

THE SUN, THE MOON, THE ELEMENTS AND THE QUALITIES

As we all know, science began with the stars, and mankind discovered in them the dominants of the unconscious, the “gods” as well as the curious psychological qualities of the Zodiac: a complete projected theory of human character.

--Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*

Astrology is all about synthesis. When we are presented with a natal horoscope, we are faced with literally hundreds of different factors that have to be mentally integrated, intuitively grasped, and intelligently communicated so that the “message of the stars” can be clearly understood. It is only then that the horoscope can be a successful tool for learning and healing. The faculty of synthesis can be approached and applied only through many years of sincere study and practice. It is certainly something that can be fostered and supported by a teacher, but it is the student that has to do the real work. The art of astrological synthesis is not a gift; it is a hard-earned prize.

In this article, we shall add to this goal of understanding the solar-lunar relationship by presenting some additional factors that will definitely aid us in uncovering the real meanings of the luminaries in your chart: the elements and the qualities.

In astrology, we use four elements to characterize the twelve signs. These are called the “triplicities” as there are three (“tri”) signs in each of these groupings: fire (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius), earth (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn), air (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius), and water (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces). The elements and their corresponding signs can be also divided into two broader categories of six signs each: male/electric (the fire and air signs) and female/magnetic (the earth and water signs). Basically, the male/electric signs are outgoing, projective “doers”, while the female/magnetic signs more internal in nature, tending to draw life and events to themselves.

The elements may be characterized as follows:

1. _____ Fire is the element of creation. It is said in an ancient text that: “Out of the fires of the Mind of God, the universe was born.” We can therefore say that fire is the primal force of creativity. It is the fire in a chart that characterizes a person’s drive to create one’s own reality. When positively expressed, people in whose natal chart we find a great deal of fire stand up for the oppressed, generate inspiration to others, are highly moral, and project independence, initiative and courage. When expressed negatively, fiery people tend to be selfish, egotistical, foolhardy, opportunistic and inclined to give way to their passions and pleasures.

2. _____ Earth is the element of form. As the initial creative impulse is given forth through fire, it is picked up by earth and “grounded”. The earthy signs “make the word flesh.” They build on the physical level, structuring and organizing the material plane around us. All three signs of this triplicity have many traits in common. Positively, this manifests as circumspection, caution, patience, long-range planning, determination for worldly success, and practicality. Negatively oriented “earthy” people can be too pessimistic, melancholy, lacking in imagination, greedy, selfish and fearful of loss.

3. _____ Air is the element of communication. As no animals are associated with Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius, these three are referred to as the “human signs”. The zodiacal signs of this element embody the faculties of reason, intuition and relationship. This urge to relate extends beyond the dynamics of rapport between people but also characterizes the relationships between humanity, our environment and all the other kingdoms of nature. When positive, air expresses itself as intelligent, cooperative, objective, humane, and uplifting. When negative, the air signs tend to be superficial, deceitful, aloof and emotionless, hyperactive and nervous.

4. _____ Water is the element of feeling and sensation. These are the most psychic, impressionable, understanding and compassionate of the signs. Yet they also tend to become “flooded” by such feelings when their water has no boundaries or containers. Water has endless depth and must circulate in order not to become stagnant. Certainly, the signs of this element are the most mysterious. When positive, water is sensitive to others, artistic, romantic, charitable and empathetic. When negative, the

watery signs tend to be overly concerned with their own emotions and express addictive behaviors. They can also be quite self-indulgent, moody and unpredictable.

In addition to their position by element, the Sun and Moon are also found in a given “quality”, or “quadruplicity” as it is also called because each of the qualities pertains to four (“quad”) signs. The quadruplicities are: cardinal (Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn); fixed (Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius) and mutable (Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces).

The qualities may be characterized as follows:

1. Cardinal signs are motivational in nature. Think of a wheel having three parts: the rim, the hub, and the spokes. The cardinal signs signify the rim, as it is this part of the wheel that touches the earth and moves the conveyance forward. People born in these signs are active, often ambitious and like to generate momentum in any group of people in which they are found. Individuals with the majority of planets in the cardinals will be constantly seeking to move forward in life. When positive, the cardinal signs are very keen to use their creative drive to accomplish their envisioned aims and goals. This trait becomes negative when such ambitions are purely selfish, opportunistic and egocentric in nature.

2. Fixed signs are determined in nature. In terms of the wheel, they represent the hub. It is the hub that brings integration and wholeness to the wheel. It is the center around which the rest of the mechanism moves. All four of these signs are willful and determined to maintain their positions or desires in all of life’s situations. Individuals with the majority of planets in the fixed quadruplicity are always endeavoring to establish themselves at the center of activities. Their personal values are extremely important to them. When positive, people of these signs are loyal, reliable, patient and persistent. When negative, the fixed traits become opinionated, inflexible, inert, lazy, and resistant to change.

3. Mutable signs are changeable in nature. They tend to be communicative and reach out into life in order to augment experience. In effect, people of the mutable signs tend to be active and busy. In terms of the wheel, they represent the spokes, reaching out with many arms in a wide radius of expression. Mutable sign people

prefer variation to repetition, versatility over predictability, difference over sameness. There is often a longing for movement, a need to travel, and the urge to be constantly occupied. As a result, mutable sign people also tend to be restless and nervous. When positive, they can adapt themselves to any situation, make the most out of the least, and easily learn new methods and techniques that help them in life. When negative, they tend to be wasteful, indiscriminate, exaggerating things out of proportion while they magnify details and are blind to the whole.

When we attempt to interpret a chart, it is very important for us to note the element and quality of each of the planetary placements. This is especially so in terms of the Sun and the Moon. As a fiery, male planet, the Sun is most at home in the fire signs. The Sun is also at the center of the solar system as all the planets revolve around this, our central star. We can therefore state that the Sun is rather fixed by nature and in fact is called by astronomers and astrologers alike, a “fixed star”. It is no wonder then that the Sun is the ruler of the fixed-fire-male sign of Leo. It is here that the Sun has what we call its “dignity” (a very leonine word to be sure!).

The Sun is also known for its solar flares, sometimes reaching out hundreds of thousands of miles into space, emitting a huge amount of heat and light. These sudden flare-ups are very much like the sign Aries. It is the celestial Ram that stimulates and provokes creativity in his environment. It is when the Sun is in Aries, a cardinal-fiery-male sign, that it is said to be in its “exaltation”. Aries is therefore the next most powerful sign for our central star. The rays of the Sun reach out in all directions and touch all the planets in the solar system. We are fortunate here on the earth and we can stand under a solar ray, and feel its healing warm and experience its inspiration. Thus the third of the fiery signs, Sagittarius is also a powerful influence for the placement of the Sun. Sagittarius is a mutable sign and as such, it permits and fosters the multidirectional radiation of the solar rays. No wonder then that Sagittarius is the foreign traveler, the philosophical thinker and the inspirational teacher.

The Sun seeks bold and projective solar power. He likes fixed authority and a position of permanent leadership. He is thus not very happy in the often wavering,

inconsistency of his “fall”, Libra. The Sun is also not at his brightest in Aquarius when his rays lose power and strength by becoming overly dissipated and dispersed.

The Moon is most comfortable when in close contact to water as she regulates the tides. She is the sea-mother, the goddess of all forms of creation. It is out of the primordial ocean of space that all of manifestation has come forward and it is out of the primitive oceans of this planet that human life evolved. We remain inside the waters of our mother’s womb from the time of the joining of sperm and egg until the time of our first cry. It is the Moon that regulates the tides of both our conception and birth, for she governs the female menstruation/ovulation cycle as well as the cycle of the birth pangs and contractions that usher us into earthly life.

The Moon thus has her dignity in the cardinal-watery-female sign, Cancer. It is here that the Moon feels most at home. In fact in the astrological system of interpretation, it is the home and everything domestic that falls under the jurisdiction of the Moon and her primary sign. She is also quite comfortable in Pisces the Fish, where she is left free to roam unimpeded through the depths of the subconscious. Here she stimulates dreams and fantasies while also inspiring people to be compassionate, kind and self-sacrificing.

It is in the seas of the third of the watery signs, Scorpio, where the Moon finds some challenge and discomfort. In the first place, as the sign of the mother, the Moon wants to give and preserve life. Scorpio is the sign of death and as such the Moon feels particularly vulnerable when she is placed herein. Scorpio also speaks about the death of form and its regeneration into something greater and finer. The Moon is the mother of all forms and is very conservative and protective by nature. As such she is very reluctant to lose any of her “babies” even if there is a promise of a new and better life in the end. The Moon much prefers to hold on to what she has in hand rather than to give it up for a promise of an unknown future.

Scorpio is also in direct opposition to Taurus, the sign of the Moon’s exaltation. Taurus represents primordial matter, the initial building blocks of all physical manifestation. The Moon loves the abundance and security that Taurus promises and provides. She knows that the Sacred Cow-Mother will provide all the milk, food, and raw materials for a safe and secure life for all of the Moon’s children. Taurus is an

earthy-fixed-female sign and it is this fixity, this stability and surety that appeals to the Moon. She is not comfortable in the earth of Capricorn for here she finds the land too dry and compact for her comfort. The Moon prefers the easy unstructured ways of the Bull and not the more harsh conditions of the mountain climbing Goat. From the standpoint of the soul, she is most at home in Virgo, where as the Virgin Mother she has the potential to birth and nurture the inner Christ.

When assessing the Sun and Moon positions in the natal chart, here are a number of helpful suggestions and general observations relative to the elements and the qualities:

1. If both the Sun and the Moon are in male signs, the Sun will tend to dominate the horoscope. If they are both in female signs, the Moon's influence will generally be the stronger.
2. In general, a man's ability to assert his will and objectives upon his environment will be far more apparent if his Sun is in a male sign. He will usually be much subtler about things—though not necessarily less powerful—should his Sun be in one of the female signs.
3. As a rule, a woman will tend to be more projective emotionally if her Moon is in a male sign. This position may thus make it easier for her to voice her needs. She will have far more emotional pull and magnetism if her Moon is in a female sign. This position would tend for her seek to work out her emotional situations and challenges internally.
4. The Sun and Moon work best when placed in a sextile aspect (between 55-65 degrees apart in the chart) in complementary signs. These combinations include: Sun in Aries-Moon in Gemini; Sun in Taurus-Moon in Cancer; Sun in Gemini-Moon in Leo; Sun in Cancer-Moon in Virgo, etc., or the reverse: Moon in Aries-Sun in Gemini; Moon in Taurus-Sun in Cancer, etc. This is because the complementary nature of fire and air and earth and water blend very well but only when they are in sextile! When they oppose, such as Sun in Aries and Moon in Libra or Moon in Virgo and Sun in Pisces, many conflicts in life ensue. In this case, the elements do not blend, they compete for dominance!

5. The Sun and Moon work very well when they are in different quadruplicities. If the Sun is in Leo (fixed) and sextile the Moon in Libra (cardinal) then not only do you have the Sun and Moon in compatibly blending elements, they are also in harmonious quality relationship. Thus the forward moving cardinal sign helps the fixed sign not to be overly rigid while the fixed sign adds stability to the motivations of cardinality. In the case of Leo and Libra, the intense self-centered quality of the Lion has a chance to harmoniously mix and mingle in the relationships brought about by the Moon in Libra.

6. This positive relationship by quadruplicity is enhanced when the Sun and Moon are in the same element. Thus if the Moon is in Taurus (fixed-earth) and the Sun is in Virgo (mutable-earth), there is an affinity by element and a harmony by quality. In this case fixity adds purpose to mutability and mutability lends variety and experience to fixity. Should the Sun and Moon in these positions be linked by trine (are 110-130 degrees apart in the natal chart), then many benefits come into one's life. In this case, the earthy element will tend to produce ample opportunities for material abundance (Taurus) connected with (trine) from positive work experiences (Virgo).

7. In synastry, one of the most powerful indications for a positive relationship between a man and a woman is indicated when the man's Moon is in the same sign as the woman's Sun. Thus a woman with the Sun in Libra would do very well if her chosen male partner were to have the Moon in that sign.

8. There tends to be much more easing in relationships in general if harmonious aspects exist between the Sun and Moon in the natal chart. Should Venus and Mars also be well placed and favorably connected to the 7th house or the ruler of that house, then one has an excellent chance of success in one's personal life.

9. If the Sun and Moon are well linked by aspect and either the Sun or the Moon be the ruler of the 4th house or connected by positive aspect to the ruler of that house, then the tendency is that the individual has come out of a harmonious family background.

It is important to remember that when dealing with the Sun and the Moon, that the Sun has much more to do with the sense of objective personal identity and the Moon

is far more involved with the subjective and instinctual life. We can thus say that the Sun is like our power engine and is the storehouse of our creative potential. It is essentially the *present*. The Moon works under the surface because it is so connected to our survival urges and our internal subconscious, psychological processes. This is one reason why we say that the Moon is essentially the *past*. If the Moon “interferes” with the well working of the Sun, i.e. if the Moon is in inharmonious aspect to the Sun, then our past—our subconscious inner voice, motives and fears—stands in the way of creating a more positive present. Finally, if the Moon and the Sun are not linked by aspect, then we usually find that our life is somewhat divided and dual in nature—our creative urges acting out in one way and our survival urges acting out in quite another.

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