

The Exaltation of the Planets by Dane Rudhyar

Every student of astrology becomes acquainted at the outset of his studies with the principle of "planetary rulership." He learns that every planet "rules" over one or two signs of the zodiac and the usual explanation given by astrological textbooks as to the why of a planet's rulership over a sign is that there is an affinity between the nature of the planet and the nature of the zodiacal sign. This concept of "Natural affinity" is however not to be taken too literally. It is a very vague concept indeed, unless it is definitely related to the fact that there is a parallelism of sequence between the series of planets (from the Sun outward) and the series of zodiacal signs.

We must never forget that the zodiac is an expression of the yearly, cyclically changing, relationship of the Earth to the Sun. It refers to the constantly altered adjustment between our planet (representing **the substantial foundation of human nature**) and the Sun, source of vitality for all living organisms on this Earth. The signs of the zodiac constitute twelve basic phases in this cyclic series of adjustments, and by extension twelve essential types of vitality and selfhood among men, according to the time of the year a man is born.

The planets, on the other hand, are symbols of "organic functions" — using the term "organic" in reference to psychological as well as physiological factors within the total "organism" of a human personality. Organic functions are modes of organic activity. There are a few very basic types of such activities, and these basic types are symbolized by the cycles of motion of the planets, because the solar system as a whole is considered in astrology as the symbol of the total human personality, body and psyche. The natural sequence of these organic functions in human life is related to the actual sequence of planets considered **in reference to the position of the Earth in the solar system**. Some planets are inside of the Earth's orbit, others outside. The Sun being the source of vitality for man, the spatial relationship of the Earth to the Sun becomes the "frame of reference" which determines the symbolic meaning of the planets for all men, collectively or generically speaking.

Thus we have two sets of symbols, both to be referred to the relationship of Earth to Sun. The signs of the zodiac represent the basic phases of this relationship as it unfolds **in time** throughout the year, as a result of the Earth's orbital revolution around the Sun. Then, the series of planets represent the series of organic functions, or modes of organic activity, which constitute the differentiated workings of solar vitality within the human organism. The

Sun is a source of life-potentiality rather than of actual power. This "life potential" must be differentiated, activated and distributed, in order to become actually operative within the organism. The planets are the distributors of this solar potential, **transforming solar potential into the various basic modes of organic activity required for human living, feeling, thinking and creating.**

Through the concept of planetary rulership an operative relationship is established between the series of planets and the series of zodiacal signs; that is to say, a relationship is established between basic types of life-potential or vitality (signs of the zodiac) and organic functions (planets). This relationship is established according to the sequence of both signs and planets.

An Operative Relationship

We speak of this relationship as an **operative** relationship. What we mean by this is that the solar life-potential can "operate" in the body and the inner life as it is activated and distributed by the planets. Each planet is more efficient in activating and distributing certain types of solar potential than other types. Mars for instance, as representative of the muscular function which enables man to move and to act, is most efficient as the activator and distributor of the type of solar potential which is released at the beginning of Spring, when the Earth-to-Sun relationship is characterized by the zodiacal sign Aries. Thus we say that Mars "rules" Aries.

The concept of rulership, however, does not exhaust the many possibilities of relationship between planets and zodiacal signs. Ptolemaic and Medieval astrology devised other types of relationship, and the most significant among them is that which attributes to every planet a sign of the zodiac in which it is "exalted." Modern astrologers often belittle the value of this concept of planetary exaltation. Yet it is a most interesting concept, and it should play a very significant part in the type of psychological astrology which we have featured. The distinction between "exaltation" and "rulership" is an excellent index of the distinction made by modern psychology between "subjective" and "objective" operation, or between "unconscious" and "conscious" activity. It is a distinction between "desiring" a thing and "using" it, between anticipation and actuality.

In order to grasp fully the meaning of such statements we will draw upon a department of astrological interpretation which is not usually well understood, and which — to my knowledge — has never associated so far with the concept of planetary exaltation. I refer here to the factor of **declination**.

The declination of a celestial body is defined astronomically as its angular distance, measured north or south, from the plane of the equator. The example of the changes in the Sun's declination throughout the year will explain at once the meaning of this type of measurement. At the time of the Spring equinox, the Sun sets exactly west and its declination is 0°. This is because the equinoxes are the points where the plane of the ecliptic (i. e. of the apparent motion of the Sun in the sky) and the plane of the Earth's equator (i.

e. of the Earth's daily rotation around its polar axis) intersect. In other words, "the angular distance" of the Sun from the equatorial plane at the Spring equinox is 0. The Sun, therefore, rises exactly east and sets exactly west.

As weeks go by, the Sun sets more and more to the north; until at the summer solstice it sets as far to the northwest as it can. The distance between the equinoctial and the solstitial positions of the Sun (as it sets and rises) measure the amount of declination which the Sun has around June 21 (i.e. $23^{\circ} 27'$). Then, this declination is in a northern direction; but at Christmas (winter solstice) the same amount of declination is in a southern direction. The Sun sets to the southwest.

Throughout the ages this change in declination of the Sun has been given the most profound significance. The reason for this is obvious, for it is the actual cause of the change in the degree of incidence of the sun-rays on the earth-surface, and thus the cause of the change in the seasons. Indeed it is the **change in the seasons** which is the actual fact back of the symbolism of the zodiac. But the zodiac is measured not directly by the change in the Sun's **declination**, but rather by the change in the Sun's **longitude**, that is by his position in the sky in relation to the structure of the sky as a whole.

Zodiacal longitude is (or was, originally, when the precessional motion of the constellations was not known) the description of the Sun's position every day of the year **in reference to the stars**. Declination refers to the position of the daily path described by the Sun in the sky **in reference to the horizon and the zenith**: that is, whether the Sun sets more or less to the south or the north, and whether it is higher or lower in the sky at noon. Changes in declination were undoubtedly the first to be observed by primitive man, because they are the most obvious and they seem to affect the character of the Sun's radiations more immediately — thus, the degree of light and heat, basic factors for the development of life.

The changes in declination of the Sun affect immediately every one, every living thing on earth. The changes in zodiacal longitude seem rather to refer to the relation of the Sun itself to the sky. The former are intimate, linked as they are to the framework of our everyday experience, horizon and meridian. On the contrary, changes in longitude appear to deal with distant matters of celestial order. Declination thus can be taken symbolically as a personal factor; longitude, as a social factor affecting the collectivity in which we live and its government. Thus declination should be related to the concept of "exaltation;" zodiacal longitude, to the principle of "rulership."

Understanding this, we shall see better why particular signs of the zodiac have been traditionally mentioned as the "signs of exaltation" of particular planets; otherwise such an attribution would appear puzzling and without any consistent order. We shall realize that the four basic signs of exaltation are the equinoctial and solstitial signs: Capricorn, Aries, Cancer and Libra. These four signs are said to be the signs of exaltation respectively for Mars, the Sun, Jupiter and Saturn — **the four positive planets** in Ptolemaic astrology.

Why did I open the series with Capricorn? Because Capricorn begins the declination-cycle of the Sun. It is the time of the winter solstice. Then the Sun begins to "move northward" — as the old mystical phrase goes. For six months the Sun will move northward, and it will increase in power. And this six-month period is considered in all religious or occult philosophies as the "spiritual" period of the year. More exactly it is the period during which **the inner powers within us are being gradually made manifest in the outer life.**

"It is a "spiritual" period, but it is also the **personal** phase of human growth. It is the period during which the spirit in man takes a concrete form as a person. It is the period of the Incarnation; the period when man is **exalted** by the descent of the Christ within his total being. It sees the birth, the growth and mature development of the Living God as a man. And the phases of this process are correctly represented by the sequence Mars (exalted in Capricorn), the Sun (exalted in Aries) and Jupiter (exalted in Cancer).

With Cancer the second six-month period begins, when the Sun moves southward. This is the period of social or collective development, when the group dominates over the individual. Saturn is exalted in Libra because it is a symbol of the sacrifice of the seed (the Christ-being) for the sake of the whole future of humanity.

Mars is **exalted** in Capricorn; and here we see Mars acting as a subjective, transcendent, at first unconscious impulse. It is the Primordial Desire of the universal Spirit seeking birth so as to redeem and exalt man, the being "made into the likeness of God, the Father." Saturn **rules** over Capricorn. Here the "Father" (Saturn) is operating actively, concretely. He is projected as the Son. The structural power of life has built this new being. And in the new being there is this immense Martian desire for action, a desire which, however, is only subjective and as yet ineffective—an extreme of potentiality.

As Spring comes with the zodiacal sign Aries, the Mars-power in its turn becomes concretely operative. Desire is now fully objective. There is physical activity, going forth, great urge for demonstration. But the Sun is then only a subjective force. It is **exalted** in Aries. There is intense desire for selfhood, for personality-integration and radiant power. But it is desire, rather than realization—anticipation rather than actuality.

Then comes Summer. The Sun's desire for completion and creative selfhood has created the Two-in-One, the Moon-Sun couple — which **rules** over the summer zodiacal signs, Cancer and Leo. There is intense activity realized by this Two-in-One — home-making and creation. And within this activity, yet only as a rather distant and subjective dream, the Jupiter function begins to glow. It is the desire to expand, to become socially important and successful, to fulfill one's place in the greater Whole of which one comes to recognize oneself as a part.

The Libra Phase

The recognition of oneself as a participant in the social and universal Whole occurs as the Libra phase of the year comes — the Fall equinox, the time of the sowings. The individual sees himself then subjectively and longingly as a "Father" of the future, as a civilizes. He

dreams of giving birth to his own Christ-child. Saturn, the seed, is **exalted** in Libra. It will **rule** only in Capricorn, when it has acquired the ability to operate concretely and objectively, as a manager of power and of life.

The four cardinal signs provide a framework for the entire system of planetary exaltation, and they do so because they represent the four great moments in the to and fro oscillation of the Sun from southern to northern declination. Mars is exalted at the southern point — the point of descent into matter (Christmas); Jupiter, at the northern point — the symbolic marriage of Heaven and Earth (the mystical Feast of St. John when fires are lit in the fields by the peasants celebrating the nuptials of Sun and Soil). Then, at the spring equinox, we find the Sun exalted in the eager ascent of green stems out of the earth, the stems that yearn for the light. And, at the fall equinox, we see Saturn exalted in the sacrificial descent of the seed, as a promise of immortality.

The other planets develop this basic pattern of exaltation. They do so in a way that has become rather confused and full of uncertainty — largely because traditional astrology did not know of planets beyond Saturn. Today in their effort to find signs of exaltation for the newly discovered planets astrologers seem to have been unable to discover the proper correlations, because they had failed to grasp the significance of the pattern just described. Without attempting to refute any particular scheme of planetary exaltation which has been put forth of late, we shall explain what appears to us as the consistent and logical sequence of planets and signs, claiming however no special authority that would enable us to vouch for its accuracy.

Mars exalted in Capricorn gives the key to the exaltation of planets in the winter signs. Mercury is exalted in Aquarius and Venus in Pisces. These are the two planets within the orbit of the Earth, the planets which refer to the inner, intimate and personal life of the individual. The winter quarter is the period of "exaltation" (in the present technical sense) for personal values; that is, it is the time when these values operate at the subjective, semi-unconscious level of yearnings, desires and dreams. Winter is the seed's anticipation of spring germination, growth and flowering (Aries, Taurus and Gemini, respectively). During the spring months Mars, Venus and Mercury will be "rulers;" during the winter months they are "exalted."

Spring begins as the Sun is exalted in Aries — particularly on the 19th or 20th degree of Aries, which can be related to the idea of Easter, the Resurrection. The next exaltation to follow is that of the Moon in Taurus, the sign of impregnation and of fertility, at the instinctive-biological and thus **unconscious** level. It is the love of adolescents. The Moon function (the mothering impulse, the will to bear forth) is wrapt in the glamor of feelings (Venus, ruler of Taurus) and the urge to love is desire which as yet has very little individualized characteristics. It acquires an individual meaning and pattern in Cancer, the sign ruled by the Moon.

Then comes Gemini, the sign of "vivid extension of relationship," of the search for new sensations, new contacts, new knowledge. And here we find Uranus exalted, for Uranus is

the symbol of "reaching beyond," of the quest for the infinite. But in Gemini this quest is a subjective yearning, rather than a working reality. It operates in the realm of things near at hand, because the individual is still immature and the wings of his spirit are not full-grown.

The Summer quarter begins with Jupiter, exalted in Cancer. Summer is the period of **physical personal** fruitions; thus the Moon rules Cancer. Fruitions are experienced within the boundaries of the home where the lunar function works most effectively and objectively. Jupiter refers, on the other hand, to **social** fruitions. The Moon (the matriarch) rules the home; Jupiter (the king) rules society. In Cancer, "kingship," or social power, is only a subjective yearning for the person who is very much occupied with family-problems; thus Jupiter is "exalted" in Cancer. In Leo, Neptune is exalted, because this planet of universal wholeness and of spiritual brotherhood is in' the subjective background of the Leo type, ruled by the Sun. It has been said that Neptune is a sort of Moon for the Sun; it links the Sun in a curious way with the Galaxy of which the Sun is a small star. It forces the solar being to dream of his greater "home," the galaxy; it urges the "king" to seek inspiration in the "Church."

The summer quarter closes with the zodiacal sign, Virgo, at the entrance of which stands the symbolic figure of the Sphynx, the creature that is half-lion and half-Virgin. The Sphynx is the subjective, mystical symbol of Virgo — and to the Sphynx we must associate the goddess of the Mysteries, Proserpina, wife of Pluto. While Neptune refers to the **feeling** of the universal Whole, a new planet (beyond Pluto) will undoubtedly be found to relate to the **experience** of greater life. Such experience was bestowed upon the Initiate in the ancient Mysteries; but as yet only as a **subjective** realization. Thus the future planet "Proserpine" will be the logical one to be exalted in Virgo. At the level of objectivity and efficient concrete activity Mercury rules over Virgo. The critical, technical mind that is necessary for social efficiency (fall-winter period) is built.

The exaltation of "Proserpine" leads to that of Saturn in Libra. The individual who has been initiated into the Mysteries potentially becomes a "seed": humanity (or God) will use him as a focal point to proclaim the new message. This will occur only in Capricorn, ruled by Saturn; but in Libra, the event is anticipated, made a potentiality in the "sacrifice" of the individual to the collectivity which occurs in Libra. This sacrifice leads to the exaltation of Pluto in Scorpio, just as the rulership of Venus over Libra (activity based on social values, art, etc.) leads to the rulership of Mars over Scorpio (activity based on the root-blending of individual — through mating or other means of at-onement). Pluto is the symbol of integration at the collective-social or spiritual level. In Scorpio such an integration is yet more of a dream than a reality. It is a subjective goal — whether it be as the Soul-Mate ideal or as the desire to participate in an occult Brotherhood.

In Sagittarius a further stage of the subjective process begun in Libra is reached: Saturn and Pluto lead to an as yet unknown planet, or celestial body of some sort, which is still farther than the already mentioned "Proserpine." As ruler of Sagittarius, Jupiter is the manager of social organizations, the seer, the prophet. What Jupiter accomplishes in terms

of concrete, effective social or religious activity the most distant planet "Z" should symbolize in terms of subjective, semi-unconscious or prae-conscious potentiality. Here is Jupiter as the great god "Zeus" **in the sky**, yet yearning to be born as the spiritual King, the embodied Christ in Whom man and God are one. It is the longing of the Father in Heaven for the state of Sonship, in which all opposites are integrated and universal wholeness is demonstrated in the perfectly managed balance of divine **Spirit** and earth **substance** through a human **form** (or mind).

The Son is born at the winter solstice, and thus the cycle begins again. It is the cycle of potentiality and subjectivity, with a direct connection with the solar cycle of change in declination. And thus it complements the cycle of actual and objective manifestation which finds its expression in the zodiac (measuring changes in solar longitude). The two cycles are one; but declination and longitude, exaltation and rulership, constitute two ways of approaching the experience which this one solar cycle of the year presents to the human individual. He who forgets to dream of the future while efficiently building the present, sacrifices the potential to the actual — and the structure that is built remains empty and futile. But he who lets the yearning for tomorrow spoil the efficiency of his action in the now fails to give solid substance to the vision his dreams have revealed.