

Introduction to Signs of the Zodiac – Clothing of the Self

This work is part of an ongoing project to develop a contemporary astrology of soul, depth, wit and wisdom. My intention is to bring astrology to life, to inform and inspire, to provoke the 'aha' experience, the telling shiver of truth about your life, the smile of self-recognition.

To achieve these ends I have adopted a creative writing style, and have amplified the astrological material with aphorisms and quotations from spiritual masters, creative artists and other historically influential figures, both to add depth to astrology and to provide an illuminating perspective on the life and work of those figures. So, for example, to bring the sign Aries to life, I take the life and work of the pioneering mythologist Joseph Campbell as an example, and show that the sign Aries provides the 'mything link' to the inner *daemon* that drove Campbell's life and work.

A major theme of the book is to demonstrate that spiritual masters and other evolved souls do not transcend astrology as sometimes claimed, but on the contrary, provide inspirational examples of the truth of astrology in action.

And just as the planets move against the backdrop of the fixed stars in the night sky, I have framed the insights of astrology against the backdrop of the timeless wisdom of the 'perennial philosophy', in the spirit of this beautiful quote from Carl Jung: "I found that the more I looked into my own spirit .. I saw stretched out before me an infinite objective mystery within, as great and wonderful as a sky full of stars spread out above on a clear and moonless winter's night"

Please note, this work does not purport to be a comprehensive text book, rather an aperitif, a taster for the intelligent general reader to demonstrate that astrology is a rich source of self knowledge and should not be dismissed on the basis of it's shallow popular presentation.

Excerpt from Capricorn Chapter

"Don't work toward freedom but allow the work itself to be freedom" - Dogen

"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but to lose his soul?" - **Jesus**

Ruled by Saturn, the planet variously known as the Lord of Karma, the Grim Reaper and old Father Time, Capricorns tend to get a bad press in popular astrology. Although universally acknowledged to be hard working, conscientious, and responsible, they also have a reputation for being hard, calculating and ruthless; judgmental, dutiful and guilt ridden; and overly serious, controlling and materialistic. In short, very unspiritual.

"Every man is guilty of the good he did not do" - Voltaire

This certainly seems to apply to **Mao Tse Tung, Idi Amin, Richard Nixon, J. Edgar Hoover** and **Al Capone**, but what about spiritual masters **Ramana Maharshi, Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Vivekananda, Mother Meera**, and **Gurdjieff**, or evolved souls like **Joan of Arc, Kahil Gibran, Albert Schweizer** and **Martin Luther King**, or twentieth century sages **Alan Watts** and **John Lilly, William James, Ken Keyes, Alexander Lowen**, and **Carlos Castaneda**, not to mention **Jesus**, whose heartfelt cry "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" is an all too common Capricorn question. The controversial Indian guru, Osho, a Sun sign Sagittarius, also has five planets in Capricorn - Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars and Saturn.

Capricorn then, is pre-eminently the sign of spiritual attainment, which, like worldly achievement, requires dedication, discipline and plain hard work, qualities Capricorns have in abundance. **Gurdjieff's** emphasis on 'The Work' is archetypical. When he writes "I love him who loves work" he is giving voice to the enduring sentiment of patriarchal authority heard through the ages. Another typical quote on the same theme gives the pure Capricorn taste: "There is only self-initiation, which is acquired by constant effort. It is impossible to give to a man anything that could become his own without effort on his part."

Excerpt from Cancer Chapter

"Everyday someone new cries out for understanding and compassion. Listen to the sound. Hear the call as if it was beautiful music. I can assure you that the greatest rewards in your whole life will come from opening your heart to those in need. The greatest blessings always come from helping."

Care and compassion as an imperative of soul found deep expression in the life and work of conscious dying advocate, **Elizabeth Kubler Ross**, who devoted her whole life to caring for the sick and dying. I am moved by the words from her autobiography, *The Wheel Of Life*, quoted above.

How the wheel of life turns. As she reiterates constantly, there are no accidents. Carl Jung expressed it so: "What happens to a person is characteristic of him. He represents a pattern and all the pieces fit. One by one as his life proceeds they fall into place according to some predestined design." And so it came to pass that Kubler Ross suffered a series of strokes that left her totally dependent on others for the most basic care. She writes: "I suppose it is appropriate that after counselling so many dying patients I should have time to reflect on death now that the one I face is my own. There is a poetry to it, a slight tension, like a pause in a courtroom drama where the defendant is given the chance to confess. Fortunately, I have nothing new to admit. My death will come to me like a warm embrace."

In a way that never fails to fill me with awe, the pattern of Kubler Ross' life is clearly indicated by her birth chart, for she was born with the Sun in Cancer closely conjoined to Pluto, the planet associated with death and rebirth. This planetary *daimon* achieved conscious expression in the fulfillment of her vocational quest to bring death out of the closet of fear in which it was enclosed by our Western culture, and constantly informs the words of her inspiring last testament, as in this excerpt from a letter she wrote to a child dying of cancer: "When we have done all the work we were sent to earth to do, we are allowed to shed our body, which imprisons our soul like a cocoon encloses the future butterfly. And when the time is right, we can let go of it and we will be free of pain, free of fears and worries - free as a very beautiful butterfly returning home to God."

Excerpt from Gemini Chapter

"The secret to life is honesty and fair dealing. If you can fake that you've got it made" - Groucho Marx

Let's go further into the subject of truth and honesty to demonstrate the way Gemini's are magicians with words, able to talk their way into and out of any situation. They follow Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty's dictum: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less." So here goes.

Lying is wrong, right? Well no, not always anyway. A little truth goes a long way, but total honesty hurts too much, and does more harm than good, a truth the movie *Eyes Wide Shut* comprehensively demonstrates. If the **Nicole Kidman** character had kept her mouth shut about her attraction to another man, both she and the Tom Cruise character would have been saved much torment and suffering. A wiser approach is given by Shakespeare - "When my love swears that she is made of truth, I do believe her, though I know she lies." And let's face it, total honesty is just too hard. Show me a self-described honest man and I'll show you a liar. Let me quote again that wisest of men, Groucho Marx - "There's one way to find out if a man is honest. Ask him. If he says he is, you know he's a crook."

"Whether you're an honest man or a thief depends on who's solicitor has given me my brief" - W. S. Gilbert.

Finally, the killer argument for these times in which we worship at the altars of democracy and the mighty dollar, too much honesty would destroy democracy and cripple the economy. A politician has to lie by presenting himself as an honest man in order to get elected, and then has to tell the people what they want to hear, rather than what he really believes, in order to stay in power. Broken election promises present no problem that a little creative word play can't fix - just ask former Australian Prime Minister John Howard. Simply define the promises you break as 'non-core' and the ones you keep as 'core'. As for the economy, several professions particularly well suited to Gemini would disappear overnight if dishonesty was suddenly deemed unacceptable - talk back radio, tabloid journalism, public relations, sales and marketing, and the law, to name but a few.

Time to address the affirmative side of the debate, keeping within the boundaries of the Gemini mind set. It takes wisdom to handle a

lie; a fool had better remain honest. True. Honesty is the best policy? Maybe, but he who acts on that principle is not valuing honesty for its own sake. Telling the truth is simpler. That's a good argument, for lying needs a good memory and generally takes up an increasing amount of energy to avoid being found out. One lie leads to another, and sooner or later takes up too much valuable head space, space that could be used more profitably doing crossword puzzles, gossiping with friends, or trading shares on the internet.

"What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive"

-
Shakespeare

As a creative writing exercise now, I'm going to write a character reference for Gemini, drawing on all of the above. Gemini, trust me, would I lie about you? [Well I might lie *for* you if you get me a good publishing deal. Talk to my agent regarding my fee. Of course it's understood I'll deny everything if this is ever made public.] I'll write it in the first person for greater effect:

'Ruled by Mercury, messenger of the gods, patron of merchants and thieves, I'm the original super information highway. I know who's doing what with whom, when where and how. Tricky, witty, sometimes wise, I'm an honest person in disguise. Trust me, I'll always let you down. Just joking, anything for a laugh. Trust me - to be myself. Whatever else, I shall not bore, though alas, myself am often bored. For me words mean nothing, or whatever I want them to at the time. I'm a master at dazzling people with their own bullshit - I promise not to believe my own. I'm a brilliant debater, deal-maker, and salesman supreme, I could sell ice to the Eskimos, rice to China. I love to play with words, for humour and effect. Here is my current favourite: Guru = Gee-you-are-you. A final brain stretcher: 'I'm a liar' - if true, it's false; if false, it's true.'

Excerpt from Taurus Chapter

"From pleasure comes sorrow, from pleasure comes fear; he who is free from pleasure is free from sorrow and fear .. He who forgets the real aim of life and grasps at pleasure, will in time envy him who has exerted himself in meditation"

- **Buddha** [Dhammapada]

-

It is a rare Taurean who will follow this advice of the **Buddha**, for Taureans are the most pleasure loving creatures of the zodiac. Ruled by Venus, the planet of love and beauty in her earthy, sensual aspect, they especially love a beautiful body - such a joy to have and to hold.

M-m-m .. Attuning more deeply to the sensual energy of Taurus now, my thoughts lead naturally from there to the delights of concupiscence .. Ah yes Taurus .. I can feel myself slowing down even as I write .. M-m-m .. Reader, I suggest let's just relax and make ourselves comfortable, and prepare for a long day's journey into night .. M-m-m .. Taureans do so enjoy the slow build that goes on and on, never quite going over the edge, all night long .. How they love to linger over each and every sensation .. to savour to the nth degree, the exquisite pleasures of erotic touch .. A-h-h [Inaudible murmur] What's that you say Taurus? "More please .. please don't stop .."

Yes, Taurus can be absolutely insatiable. Slow to get started, then impossible to stop. In love, as in music, they love a solid groove that 'keeps on keeping on'. Bliss for them is the calm after the rush, the state of utter relaxation, the feeling of oh-so-delicious contentment after all that Arien excitement, tension, and explosive release .. mmm .. what a luscious feeling .. 'Tis truly the peace that passes all understanding ..

Buddha I ask you, could meditation really compare to this? The short Taurean answer is, try it and find out. Practise, patience and perseverance will be required, so don't expect instant results and realize there is an art to it, like everything else. Better still Taurus, why not combine the two, making love and meditation. Of all the signs perhaps, you are most naturally suited to it. See if you agree as I describe how to 'do' it. [I put 'do' in quotation marks, because strictly speaking meditation can't be done. Any technique only lays the ground for the space of meditation to spontaneously arise.] Okay, here goes.

While joined together, stay present, here-now, in the body. Breathe, relax, soften the belly. Don't strive for an orgasm or any kind of peak experience. Enjoy the garden of delights blooming in the valley. Don't fantasize. Be alert to thoughts and dreams of past and future taking you out of the body and into the mind. Keep your awareness centered in the body. Really feel the delicious sensations of body-to-body connection .. Relax deeper into each other .. release any tension on the out breath .. let go .. a-a-h-h .. let go even more on the out breath .. A-a-h-h-h Now rest and be still .. absolutely still .. Alert, yet relaxed .. utterly relaxed .. No-thought, no-mind, no-past, no-future .. just the sensation of pure pleasure here-now in the body .. mmmm .. Body-to-body .. only one body .. no boundaries .. no duality .. union .. unity .. bliss .. this is it .. the space of meditation

Recognize this Taurus? If not, why not conduct the experiment. Try it before expressing an opinion. Experience is the only true test.