A New Model of Astrology:

Planets, Model-Building and the Inner Core of the Self

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Note: The author has elaborated on the theme of this article in a book published in July 2001 called *The Circuitry of the Self: Astrology and the Developmental Model*.

In Western astrology the planets are symbols that express a range of qualities on many levels, including both the personality and the physical body. In earlier times, before the advent of modern psychology, astrologers viewed the human body as a microcosm of the heavens, with each planet having a bodily correlation. In its totality, the human body was seen as a manifestation of the cosmic principles of the Sun, Moon and planets. In many respects, the human body served as a microcosmic model of the universe. If the old saying "as above, so below" is a key to how the ancients thought, then the body was a tangible model of the arrangement of the greater universe.

Today astrology lacks a respectable model (in the context of scientific/academic consensus reality) of how it operates. It is part of the scientific method to build models of reality and test them against experience. In this regard, astrologers have not
played along with the scientific movement and have paid a heavy price. No model means no communication with the rest of the scientific community. This is sad, but there are explanations. Astrology was ostracized by Christian fanatics during the Scientific Revolution and persons concerned about their reputation (most scientific and academic types are terribly insecure about their professional lives) stayed away from the subject. Astrology was also fraught with complicated problems of measurement,the tools for which (statistics) were not to be invented for several generations. By then, very few astrologers were left. Since the 18th Century the majority of astrologers have been practitioners, not researchers with paid jobs from institutions. Practitioners generally don't do science, they work for a living. It's been a tough road for astrology, but I think continued avoidance of the scientific method is a mistake for the field. I'd hate to see the subject get absorbed by psychology and biology -- and that's just what will happen if we don't don't get our act together.

In the spirit of scientific model building, I will now present a simple psychological model of how the planets might be linked to one's personality. Many psychologists, including Freud, have shown how personality develops in stages. Other psychologists have studied how animal and human young take imprints from their environment at crucial moments in their development, which then conditions their future behaviors. Moving from these foundations, developmental and imprint theory, Dr. Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson have written about eight circuits that exist (in potential at least) in the mind.(1) Their writings, particularly Wilson's clear and humorous book "Prometheus Rising," have for several years stimulated my thinking about how the planets might work together.(2) The model that follows takes ideas of imprinting and stages of development from the psychologists and uses the planets as focal points in a three-dimensional model of the self, a printed neuro-circuit board, if you will.

At the center of the personality, as in the solar system, is the Sun. It sustains the life force, indicates the ego strength and keeps things integrated. Around the Sun are four basic imprint circuits or fixed points. The first is that of the Moon. This corresponds to Freud's oral stage, the circuit that is activated in the first two years of life. It is pre-verbal, unconscious and is focused in the mouth. Imprints set here are very hard to access and change. Leary and Wilson call it the Bio-survival Circuit.

The next is that of Mars, the point of muscular control and personal autonomy. This is like Freud's anal stage, the stage where toddlers learn to do things for themselves. Toilet-training requires muscle control. For Leary and Wilson, this is the Emotional-Territorial Circuit, a power point in the psyche.

Next is the Mercury circuit, which may correspond in some ways to Freud's latency period. On this circuit the child develops the ability to communicate and use symbols. Imprints on this circuit occur approximately between ages 5 and 12. Language skills and hand dexterity come under this one, called the Symbolic or Semantic Circuit by Leary and Wilson.

The fourth circuit is that of Venus. This is like Freud's genital stage, as it is the circuit of socialization and mating and it kicks in during puberty. Leary and Wilson refer to it as the Socio-Sexual Circuit. These first four circuits are basic and form the foundation set around the Sun in the birth chart. The Moon, Mars, Mercury and Venus, traditionally considered personal planets, make up this basic fourfold structure of personality.

Each of these basic four circuits has an extension, or higher octave, that indicate levels of consciousness well beyond that needed for ordinary functioning in the world. These outer circuits are transformational and they allow the individual to make connections with the universe beyond the limits of the self. In some ways they act as antennae, in some ways as transmitters.

For the Moon, this higher-octave extension is Neptune. Where the Moon is the symbol of the nurturing emotional world of the mother, Neptune symbolizes spiritual ecstasy, the sensual urge to merge with the infinite and return to the source. This is Leary and Wilson's Holistic Neurosomatic Circuit. For Mars, the extension is Pluto. Where Mars fights the personal battles of the world, Pluto takes the warrior into different worlds, perhaps like those described by Carlos Castaneda. This circuit is a powerful one and includes the power of DNA, hence its name Collective Neurogenetic Circuit. For Mercury, the extension is Uranus. Here is where the mind can make quantum leaps toward a level where even reprogramming the mind itself is possible. On this level, one can entertain the mathematical and philosophical problems of particle physics and the creation of the universe. This is the Meta-Programming Circuit. At present, Venus has no known planet as a higher octave.(2) The model predicts that its higher octave would deal with a high level of social interaction. Perhaps such a planet will be discovered when humanity meets intelligent life from another planet. This is the Non-Local Quantum Circuit.

In a private conversation with Mr. Wilson, he suggested that planetary correspondences with the 8 circuits might be those of the planetary rulers of the days of the week. This order would have Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday) and Jupiter (Thursday) rule the first four primary circuits. The higher octave would then have Venus (Friday), Saturn (Saturday) and Sun (Sunday) rule the next three. The fourth, which Wilson suggested was beyond planetary symbolism, would remain unruled. Although some of this works, it did not satisfy my astrological mind and I worked out the arrangement described in this article.

What I did with Jupiter and Saturn follows. In traditional astrological symbolism, Jupiter and Saturn often symbolize one's placement in society. They are not considered personal planets. Jupiter has to do with growth and the expansion principle, Saturn, with limitations and contraction. In the astrological model presented here, Jupiter and Saturn act as general influences on the Sun, Moon and inner planets. Jupiter and Saturn are like fields, positive and negative, expansive and contractive, which act on the other parts of the chart. The influence of either of these giant planets on the inner planets is shown primarily by aspects, specific angular separations between the planets that serve to link one planet to another. One way to think about Jupiter and Saturn is to regard them as indicators of how much growth potential a particular circuit has. For example, suppose that at birth the Moon is in conjunction with Jupiter. This indicates that the individual takes a strong nurturing imprint. That person will probably be very well nurtured, and may live in a protected environment. They will carry this with them for the rest of their lives and it will shape their destiny. Or suppose that Jupiter connects with a person's Mars. Such people may be very positive about asserting themselves. This combination is found in charts of gamblers, athletes, and people who enjoy competing and winning. With Jupiter connected to Mercury, one finds people who love travel, movement, and conversation. Jupiter to Venus stimulates social life, even indulgence in it.

With Saturn, the reverse can be the case. A birth chart with a strong Saturn-Moon aspect symbolizes a person born into a cold, unemotional, restrictive environment. It may be worth investigating whether babies that spend time in incubators have strong Saturn-Moon aspects. Later in life, this condition often coincides both with fears of intimacy in relationships and with control over feelings and emotions. Saturn in aspect to Mars in a birth chart indicates one who becomes conditioned to control and who holds back much of the time. A strong yet difficult Saturn-Mars contact could mean a frustrating toilet training experience during the time of second circuit (Mars/Emotional-Territorial) imprint. Toilet training is an important act of self-sufficiency, a proof of autonomy. With Saturn stressfully connected to Mars one may find a parent whoputs pressure on the child, such as pressure to control the bodily functions. This could backfire if the timing is wrong, and the child may spend the rest of his or her life with control problems, a fear of self-sufficiency and a lack of confidence. A positive Saturn-Mars contact suggests the steady control of the aggressive instinct, which is needed when life's great challenges are to be met.

Saturn aspecting Mercury is the focused intellect, the person whose mind needs a system. People with Saturn-Mercury contacts are often very good at mathematics: they like it because it gives them a structure to think with. Saturn-Mercury can also indicate a narrow or limited point of view.

Saturn aspecting Venus indicates possible limitations in relationships and mating rituals. Sometimes it indicates marriage to an older person, or to one from a different generation. Such situations may be due to problems in learning social skills during puberty and adolescence, the period when the fourth circuit (Venus/Socio-Sexual) takes its imprint. The events that occur around age 14 set the general pattern for future experiences in relationships. If one has a strong Saturn-Venus contact in the birth chart, there may be problem marriages, delayed marriages, or fear of intimacy because of the social limitations or pressures that were experienced and imprinted at puberty. On the other hand, Venus-Jupiter could mean being married many times or never accepting the responsibility that comes with marriage. Obviously, Saturn in its own way is as important and beneficial as Jupiter.

Jupiter and Saturn act as fields that modify the inner planetary circuits. In contact with the Sun, Saturn can indicate lack of vitality, while Jupiter can indicate abundant vitality. People with Sun-Jupiter combinations are often extremely optimistic, never doubting that they can get what they want. Many of them are spoiled as children, so they tend to think optimistically and often get what they want as adults. Sun in aspect to Saturn produces people who may be very hard-working but somewhat insecure. They often struggle with issues of responsibility, and they tend to be pessimistic, thus making life harder for themselves than it might need to be. However, Sun-Saturn people have tremendous endurance and persistence and may find success in the long haul.

The houses and signs in the birth chart also have a place in this astrological model. The houses can be described as the surface of the self, its outer covering and its contact boundary with the outside world. Like a sphere, the houses encase the planetary configuration outlined above. Along the surface of this sphere, which separates the self from all else, are sections that have specialized functions. For example, the section called the Ascendant specializes as an immediate contact point with other selves and the environment in general.

The signs are more difficult to define in terms of this model. Since the signs tend to modify or color the operation of the planets and houses, we could view the signs as a sequence of phases of a universal cycle through which planets or houses travel. For example, the Aries phase is direct and primitive while the Libran phase is more refined and balanced. In this model, Venus in Aries would be described as the Venus circuit operating in its most basic phase.

Although the above description is sketchy, it does outline a possible model that astrologers could embrace and build upon. Others are possible, the point of this article is to encourage model-building. With some psychological terminology in place, communications with the rest of the scientific and academic community might be enhanced. Although proof of astrology is scant, a mere model could do wonders. There are plenty of models flimsier than this one floating around in the social sciences that are getting funding and going over with academic nitwits even as you read. If nothing else, it will get astrologers to think about models and model making, something our subject needs badly.

(1) The original idea of the 8-circuits appears to have been Timothy Leary himself, surely to be discovered next century, or the next, as one of the great 20th century psychologists. It appeared in his book "Exo-Psychology" which was published around 1976. A recently published new version is called "Info-Psychology," Falcon Press, Santa Monica, CA: 1987. Robert Anton Wilson's "Prometheus Rising," which takes the basic ideas further, was also published by Falcon Press, in 1983. "Angel Tech: A Modern Shaman's Guide to Reality Selection" by Antero Alli, Falcon Press, 1986, elaborates on the same themes.

(2) See also Scofield, Bruce, "NCGR Journal," winter 1987-1988, A Planetary Model of the Developing Self. p. 62.

(3) It has occurred to me that the hypothetical planet known by several names including Transpluto, Persephone, and Isis, may fill the hole in this diagram. This planet appears to describe more complex forms of relationships, a joining of different worlds, and a kind of rite of passage. Not much has been written about this moving sensitive point or planet, whatever the case may be, with the exception of a few articles by Brad Clark and Valerie Vaughan. See 1989 AFA Bulletin vol. 51, #'s 2 and 4, and "Welcome to Planet Earth," Scorpio 1983 and Leo 1986.