it was no different, and I tried to leave home at age four; I actually packed a suitcase and got on a bus. It was both curse and blessing to have no sense of family, because I learned early that warmth and security will actually never be satisfactorily found by looking externally, they need to be self-created as personal qualities on the inner planes, independent of beloved people and favourite places. In the end I came to know for certain that I simply cannot look to others for my comfort. At first somewhat unhappy to be lonely, eventually I became emotionally self-reliant, and unlikely to become distressed by the cruel arrows of outrageous fortune.

The Moon is best experienced by relaxing, and it is quite meaningful to interpret this not just an activity at the end of a busy day but as a life path. Following this realization, there was a long period of breaking away – year by year I withdrew from my public role and became almost reclusive. Through this, I found a truly deep and real sense of self as impregnable – totally safe, calm, untroubled and content. I tuned into this aspect of myself by walking a great deal – sometimes through the ancient times that can still be felt on The Burren. The Irish seem to have fully realized this wisdom, and living in Galway Bay has shown me how to slow down, and how delightful life can become when I do. The softer aspects of life become so much more obviously the primary purpose – not a secondary benefit – things like peace and quiet, beauty, spaciousness of time, trust, allowing, letting go, and just feeling feelings instead of trying to fix them or even understand them. We reach out towards things that fascinate our hungry attention; decades later, we may come to realize that we're still doing it, looking for what actually we have already found. Then, the trick is to unpick all the tangles, to cut all the strings, let go of all the stress, and relax into being, rather than doing. This is exactly what I am attempting now. I have significantly detached from my past, and I have very little involvement in the busyness of life. I think it's working, because what is now arising within me is a deep connection with something very soulful that has been all-but-dormant, and is reclaiming its place in my life. Now most mornings when I wake up, I feel joyful, and almost childishly excited, for no reason at all – I just love being me.

Since all is folly, nothing is folly – and realizing this brings ultimate freedom

In Sufism, every aspect of God is available for us to realize. Our life purpose is to achieve this by experiencing who we are in an eternal process of self-revelation. With Sabians, I am advised to become a model of tenacity – this is very apt. My approach to anything is like a stuck on/off switch – all or nothing, very doggedly. I stand alone in an unpopular position, unbending and absolute, so convinced in my stubbornness that my attitude becomes fixed as a rock; my confidence is independent of any sense of being right or wrong. The impression I make is at first is not so strong, because this approach tends to be more passive than projecting. However, as time passes the impact grows and, aided by Pluto, usually leads to catharsis and transformation. Holding a position strong and long creates change, often at a deep level. Since this quality depends upon resisting influence, I visit situations where my view is at variance with others, such as spiritual teaching and travel.

With no family roots, I became reliant on upon connections with others to find a set of values to become tenacious about, and my friendship circle is united more by values and qualities than for kindness and support – old-fashioned values like truth, honour and strength. I trust my feelings completely – and at root tenacity is a feeling not an idea – and I need to be in touch with myself at this level in order to decide the yes/no question. Wrong is wrong – I feel it and absolutely refuse to budge, even to the point of destructive outcomes. Aged 7 at school, I sat for an hour absolutely refusing the dinner-lady's insistent bullying that I ate a bowl of disgusting blancmange. Irresistible forces can encounter me as an immovable object.

The Sun indicates the hero's journey – and its path can be quite a test of courage. To overcome fear, my way is to decide what type of thing I should be able to do, then fix myself in that attitude indefinitely until it is no longer an issue. I can see how this *never-say-die* personality provokes frustration in others, but that's how I am, and nothing can be done about it. Actually I thrive on conflict, and have put myself into a world wherein conflict is not well thought of – I promote male spirituality in the essentially feminist New Age movement.

Coupled with the Sun's placement in conjunction with the nadir, this extreme fixity doesn't work well on the social ladder; fame and fortune are not writ large in my destiny – nor indeed my wish list. I would find both to be an imposition – I would dislike having constantly to manage wealth almost as much as being recognized in Tesco's. So my path of progression is more an inner journey; success is measured by feelings rather than things and titles. One of those is the satisfaction I get from being able to say to myself – “*I said I would and I did*”.

In my thirties, I was rescued from a path of debauchery and greed when I encountered a spiritual dimension to life that was free of both unpalatable dogma and silly, forced emotion. It gave me a firm central pole to rotate around; at core I serve Sufism, and all else is derivative. And I feel it will never change, even perhaps defining my eternal identity. I came to believe in the ancient Delphic maxim ‘*know thyself*’ – in other words the way to God is self-knowledge, and so it was easy to settle into my natural inclination towards a profound and constant process of self-reflection. Being a teacher enables me to ‘defend my thesis’ so that my faith is strengthened as it copes with the challenges of perpetual rigorous examination from students and associates.

One of the keynote wisdoms in Sufism is that life is a mirror. For better or worse, we only ever get from life a truthful, accurate and unavoidable reflection of who we are, and what we have in mind. This knowledge is both absolutely empowering and very comforting. So when I push, I push hard – and when I don't, then I let go and trust, knowing I can only ever get back what I put out, and will always find a way to deal with what comes. If we hang in there, long and strong, then we get everything we expect. Therefore the essential law and morality of life becomes obvious – and of course nothing will ever change my mind – it is optimism.

CELEBRITIES AND EVENTS

The quotes in italics are from Marc Edmund Jones's source material The Sabian Symbols in Astrology.

NEIL ARMSTRONG

Moon @ 26th Sagittarius | Nobility: A flag bearer

'Spiritual exaltation through some dramatic or vital service to all'

Sun @ 13th Leo | Retrospect: An old sea captain rocking

'Man's great love for reliving his experiences in memory'

The first man to set foot, and place a flag, on the Moon was the focus of the world's attention in one of the most dramatic events in human history – and no doubt Armstrong spent the rest of his life remembering it.

LUCILLE BALL

Sun @ 14th Leo | Ingenuousness: Human soul awaiting opportunity for expression

'Genius for an absolute wholeheartedness of participation in the everyday adventures of personality'

In 1951, I Love Lucy made its debut, and it was a sitcom like no other. Bombastic and daring, the show set the stage for a generation of family-related sitcoms to come, including story lines that dealt with mundane questions such as marital issues, working women and suburbia.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

Sun @ 28th Aries | Disjunction: A large disappointed audience

'Complete spiritual independence or destructive assimilation of self to every frustration of humankind'

Despite his iconic status, personally mapping out the grinding poverty and disappointments of these hard times, Chaplin at last disappointed his vast audience by disclosing his political views in The Great Dictator.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Sun @ 24th Pisces | Cultivation: An inhabited island

'...inventiveness of exceptional order'

He developed the general theory of relativity, and received the Nobel Prize in Physics for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect, which was pivotal in establishing quantum theory.

BILLY GRAHAM

Neptune @ 10th Leo | Rejuvenation: Early morning dew

'...special talent for finding the better in every situation'

Pluto @ 7th Cancer | Ascendancy: Two fairies on a moonlit night

'...release offered from psychological involvement, balance for strain of everyday existence'

One of the most admired men ever, spiritual adviser to presidents, his very presence conferred sanctity on events – all this achieved by promising personal transformation and promoting belief in an unproven reality.

OSCAR WILDE

Sun @ 23rd Libra | Fervour: A rooster

'Fearless self-affirmation or ill-starred conceit and ineffective bombast'

When coming out was punished by two years hard labour, his lack of caution seems brash and rash in challenging the standards of sexual ethics of his times – he crowed once too often.

MOHANDAS GANDHI

Sun @ 9th Libra | Accord: Three old masters hanging in an art gallery

'Gift for bringing people and events together in appreciation of the greater values in life'

Pluto @ 18th Leo | Facilitation: Woman holding a bag out of a window

'When negative...dissatisfaction with things as they are and complete ineptness in handling them'

With fasting and prayer, he brought Hindus and Moslems together against imperialist oppressors, yet there ensued never-ending religious violence, Pakistan and India constantly at odds and threatening a nuclear war.

MAO TSE TUNG

Sun @ 5th Capricorn | Mobilization: Indians rowing a canoe and dancing a war dance

'Capacity for aggressive leadership and unusual effectiveness for major achievement'

Moon @ 15th Leo | Demonstration: A Pageant

'Irresistible heightening of self-significance...or unconvincing claims and embarrassing self-assertion'

He is estimated to have contributed to the deaths of 40–70 million people through starvation, forced labour and executions, and pressed a quarter of the world's population into reading his little red book.

SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS

Pluto @ 13th Sagittarius | Rectification: Widow's past brought to light

'...agony of soul as the property of all, its public revelation an encouragement to others in their own ordeals'

As much as it was a political event, this was watershed in human consciousness. Across the globe, people shared in the agony of strangers in real time, as they faced inescapable, certain death.

NELSON MANDELA'S DEATH

A study of transits: On 7 December 2013 the world's attention was focused on the death of Nelson Mandela.

Pluto @ 11th Capricorn | Illimitability: A large group of pheasants

'... tireless pursuit of every aspiration'

Neptune @ 3rd Pisces | Survival: A petrified forest

'... power in human character'

Uranus @ 9th Aries | Acuteness: A crystal gazer

'... man's capacity for bringing an entire universe within the purview of mind'

Chiron @ 10th Pisces | Observation: An aviator in the clouds

'... transcendental powers of comprehension'

This man was born an insignificant black African, became a terrorist, or freedom fighter, and was harshly imprisoned for 25 years. Yet he died the greatest hero of the history of the continent, a statesman respected above all his other achievements for his goodness and decency. So we could offer this interpretation: *Humanity's evolution requires us to be tireless in following our dreams, and believe in the power of a developed character. Then all and everything can be known – even transcendental realities.*

This gives us an entirely new perception of the man, and his place in human evolution, not only an icon for freedom and justice, but actually as a man of true awareness, a mystic, which for him personally was the greater achievement. His outer success was but the evidence of an inner condition – which presumably took 25 years of meditation and contemplation in prison to attain. Note that these are comments about the day, not the man – and that the perception of the man, even to himself, was never fixed; it was ever an aspect of the changing of the times.

MUSINGS

- ✦ It serves the true astrologer well that the subject is widely ridiculed. If the objections were more punitive, we would find it more difficult to practise, and, although 21st Century witch-burning would be unlikely, there would be a need for greater efforts to ensure privacy and security. But if astrology were legitimized, it would be far worse! To be taken for a bunch of fools serves our freedom, but to be certified, insured and made legally accountable for our words – who wants that? The esoteric essence of the subject would leave immediately as practitioners took the party line and denied their intuition its necessary freedom.
- ✦ Astrology is a language by which esotericists describe, define and debate their world. It has no less of an appeal to star-struck, emotional lovers, and also the very numerous superstitious people in our community. These two latter categories finance, and use the output of, the former – the researchers and serious students of the subject.
- ✦ The magician finds astrology adequate as a secret tongue until more specialized needs arise.
- ✦ To have our lives be both stable and meaningful is probably the necessary and sufficient condition for happiness. Thus we need three aspects to be in place – a firm foundation, a clear vision, and motivation; this gives us a place to stand, a direction to go, and the power to be creative. The magical symbols of astrology can be used to invoke the clarity needed to create a firm definition of identity, and also where best to discover aspects of this reflected in our circumstances. The symbols also point us to understand what goals to set so that we can work towards the realization, in real terms, of even greater potentiality.
- ✦ Though very specific, astrological symbols are multi-faceted and kaleidoscopic – clear statements with unlimited interpretations.
- ✦ The interpretation of your own horoscope is a magical, creative, wilful act – and needs to be approached with due diligence, and great care. It is possible to read the symbols from the negative perspective as easily as the positive, and such a viewpoint could become more crystallized into a lifestyle with the apparent authority of the stars. It is best to disengage from judgements of a moralistic nature, and affirm optimistic readings of potentiality. With this in mind, choose your astrologer carefully and, if possible, in sacredness.
- ✦ Astrology is not essentially sacred, although it is sufficiently esoteric to embrace sacredness rather beautifully and clearly. By esoteric I mean occult, hidden, arcane, mysterious, veiled and not accessible without training, guidance and experience in various fields like philosophy, psychology, counselling and mythology. Ever has it been so – throughout the ages.
- ✦ There is plenty of room for sacredness within astrology and more needs to be written to show this.
- ✦ Though ancient, astrology is also contemporary, and we can see that recently a great acceleration took place in our deepening and widening of the subject. The Theosophists opened up Pandora's Box around the turn of the 20th Century with a jolt of eastern thought. The wars postponed the next big awakening until the 1960s and since then major evolutionary steps have been taken – examples include integrating the feminine, psychological ideas, experiential astrology, new layers of perception through both Pluto and Chiron, and a surprising degree of popularity for Sabian Symbols.

APPENDIX

WORKSHEETS TO STUDY THE TRANSITS OF SLOWER PLANETS THROUGH SABIAN DEGREES

The changes are shown, and the Sabian degree – for example, 22 ° means 21 ° to 22 °

Date	Saturn	Uranus	Neptune	Pluto	Ref	Date	Saturn	Uranus	Neptune	Pluto	Ref	Date	Saturn	Uranus	Neptune	Pluto	Ref
20.4.14	SC 22°	AR 14°	PI 7°	CAP 14°	1	11.11.15	SG 6°	AR 18°	PI 8°	CAP 14°		19.2.17	SG 27°	AR 22°	PI 12°	CAP 19°	
24.4.14			PI 8°			18.11.15	SG 7°					27.2.17		AR 23°			
28.4.14	SC 21°					24.11.15		AR 17°				6.3.17	SG 28°				
30.4.14		AR 15°				27.11.15	SG 8°					10.3.17			PI 13°		
12.5.14	SC 20°					30.11.15				CAP 15°		12.3.17				CAP 20°	
21.5.14		AR 16°				5.12.15	SG 9°					20.3.17		AR 24°			
25.5.14	SC 19°					14.12.15	SG 10°					7.4.17		AR 25°	PI 14°		
5.6.14				CAP 13°		22.12.15	SG 11°					24.4.17		AR 26°			
9.6.14	SC 18°					31.12.15	SG 12°			CAP 16°		9.5.17	SG 27°				
17.6.14		AR 17°				9.1.16	SG 13°					12.5.17		AR 27°			
30.6.14	SC 17°					18.1.16			PI 9°			16.5.17			PI 15°		
17.7.14				CAP 12°		20.1.16	SG 14°					26.5.17	SG 26°				
29.7.14			PI 7°			28.1.16		AR 18°				1.6.17		AR 28°			
11.8.14	SC 18°					29.1.16				CAP 17°		2.6.17				CAP 19°	
28.8.14		AR 16°				31.1.16	SG 15°					9.6.17	SG 25°				
1.9.14	SC 19°					13.2.16	SG 16°					23.6.17	SG 24°				
6.9.14			PI 6°			16.2.16			PI 10°			28.6.17		AR 29°			
14.9.14	SC 20°					24.2.16		AR 19°				7.7.17	SG 23°				
26.9.14	SC 21°	AR 15°				4.3.16	SG 17°					16.7.17				CAP 18°	
6.10.14	SC 22°					5.3.16				CAP 18°		20.7.17			PI 14°		
16.10.14	SC 23°					13.3.16			PI 11°			25.7.17	SG 22°				
20.10.14			PI 5°			15.3.16		AR 20°				1.9.17			PI 13°		
21.10.14		AR 14°				2.4.16		AR 21°				5.9.17				CAP 17°	
25.10.14	SC 24°					11.4.16			PI 12°			10.9.17		AR 28°			
3.1.14	SC 25°					17.4.16	SG 16°					27.9.17	SG 23°				
11.11.14	SC 26°					20.4.16		AR 22°				9.10.17		AR 27°			
19.11.14	SC 27°					8.5.16	SG 15°	AR 23°				10.10.17			PI 12°		
20.11.14		AR 13°				23.5.16	SG 14°					13.10.17	SG 24°				
27.11.14				CAP 13°		28.5.16		AR 24°				23.10.17				CAP 18°	
28.11.14	SC 28°					31.5.16			PI 13°			26.10.17	SG 25°				
6.12.14	SC 29°					4.6.16				CAP 17°		2.11.17		AR 26°			
14.12.14			PI 6°			5.6.16	SG 13°					5.11.17	SG 26°				
15.12.14	SC 30°					19.6.16	SG 12°					15.11.17	SG 27°				
24.12.14	SG 1°					24.6.16		AR 25°				25.11.17	SG 28°				
28.12.14				CAP 14°		28.6.16			PI 12°			2.12.17		AR 25°			
3.1.15	SG 2°					5.7.16	SG 11°					4.12.17	SG 29°				
13.1.15	SG 3°					17.7.16				CAP 16°		8.12.17				CAP 19°	
23.1.15		AR 14°	PI 7°			29.7.16	SG 10°					12.12.17	SG 30°				
26.1.15	SG 4°			CAP 15°		21.8.16			PI 11°			21.12.17	CAP 1°				
10.2.15	SG 5°					30.8.16	SG 11°					29.12.17	CAP 2°				
20.2.15		AR 15°	PI 8°			5.9.16		AR 24°				5.1.18			PI 13°		
2.3.15				CAP 16°		11.9.16				CAP 15°		7.1.18	CAP 3°				
12.3.15		AR 16°				22.9.16	SG 12°					8.1.18				CAP 20°	
18.3.15			PI 9°			27.9.16			PI 10°			16.1.18	CAP 4°				
30.3.15		AR 17°				4.10.16		AR 23°				25.1.18	CAP 5°				
17.4.15		AR 18°				6.10.16	SG 13°					3.2.18	CAP 6°				
18.4.15	SG 4°		PI 10°			13.10.16				CAP 16°		4.2.18		AR 26°			
5.5.15	SG 3°	AR 19°				18.10.16	SG 14°					7.2.18				CAP 21°	
19.5.15	SG 2°					29.10.16	SG 15°	AR 22°				8.2.18			PI 14°		
25.5.15		AR 20°				7.11.16	SG 16°					14.2.18	CAP 7°				
1.6.15	SG 1°					16.11.16	SG 17°					25.2.18	CAP 8°				
6.6.15				CAP 15°		25.11.16	SG 18°					3.3.18		AR 27°			
16.6.15	SC 30°					27.11.16		AR 21°				7.3.18			PI 15°		
21.6.15		AR 21°				3.12.16				CAP 17°		12.3.18	CAP 9°				
4.7.15	SC 29°					4.12.16	SG 19°					20.3.18				CAP 22°	
18.7.15				CAP 14°		12.12.16	SG 20°					23.3.18		AR 28°			
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22.10.15	SG 4°					2.2.17				CAP 19°		29.5.18				CAP 21°	
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