



Saturn and the Four Birth-Moments

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introduction

Among the many variables that contribute to an astrologer's competence is the ability to take the natal horoscope of an individual and, by simply glancing at the chart, spontaneously identify symbolic information that can be instantly converted into real and relevant information about the individual in question. The two key phrases here are "by simply glancing at the chart," and "real and relevant information."

It's one thing to painstakingly prepare a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the myriad astrological factors that reveal an individual's experience of reality; it's quite another thing to have the skill and savvy to do so spontaneously, within five or ten seconds of first seeing a chart. Similarly, one of the most vexing challenges in astrology is separating the wheat from the chaff. Charts contain way too much data, enough to cause sensory overload and cortical brownout. We want the information we see in the chart to be both *real*—which is to say, accurate about the individual in question—and *relevant*—meaningful to that individual.

Following a basic education in the meanings and interrelationships of planets, signs, houses, and aspects, much of what we later learn as astrologers emerges only with time and experience. To achieve proficiency in improvisational

interpretation—which is to say, to get really good at looking at charts—requires logging a lot of time studying a boatload of charts. Practice may not actually make perfect, but it does inch us down the road in that direction. And along that gradual journey toward understanding through the persistence and repetition of amassed experience, every so often we pick up a hitchhiker who suddenly changes our lives for the better. In astrology, this usually takes the form of an interpretive technique, a way of looking at the chart that had not previously occurred to us, and which no amount of repetitive practice might ever have revealed. Once exposed to this new technique, however, we see its relevance instantly and are astonished at the vistas it opens up in our understanding of ourselves and others.

Stumbling on such a technique is akin to finding a lover with whom one has extraordinary chemistry. There are no awkward beginnings nor unsatisfying interludes, no embarrassing self-consciousness or fumbling to reach a mutual rhythm. Instead, there is immediate recognition of the beloved, and a grateful falling into each other's arms, as if the two had been lost in separation and are now at long last reunited. It's *Deja Vu*. *Kismet*. Or maybe it's just great sex. Anyway, you readers know what I mean. Such lovers are few and far between. Like true friends, we can count ourselves lucky to have two or three in a lifetime.

Nooooo, on second thought, I take it back. No astrological technique ever invented is anywhere close to as good as finding a wonderful lover. But while you're waiting for your next true friend or real lover, try out the technique of *The Four Birth Moments*. At worst, it will add one more interpretive tool to your astrological arsenal, and, at best, it may alter, at least slightly, the way you think about charts and human beings.

keep it simple

What's great about *The Four Birth Moments* is its relative simplicity. Using the technique requires no computers, no reference texts, and no complex calculations. You may use an ephemeris if you wish to add precision to the timings, but that's not necessary to get full benefit from the technique. All that's required are a birth chart and a moderately accurate eye for visual proportions.

You may already have guessed from the title that this technique involves Saturn cycles. Since that is true, let's move into the set of presumptions that underlies the technique and gives it "interpretive teeth" by discussing Saturn cycles, seasons of growth, and the transits that mark those changing seasons.

saturn cycles

From any point in the zodiac, Saturn will take between 28.4 and 29.8 years to move around the zodiac and return to that same point. The average cycle is 29.4 years. This cycle unfolds in quarters of a bit more than seven years each, which corresponds to the "seven-year" markers of cultural lore—seven years of bad luck for breaking a mirror, the seven-year itch in marriage, seven-year locust cycles in farming, etc.

What are Saturn cycles about? What is their general meaning? A Saturn cycle is about the conversion of an invisible drive inside you—a drive that exists only as potential meaning and has no external form—by a long-term process of

repeated application, sustained effort, and persistent ambition that is slightly conscious yet mostly unconscious, so as to link that drive with solid form and coherent structure through the vehicles of personality and real-life circumstances, so that the inward, potential meaning can eventually be expressed as outward, literal meaning.

This process—finding, fostering, or creating dependable forms, structures, and habits in personality and circumstance, and then filling them with content by literally living through them—is very much like the natural process of crop farming or creating a vegetable and flower garden. Saturn cycles unfold in seven-year quarters that represent in metaphor the four seasons of Mother Nature’s year. These four quarters share the same names we use for the monthly soli-lunar cycle, and, indeed, for all astrological cycles that are quartered in time: *New Phase*, *First Quarter*, *Full Phase*, and *Last Quarter*.

- **new phase (spring)**

The New Phase, which unfolds over the initial seven years of the cycle, is analogous to the season of spring, where the gardener prepares the ground by tilling and fertilizing, and then plants the seeds, hoping they will later germinate, take root, and start to grow upward through the fertile loam toward the sun.

- **first-quarter phase (summer)**

The second seven-year stretch, called First Quarter because it follows that transition, is like summer, where the gardener works actively to promote the growth of the crop by watering the plants, pruning them to encourage maximum fruit-bearing, and protecting them from environmental damage by constant weeding, fencing out predators, and discouraging pesky insects.

- **full phase (autumn)**

The effort to transform sunlight, water, and earth elements into living organic structures leads inevitably to the halfway point in the cycle, the third seven-year period, which is similar to autumn and the harvest season. Here the farmer-gardener stops the work of encouraging the plants to grow, blossom, and bear fruit, and shifts to collecting the fruits of the crop to be eaten, sold at market, or stored for the winter months ahead.

- **last quarter phase (winter)**

The final seven years of the cycle are like that dark winter, where, though the cycle is not yet finished, previous endeavors stop. The farmer lets exhausted fields lie fallow, and once again the work shifts, this time from the external world of mother nature to the interior world of psychology, with its obsessive pride about success and shame over failure. A savvy gardener uses this last phase to recognize, clarify, and reconcile the previous three seasons’ efforts

and attachments. Success and failure, pride and shame, are released. As experience becomes conscious, the famers prepares a tentative vision or experimental strategy for the next garden cycle to come.

saturn transits

Each quarter of a Saturn cycle begins with the 10-month gestation period of a significant Saturn transit. What is the characteristic overall experience of these transits? Despite the fact that Saturn is the symbol for the sustained effort of steady, slow movement over time, Saturn transits are perverse in that they allow no movement at all during the period of the transit. I make this rather bold assertion out of observation, not theory, but, since humans are pattern-making, meaning-seeking beings, I will offer a theory as a rationale. Each 7-year quarter of a Saturn cycle involves effort expended in a certain way, toward a certain end goal. At the points of transition between each quarter—conjunction, waxing square, opposition, and waning square (and, to a lesser extent, the semi-squares and sesquiquadrates within each quarter)—we need to stop the “forward” movement of our effort, assess where we are, and prepare for a new type of effort to stay on track toward our goal. It’s as if we’re driving along and come to a crossroads where we must stop, check the traffic, and make a turn. Of course, that metaphor is misleading in that it makes the process seem conscious. In reality, the process is distinctly unconscious. That terrible grinding pressure of a Saturn transit, with its many obstacles and blocks, the sense of “hurry up and wait,” occurs precisely because we are such unconscious and habit-driven beings.

For a more lively metaphor, imagine that you’re driving down the road, paying little if any attention, just bopping along with the Rolling Stones cranked up on the CD player, and you come to a point where the road veers suddenly 90° to the left. With a cry of “Oh Nooooo!” you bomb straight through the turn at 60 miles per hour, missing it entirely, only barely aware of the road going off to the left as you crash through the retaining wall, careen down the bank beyond, and screech to a sudden thudding stop in the gully below, crumpling the front end of your car and giving your forehead a sizable owee as it smashes into the dashboard because you weren’t wearing your seatbelt. That’s the first pass of a typical Saturn transit.

The ten months that follow (whether Saturn retrogrades back over the transit point or not) are spent metaphorically walking to a distant farmhouse, phoning a tow truck and an ambulance, being taken to the hospital where you receive emergency treatment for your concussion followed by three days of bed rest, then twiddling your thumbs for another week waiting for your car to be repaired, all of which leaves a major dent in your MasterCard account to cover the medical and auto insurance deductibles. That’s what a major Saturn transit feels like.

But wait, you may be asking, isn’t astrology like a road map, allowing us to become aware of the turn before it arrives and thus avoid the accident? Isn’t that the whole point of astrology, that knowing in advance matters? Well, yes and no. Knowledge can be powerful, but astrology, and especially transits, operate on a level that might be called “cellular.” The conscious experience of awareness

is little more than icing on this cake. Human awareness has approximately the same relationship to the entire workings of the brain that tillable soil has to the whole of the earth's crust: Fertile soil is merely the top 18" of a crust that extends hundreds of miles beneath our feet.

The great fallacy of humanistic astrology lies in the belief that awareness can help avoid or at least alleviate much of life's suffering. In my 30 years as an astrologer, I have never met anyone, including myself, who was able to make that 90° turn of a Saturn transit without crashing. I've seen larger and smaller wrecks, but I've never seen anyone actually slow down, stop, look both ways, and make the turn safely. Theoretically, human beings may exist who can do just that, but I've never met any of them.

Think of it this way: Mature consciousness in human beings produces an awareness that is like the very good coach of a very bad football team. The coach can try to teach his players strategy and plays, but the players are so brain-damaged that they don't even understand the fundamentals of blocking and tackling. And no matter how much work goes into preparation for the big game, the coach must remain on the sidelines and watch helplessly as his players miss tackles, drop passes, and fumble the ball. He can create brilliant plays on the blackboard, but his team can't execute them on the field.

A young coach focused only on winning might prowl the sidelines, scream at his players, refuse to alter his elegant game-plan, and generally make life miserable for himself and all those around him. That's what many of us do in real life during Saturn transits. We curse our rotten luck, scream at an uncaring world, and bemoan our own recurring stupidity. An older, wiser coach, however, will understand that—despite Vince Lombardi's infamous quote—winning is *not* everything. The wise coach will work with his players at the level of their skills, however humble, and he will instill in them pride at even slow improvement, as well as help them endure the sting of defeat. Most of all, the wise coach will foster his players' joy at playing the game. Likewise in real life, those of us who have learned that life is hard and unyielding, who acknowledge that we are all babes in the woods and will suffer the indignities of failure (often time and time again), realize that we must treat ourselves with the patient kindness of good teachers confronted with an unruly kindergarten class. Some restraint is necessary, at times even harsh discipline, but such corrections should be meted out with unconditional love and forgiveness.

Human awareness, and systems of understanding such as astrology, can indeed make a real difference in life. Knowledge is powerful, especially when integrated into assimilated experience and applied respectfully within a realistic context of expectations. We cannot make Saturn transits easy; they are hard and harsh. What we can do, however, is reduce our own needless suffering by paying attention to life's lessons. We can learn to be content with the speed limit, to wear our seat belts, and even to relax as the inevitable accidents occur.

Time defeats everyone. Only young human beings under the influence of raging hormones succumb to the illusion of their own invincibility. Older people know better. The trick is to stop fighting time, to flow *with* the current of that river rather than against it. Patience is generally a learned skill. And Saturn reveals to us that older and wiser are better.

Unlike Jupiter transits, with their psychological buoyancy, social optimism,

expansive feelings, and interpersonal charm, Saturn transits are pessimistic in tone, depressing in their blocks and confrontations, and distinctly uncharming in their immediate impact on our egos.

Unlike Uranus transits, where the electric air of extraordinary expectancy crackles sporadic lightning bolts of radical shifts, and where shockingly unpredictable highs and lows teach us the need for change and the price of freedom, Saturn transits are consistent in their tone, steady, ordinary, utterly mundane (almost to the point of banality), and nearly unrelenting in their pressure to extract from us the dues required from our pursuit of the necessary illusion of security.

Unlike Neptune transits, where our consciousness wafts upward into clouds of fantasy and idealism, where dreams obscure reality, where reason is blurred, and where we eventually learn the essential lessons of disillusionment, Saturn transits are reality itself, the muck and mire of bodily life, the slogging through the trenches, and the endless effort of working through unglamorous tasks that are not only necessary for eventual success, but may also produce a seasoned maturity.

Unlike Pluto transits, where an unearthly stillness precedes the rumble in the ground that starts as an earthquake and culminates in a volcanic eruption that decimates the landscape to promote new growth, Saturn transits represent the long periods between cataclysms, the ongoing maintenance of mundane existence, and the courage it takes to get up and face another day.

All the other outer-planet transits alter our sense of time to allow special teachings that may take us beyond ourselves. Saturn, however, brings the recognition that we *are* ourselves, that as long as one is in a body, one works in time, not outside it. The ticking of the clock and the beating of the heart are the same in earthly biology, for life on this planet is mostly a teaching about the logic of time, the dance of duration, and the slow pace of progress.

the four crucial saturn cycles

Natal charts represent “slices out of time,” which is to say that all the symbols contained within a natal chart are “fixed” in their positions. As a moving body, Saturn forms cycles with all the fixed symbols in the natal chart. So how many cycles is that? Well, there are the two luminaries, the eight planets, the four angles, the north and south nodes of the moon, Chiron and the four major asteroids, the 200 or so minor asteroids, numerous comets, thousands of fixed stars, arabic parts, interplanetary midpoints, Sabian symbols, etc., etc., *ad infinitum* (or perhaps we should say *ad nauseum*?).

The point here is that you can identify as many different Saturn cycles in the chart as you want. Go ahead. Freak out. The first problem you’ll discover is that of far too much information. The other problem is that most of the information will be irrelevant, so abstracted from the actual experience of an individual life that it can’t be applied in any helpful way.

On the other hand, you can keep it simple. Real simple. Because that’s where the relevant information lives, in just a few really simple cycles. Consider your body. Every cell is you, every muscle, every bone, every nerve. But not all of it is essential. Lose a toe, or a foot, or even a whole leg, and you can still manage to

live a full life. Cut off your head, however, and the game is over. Clearly, some parts of our bodies are more important than other parts for our identity and survival. In the same way, only a few of the literally hundreds of Saturn cycles we could identify in the natal chart are essential to who we are.

Four Saturn cycles are critical. They involve three planetary points and one angle in the natal chart: *Saturn* itself, the *Sun*, the *Moon*, and the *Lower Heaven*. All the other Saturn cycles, important though they may be, fall into a lower rank of significance. These four form the basic structure of evolving personhood in the real world.

Before discussing the four critical Saturn cycles, allow me to detail the philosophical presumptions that led to the concept of four birth moments.

basic assumptions

The central assumption behind this technique is that human beings develop over time. In the language of biology, we humans are “K-type” animals. This designation has to do with the length of both gestation and dependency in the rearing of offspring.

Many species of animals on this planet are not born until they are nearly ready for independent life, so that the time of dependency and vulnerability is minimized. In thousands of species, no parenting occurs at all. Once born, the young are completely on their own; their chances of survival against the elements or predators are more a matter of luck than skill. In such species, young are typically produced in huge quantities, tens of thousands from a single gestation, because only a few individuals will survive long enough to reproduce.

K-type species live at the other end of the scale. We produce very few offspring, so few that nearly all must survive to reproduce in adulthood if the species is to avoid extinction. As a result, the young must be protected, nourished, and nurtured, so those instincts are built into the genetic code, along with the curious property that K-type babies are almost always cute and cuddly, evoking the deep sentiments of bonding in their parents. K-type animals are extremely protective of their children; active parenting is extended over a lengthy childhood and adolescence that may consume as much as one-third of the life-span.

In these species, of which *homo sapiens* is the extreme example, the young are utterly helpless at birth and for a long period after. Human babies are born incomplete, unready to face the world. Their lack of biological readiness is immediately revealing: soft bones, skulls that lack closure, little hair, and no teeth at all. In terms of physical development, babies cannot even stand. They could not so much as crawl away from predators, whom they would not recognize as a threat anyway. Since they cannot feed themselves, newborns abandoned by parents will die within a matter of days. Through infancy and into early childhood, human young have only rudimentary language and few social skills. Though we learn with extraordinary speed, the breadth, depth, and complexity of what we need to learn is even more daunting. Social awareness and the importance of sharing emerge around two to three years of age. Moral/ethical perceptions do not usually appear until seven to eight. Reproductive ability and the onset of courtship rituals are delayed until children are 13-15 years old.

Since biological, physical, social, sexual, emotional, and psychological development in human beings each have their own natural schedules of onset and unfoldment, some phases of which do not manifest until decades after birth, then why should we assume that astrological cycles linked with individual natal charts would be any different? Interpreting the transits of a child in the same way one would an adult is a terrible mistake, because children do not process reality in the same way as adults. So to consider astrological cycles fully developed, active, and functional from birth is to presume that astrology *does not* parallel real human life, yet the very reason the astrological system is so compelling is that it *does*, indeed, reflect the way we grow.

Thus, my presumption is that astrological cycles do not arbitrarily begin at birth, but activate only when the moving body conjuncts the fixed symbol in the natal chart. Before that, should any major transits occur in the “un-activated” cycle—squares or oppositions, or, for that matter, trines, sextiles, or any other aspect that we would call a transit—their impact and meaning in the life of the individual in question are fundamentally different from transits that occur *following* the natural activation of the cycle. Sometimes these pre-activation transit effects are muted. Other times, their impact is as strong as it would be if the cycle were active, but that effect cannot be easily integrated into the individual’s overall sense of meaning and growth. In other words, such potent transits in unactivated cycles are disruptions rather than developments.

Certain cycles involving Neptune or Pluto as the moving body will *never* reach conjunction in a given individual’s life, and yet that person will certainly experience major transits in the unactivated cycles. Should we presume that these transits, which are given substantial weight in textbooks because of their relative infrequency and supposed “spiritual importance,” are actually less important than we have been taught? Should we assume instead that such transits are mere aberrations in the scheme of things? Can it be that astrology sometimes mistakes chaos for meaning? My answer to all these questions, based on my experience as well as on theory, is *yes*, on all counts.

In the quest to decode and understand the human genome, researchers are quickly realizing the importance of separating the relative tiny amount of critically relevant information from the huge quantities of irrelevant data. We are discovering that our genes are littered with what might be called vestigial garbage. The same is almost certainly true of astrology; as I wrote in the introduction, one of our main tasks as astrologers is to separate the wheat from the chaff, and there is much more of the latter than the former.

one visible birth; three invisible births

The technique of *The Four Birth moments* presumes that human beings are incomplete at birth, and that most astrological cycles are not activated until some time after birth. Certain astrological transit cycles do, indeed, begin at first breath, namely, any cycles involving a moving body linked in relation to its own position as a fixed symbol in the natal chart. Such cycles include Sun/Sun, Moon/Moon, Mars/Mars, etc.

[Note: *In this essay, all designations of transit cycles have a uniform code. The first planet listed is the moving body in the heavens, followed by a slash; the second is a fixed*

reference point in the natal chart—planet, angle, node, etc. Thus, the “Sun/Sun cycle” represents a cyclic period of one year that starts when the Sun moving through the heavens passes over the exact position in the zodiac that was occupied by the Sun at a particular individual’s birth and ends (or begins again) when the moving Sun returns to that same point.]

Culture routinely affords the Sun/Sun cycle a basic importance, since that is how we designate age: At the completion of your first Sun/Sun cycle, you are one year old. Happy birthday to you. One need not be an astrologer to keep track of that particular cycle (do you know how old you are in years? Of course you do.) But because I am an astrologer looking for the missing kernels of wheat buried amidst the chaff, I look to another cycle rather than Sun/Sun, one that culture is not so keenly aware of. In fact, since I’m aiming for simplicity in this astrological technique in the hope of isolating a readily apparent and critically relevant bookmark, I am concerned here with only a single member of these birth-activated chronological cycles—the *Saturn/Saturn* cycle.

In this technique, the Saturn/Saturn cycle symbolically represents actual, physical birth, as well as the many implications for what it means to have a body that is growing older through time. So physical birth and the Saturn/Saturn cycle that begins with it is the first of the four birth moments. Obviously, that first birth is crucial, for the simple reason that if you’re not physically born, then you don’t have a body, much less a natal chart. At that point of first breath, we are given certain tools and certain responsibilities. The tool is the body itself—this human life. The responsibility includes learning how that body works, what it needs, and how to maintain it, not only through time, but in a world populated by other bodies. For instance, the basic rules of social diplomacy we learn in early childhood or are taught in kindergarten—saying “please” or “thank you,” standing when a new person enters the room, shaking hands when we are introduced—are part of the Saturn/Saturn cycle.

But physical birth, for all its momentous meanings, is not the only initiating moment in human development. We have much more to learn than mere bodily survival and basic social skills. In this technique, we will isolate three other birth moments that activate later, after physical birth, each of which is linked with a Saturn cycle—*Saturn/Sun*, *Saturn/Moon*, and *Saturn/Lower Heaven*. These activate sometime between birth and the Saturn return at age 29.

These other three cycles operate much like timed-release capsules, each carrying specific tools and responsibilities that will be necessary to the life ahead, but which can be fully released into our consciousness *only* at the time when Saturn crosses over the relevant fixed points in the natal chart to activate the cycles. Before their activation, these cycles are still part of us, and they may operate in nascent fashion, but, until they activate, we are still gestating, still “in the womb,” so to speak, with regard to the meanings of the cycles for the life ahead.

Technically, any or all of these three cycles could begin at physical birth, but that is so rare as to be functionally nonexistent. For that to happen, the Sun, Moon, or Lower Heaven would have to be in exact conjunction with Saturn at birth—occupying the same degree and minute of zodiacal longitude. Statistically, the odds for even one of those perfect alignments are 1 in 21,600. So while it may happen on exceedingly rare occasions that one of the other three cycles does

begin at physical birth, pragmatically we can ignore the possibility and use as our rule of thumb the idea that the other three critical Saturn cycles all activate sometime *after* birth and *before* age 30.

So far so good. Where things get interesting, and where the information from the technique begins emerging, is with the *timing* and the *order* of the three later birth moments. That, however, represents the dessert of this meal, and we must wait for those sweets until we've eaten our meat, grains, and vegetables, by examining each of the four birth moments and their respective tools and responsibilities.

The Four Birth Moments

saturn/saturn

This cycle always starts at physical birth, at the moment of first breath, when we become biologically responsible for the continuing existence and maintenance of our bodies. (*Before first breath, we are not responsible for our bodily existence; our mothers feed us oxygen, food, and stimulation.*)

The cycle is linked with the construction of a survival-oriented psychological outlook on life. The most basic defenses through which we attempt to hold external reality at bay are defined here, as well as the characteristic problems that will later be associated with real life, especially as they affect the physical body and our interaction with others. This initial birth is linked with the basic mountains we must climb, the obstacles we must overcome, and the maturity we must gain to be at peace with life itself and all the characteristic joys and sufferings that come with each of its major periods—childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, productive adulthood, mature adulthood, reflective old age, and death.

This cycle is *always* the first of the four birth moments. Its unfoldment over time reveals the natural schedule of our individual challenges to gradually understand the earthly laws (physical), social rules (cultural) and special karmic limitations (metaphysical) that we are likely to face in the care and maintenance of our physical selves and our active participation in the social world of people and events around us.

Since the cycle begins at physical birth, the critical phase changes of the cycle's seven-year quarters are chronological, which is to say, the changes occur at predictable ages that are the same for everyone: 0, 7, 14-15, 22, 29, 36, 44-45, 52, 59, etc.

The challenge of the Saturn/Saturn cycle is to make the necessary ego-illusion of security cross-fertilize with reality at the level of earthly biology. A mantra for the Saturn/Saturn cycle might be:

*I am safe in my body, I am safe in time,
and I am living in the right world.
I can take care of myself.*

saturn/sun

The birth of this cycle—when Saturn first moves over the position in the zodiac occupied by the Sun at birth—indicates the time we initially receive the tools and the power to shape our personality and circumstances into concrete forms that will become the vehicle for expression of our most fundamental life-purpose. (*If, for any reason, the choices that surround this shaping cannot be made consciously, they will be made unconsciously, and, for the most part, usually are.*)

This birth moment is when we truly arrive. Before this cycle begins, we may have a vague or intangible sense what I call life-purpose—our central interests and drives—but we have little, if any, idea of how to translate that awareness into actual forms. Once the cycle is underway, we begin to piece together in real life a sense of what is fundamentally important to us as individuals. We develop a magnetic center of interests and activities, around which everything else in our lives—all the other secondary events, activities, and experiences—gradually organize themselves into a unified whole. This is the principle of *coherence*, the challenge of making sense of our lives by relating everything to a central theme or pattern.

To the extent that we succeed in finding appropriate or workable forms for this new understanding of our magnetic center, everything else in our lives becomes more meaningful. This is not to suggest that all our experiences will be positive and happy—life always contains unpleasantness and difficulty, even during the best of times. When, however, we are on track with our central purpose, then whatever happens—good or bad, happy or sad, pleasant or not—makes sense to us. The basic pattern of meaning holds together. We can figure out or intuit why a certain event occurred and what relevance it holds for our life. We can judge plans and results accurately.

If we lose our way in the Saturn/Sun cycle by failing to recognize or find appropriate forms for expression of our magnetic center, then meaning begins to slowly drain out of everything else we experience. Life devolves into randomness, or worse, into incoherence, or, worst of all, into chaos and despair.

Coherent, overall meaning lives or dies with the Saturn/Sun cycle. Our soul prospers or fails here. That's why this is the most critical and important cycle in all of astrology.

Prior to this birth, we cannot correctly be held accountable for our behavior—none of the results of our actions or inactions go “on our record,” so to speak. We are still setting up the game board and have not yet rolled the dice. We may be dealt a hand at the card table, but we are betting with Monopoly money, so what we win or lose does not truly count. Following this birth, however, we assume spiritual responsibility for all our choices and compulsions.

Certainly all actions may have repercussions, no matter when they occur. But the Saturn/Sun cycle kicks off the activation of karma as a relevant psychological factor in our lives. Before this cycle activates, we are light (meaning weightless), so we are blown by the winds of chance and fate. After this birth moment, we coalesce into ourselves and generate a gravitational field. The laws of action and reaction then apply, so that the repercussions of our intentions and behaviors acquire density and meaning.

Integrity, pride (as either self-respect or vanity), and the effectiveness of purposeful self-expression are linked with this cycle, as are our most fundamental sense of self-importance and our sacred connection to divinity, the oneness of all things.

The challenge of the Saturn/Sun cycle is to make the necessary ego-illusion of security cross-fertilize with reality at the level of cosmos. A mantra for the Saturn/Sun cycle might be:

*I am safe in a meaningful universe;
God is present, and my world makes sense.
I can do what I must to fulfill my purpose.*

saturn/moon

The birth of this cycle is the point in life where we take on the responsibility to begin taking care of ourselves and/or others. This involves sensing or defining our emotional needs. Desires are what we want; needs, however, are what we cannot live without. Needs are the things we lack and cannot produce from inside ourselves, but must instead learn to forage from the environment or manufacture in order to survive. Frustrated desires are certainly an annoyance, but they concentrate our ambitions and re-focus our drives. Frustrated or unfulfilled needs, however, are crippling; our ability to function effectively is quickly impaired by the mounting emotional toxicity that results. We can postpone fulfillment of our desires indefinitely and still be marching toward them; we cannot postpone for very long the fulfillment of our basic needs without coming undone.

Imagine being hungry but not able to find food, or cold and wet with no shelter, or lonely with no sharing. At first, these are aggravations, but, over time, such unmet needs become obsessions, warping and twisting us into pretzels. We become less than human, and more like wild animals trapped or caged.

Managing our emotional needs is a task that operates in moment-to-moment and day-to-day time frames, as our moods evolve, shift, and swing from one situation to another. The long-term benefit of good emotional needs management is the feeling of comfort, safety, and regularity. The long-term cost of unfulfilled needs is that we shut down to life's emotional richness by chronic blowouts of oversensitivity or the arid shriveling of insensitivity. We feel that the candle is always being burned at both ends, as if there were no coolant in the radiator, so that our engine habitually overheats. We are the dragon eating its own tail.

This cycle also involves learning the most natural and beneficial ways to respond to others in our environment, as well as the ways to protect ourselves from them when necessary. We need to have good, automatic (rather than intentional) mechanisms for our attitudes in response. This is the essence of having good boundaries, knowing when and how to open to others, and how deeply we should open, as well as knowing when and how to close up, and how tightly we should shut ourselves away.

The Saturn/Moon cycle is very much about mothering. Nourishment and nurturing are associated with this birth, both for others and for the self, as are issues surrounding family dependency. Once the cycle is active, we cease to take in nourishment from our mothers and often invert the relationship, becoming their nurturers.

The challenge is to make the ego-illusion of security cross-fertilize with reality at the levels of personal well-being and maternal protection. A mantra for the Saturn/Moon cycle might be:

*My children—whether my actual offspring,
or the metaphorical “inner child”
inside myself and others—
are nourished, protected, and safe.*

saturn/angles

The angles of an astrological chart are formed by the cross of the horizontal and vertical axes—the horizon and the meridian. The four angles themselves are the Ascendant (east), the Descendant (west), the Midheaven (straight up) and the Lower Heaven (straight down). In charts, those last two are usually denoted by abbreviations of their Latin names: the Midheaven is often called the MC (for *medium coeli*), and the Lower Heaven is the IC (for *imum coeli*).

Since we are concerned here with "seeding," the angle that Saturn must cross over to active this cycle is the Lower Heaven, which is what reaches us by coming up through the earth itself. When Saturn reaches the nadir of the chart and crosses the IC, the cycle begins.

With the onset of the Saturn/Angles cycle, we gain the power and responsibility to begin answering the questions, “*Who in the world do I want to be when I grow up?*” and “*What do I want my life to stand for or symbolize to others?*” Social ambition, real-life career, and the Buddhist notion of dharma or right livelihood are linked with this birth, as are issues surrounding leadership and executive power. We begin the struggle to reconcile collective status versus personal stature.

Before this birth, we may know who we are, why we are here, and how to take care of ourselves, but we do not have an arena in the world in which to express those inner understandings. In the Circus of Life, we flit from one ride to another, never being certain which ride we enjoy and wish to master. We are adrift in the marketplace, never having a niche that suits us, and not knowing how we want to identify ourselves in the society at large. We may want to succeed in the world, but we have no defined direction for our ambition. After this birth, we choose a path that gives us a social identity.

This cycle births the evolving sense of mission. The essence of a spiritual mission is some truth that God wants everyone to remember, for which we happen to be the chosen channel of expression. Mission here is distinguished from the life-purpose of the Saturn/Sun cycle in that mission is fated, while purpose is subject to the vagaries of free will. One way or another, our missions will necessarily succeed, whether or not our purposes are fulfilled. If we succeed at fleshing out our purposes, we will become a positive model for others; to the extent that we fail at our mission, we become negative examples for others of the very same

truths. Purpose is our work, so we are allowed to succeed or fail. Mission is God's work, so it will come through us one way or another.

The Saturn/Lower Heaven cycle presents the challenge of making the necessary ego-illusion of security cross-fertilize with reality at the group level of culture and the human collective. A mantra for the Saturn/Lower Heaven cycle might be:

*I am necessary to my comrades
and productive for my society;
my contributions are recognized
and rewarded.*

simplifying the meanings

To recap, here are abbreviated meanings for each of the four crucial cycles of personal development:

Saturn/Saturn	<i>animal existence and life in a body physical maturation and natural aging one's relationship to the earth</i>
Saturn/Sun	<i>core life-purpose and magnetic center central interests and coherent meaning one's relationship to the universe</i>
Saturn/Moon	<i>daily maintenance of personal needs self-protection and emotional nurturing one's relationship to individual others</i>
Saturn/angles	<i>ambition, career, and social status identity and recognition in the marketplace one's relationship to community</i>

using the technique

Figure 1a (below) is a graphic of my natal chart with only the relevant four fixed points, over which passage by Saturn activated the four birth moments:

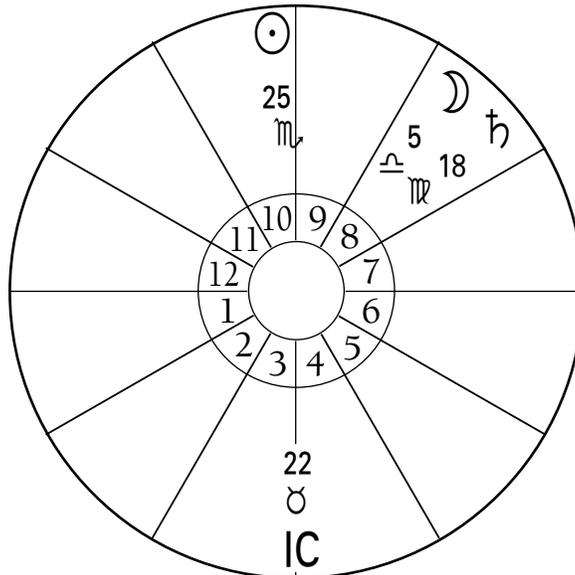


Figure 1a

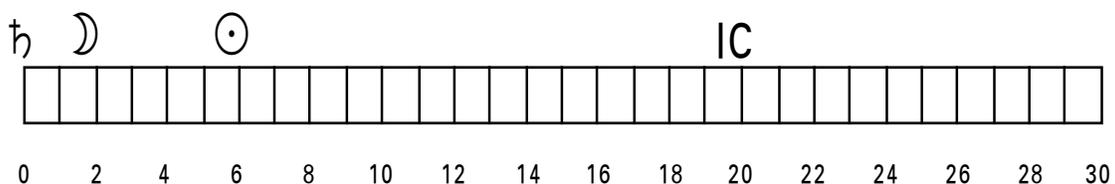
The first birth moment is physical birth and always corresponds to the position of Saturn. In my chart, Saturn is in the 8th house at 18 Virgo. So, as always and for everyone, the first of the four cycles active in my chart was Saturn/Saturn. As Saturn moves forward in the heavens through the zodiac, it also moves forward through the houses, meaning by counterclockwise around the chart.

My second birth moment occurred when Saturn passed over the Moon, also in the 8th house, at 5 Libra, which activated the Saturn/Moon cycle two months short of my second birthday. That point in time comes from an ephemeris, but we need not consult a reference. Just looking at the chart will give us a sufficient approximation. Saturn takes about two and a half years to move through each sign or an average-sized house. Without even calculating degrees or signs, we can see that Saturn will conjunct the Moon very early on, somewhere around the age of two.

The third birth moment occurred two days after my sixth birthday, when Saturn conjoined the Sun to activate the Saturn/Sun cycle. Again, we need not be so precise about the timing. Visually placing this event around the age of five or six would be sufficient.

The last of the four birth moments occurred much later. Saturn had already opposed itself and the Moon before reaching the Lower Heaven or IC. My Saturn/Angles cycle began in July of 1970, when I was 19 years old.

The graphic *Figure 1b* is the different view we get when this sequence of events is plotted on a linear timeline:



Two ways of looking at or thinking about this timeline give important information about the person in question. First, although the initial birth moment always activates the Saturn/Saturn cycle, what can we learn from the *sequential order* of the three later birth moments? Second, what does the *spacing in time* of the three subsequent birth moments tell us?

sequential order

In my life, the three invisible birth moments that followed my literal birth were Moon, then Sun, and finally IC. This is one of six possible combinations of the initiating order of the critical cycles. In columns, the six are:

A	B	C	D	E	F
1-Saturn	1-Saturn	1-Saturn	1-Saturn	1-Saturn	1-Saturn
2-Sun	2-Sun	2-Moon	2-Moon	2-IC	2-IC
3-Moon	3-IC	3-Sun	3-IC	3-Sun	3-Moon
4-IC	4-Moon	4-IC	4-Sun	4-Moon	4-Sun

If we condense each of the four cycles down to their simplest concerns, we can restate the six combinations of sequential order in a way that may be more immediately revealing:

<p>A</p> <p>1-survival 2-life purpose 3-care & feeding 4-work & world</p>	<p>B</p> <p>1-survival 2-life purpose 3-work & world 4-care & feeding</p>	<p>C</p> <p>1-survival 2-care & feeding 3-life purpose 4-work & world</p>
<p>D</p> <p>1-survival 2-care & feeding 3-work & world 4-life purpose</p>	<p>E</p> <p>1-survival 2-work & world 3-life purpose 4-care & feeding</p>	<p>F</p> <p>1-survival 2-work & world 3-care & feeding 4-life purpose</p>

The most important considerations in the order of the birth moments are: Which comes first (after Saturn, and beyond literal survival)? And which comes last?

The invisible birth moment that activates first after physical birth tends to dominate as a psychological issue in the life-to-come, since it is the first strata laid down on top of the physical foundations of basic neural patterning, and also because it brings the earliest onset of tools and responsibilities. Like a pair of sunglasses, the "tint" of this birth's lenses tends to "color" everything the individual will see after putting them on, subtly affecting his or her experience and interpretation of the two remaining invisible births that will follow.

- If the Saturn/Sun cycle is the first to activate after physical birth, then the invisible births yet-to-come may be subtly colored and shaped by the person's driving interest in central life-purpose. In overall interpretations for such an individual, give added weight to the natal position of the Sun by sign, houses occupied and ruled, and interplanetary aspects. In general, the houses concerned with spirit (1st, 5th, and 9th) may be more emphasized in the development of this life.
- If the Saturn/Moon cycle is the first invisible birth, then the two remaining invisible births may be subtly colored and shaped by the powerful issue of emotional needs and the nurturing of the self and/or others. In overall interpretations for such an individual, give added weight to the natal position of the Moon by sign, houses occupied and ruled, and interplanetary aspects. In general, the houses concerned with emotion (4th, 8th, and 12th) may be more emphasized in the development of this life.
- If the Saturn/IC cycle is activated first after physical birth, then the subsequent births may be subtly colored and shaped by the pragmatic concerns of the marketplace and circumstances surrounding social stature and the person's niche in the world. In overall interpretations for such an individual, give added weight to the natal position of the planet that rules the sign on the lower heaven (the 4th house cusp). In general, the houses concerned with practicality (2nd, 6th, and 10th) may be more emphasized in the development of this life.

The birth that is last in the sequence of four, while not being as deeply embedded in the strata of neurological patterning, has its own unique importance in the overall scheme. Precisely because it is the least deeply embedded, it therefore remains closest to the surface of neurological experience, where awareness so often lives. So, while our understanding of this last birth moment may be more colored by the three births that preceded it, this cycle tends to be the least compulsive of all four. In fact, it often becomes the "squeaky wheel" that gets so much of the "grease" of our conscious attention.

The cycle associated with the second invisible birth—middle of the three that follow physical birth—should be "middling," that is to say, less deeply compulsive than the first invisible birth's cycle, but not so clearly remembered as the last.

In my chart, the sequence of Moon, Sun, then Lower Heaven reveals a developmental schedule where, after the fundamental drive to survive, I was initially imprinted on the issue of emotional needs, dependencies, and parental nurturance, especially as they relate to intimate sharing and union (8th house Moon). These imprints colored the view of my central life-purpose, which was the next invisible birth to occur. Given a 10th house Scorpio Sun, my core purpose revolves around an intense drive to experience life-as-profession, to pursue excellence and responsibility, and to try to make a difference in the

collective. I knew early on that I wanted to be a psychologist, and all my subsequent education revolved around that goal until my last birth moment kicked off the niche-in-the-world cycle, which made it plain to me that astrology was a better vehicle (for me) to express the career for which I had been preparing.

*Which of the six combinations was **your** schedule? What does the order reveal to you?*

As in all such techniques, whatever information we derive from the sequential order of the three invisible birth moments should be used with care and restraint. In much the same way that family systems typings of birth order for siblings can be easily overblown into stereotypes (first child: *compulsively responsible, often grows up too soon*; middle child: *overlooked, often feels inferior*; last child: *“little prince or princess,” often spoiled*), so it is equally easy to apply the information here in brush strokes that are too broad. The basic interpretive assumptions I’ve laid out here are archetypes, and as such are meant to be food for thought, to stimulate you to think about your own chart and those of your friends, beloveds, and clients, to see for yourself what patterns and insights you come up with.

Please remember that each individual is unique, and that a thousand variables can and should modify our formulaic expectations.

spacing in time

Although the *order* of the invisible birth moments carries its own insights and can even be used on its own, as I have attempted to demonstrate, order is clearly secondary in importance to the *spacing in time* of those three later births. Spacing is the part of the technique from which most of the real and relevant information emerges.

For purposes of simplicity in explaining the technique, let’s divide the 29+ years of one Saturnian period into three equal phases: birth through 9 years of age, 10 through 19 years old, and 20 through 29.

<i>phase</i>	1	2	3
<i>ages</i>	0–9	10–19	20–29
<i>decade</i>	childhood	teenage	pre-adulthood
<i>designation</i>	precocious	adolescent	trailing

Our understanding of the three birth moments that follow incarnation and the corresponding Saturn cycles that activate in those invisible births will tend to reflect the issues and concerns of the decade in which they initiate:

- Birth moments occurring in the first decade of life, and especially those that activate before the first-quarter Saturn/Saturn square around age seven, are *Precocious*. They tend to be linked with the imprints of infancy and childhood, and are thus much associated with our feeling for the expectations held for us by parents and other adult authority figures—real or imagined. As the cycles unfold, they are likely to remain powerful,

both as unresolved issues and as deep sources of motivation through much of later life.

- Birth moments linked with the second decade, and most especially those that activate at or near the Saturn/Saturn opposition in at 14–15 years old, are *adolescent*: strongly peer-oriented and relationship-focused; the basic nature of any Saturn cycle activated at that point will be subtly modified in understanding to include the overcoming of awkwardness in intimacy and social participation, as well as the paradox of breaking out versus *Belonging*.
- Birth moments occurring in the third decade, and especially those activations following the last quarter Saturn/Saturn square at age 21-22, are *Trailers* or *Late-Bloomers*. While their onset can be the logical culmination of long preparation, more frequently their beginnings are surprises that dramatically alter the previously established rhythms of life-meaning and life-direction. The challenge here is to reconcile conflicts between who we learned to believe we were, based on our perception of external expectations, and the newer messages of who we are that emerge from deep and often unknown wellsprings inside us.

credits and debits

There is no such thing as an easy birth (ask any mother). No matter which decade a birth moment occurs in, it *will* be challenging for the individual undergoing the cycle activation. This is true of all Saturn cycles, but especially those four that are the focus of this essay. Considered from the standpoint of ordinary cultural expectations, however, the time that would normally be considered most suited to one of the three invisible birth moments is the middle decade of adolescence. Succinctly stated, we *expect* adolescents to be in turmoil and to go through wrenching changes. That seems "normal" to most people. We do *not*, however, imagine infancy or childhood to be an appropriate time for the weight of the world to fall on one's shoulders. At the other end of the scale, we expect that 20-something's should already be well-formed and past all such beginnings.

And yet, think about how often we hear someone say, "My six-year-old daughter looked up at me with the eyes of a very old woman," or "My four-year-old son just said the most amazingly wise thing to me." Conversely, who has not heard a parent bemoan, "My son is 23 and he doesn't know what he wants to do with his life," or "My 26-year-old daughter still acts like a child."

Such statements may defy cultural expectations for childhood and near-adulthood, but they are much more common than some people might assume, and astrology provides a reason for that. Everyone alive has already been through at least the first of the four birth-moments (in physical birth, the *Saturn-Saturn* cycle), but a six-year-old may already have been through *two or more* additional (and invisible) births, while the 23-year-old might not yet have had *any* of the three following birth-moments. So, depending on the spacing of the

birth moments in their natal charts, that young child may already be "older" than the near-adult.

So, in our technique, the first and third decades will receive most of our attention, in birth moments defined as either Precocious or Trailing. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such extreme timing in kicking off these major life-cycles?

A *disadvantage* of birth moments that occur precociously, during childhood, is that the onset of Saturn cycles too early in life often crushes the safe womb of childhood. We may be burdened by an overwhelming sense of responsibility before our young minds can correctly understand and our not-fully-formed personalities handle such responsibilities. Individual responses here are as varied as the unique circumstances in which we find ourselves—from the “good” child who always conforms to adult expectations, through the determined over-achiever, all the way to the youngster who becomes hardened, defiant, and cynical. The common result, across the board, is a perverse twisting of personality likely to leave a legacy of at least some psychological damage.

If more than one invisible birth moment occurs in childhood, we can safely predict a person who will be very strong but privately troubled, and perhaps one who experienced a reversal of parent-child roles, having felt forced in some way to become the parent to others, perhaps even his or her own parents.

One *advantage* of starting too early is that we get to *start over* earlier. Older is better with Saturn, and those with birth moments in childhood are older *in experience* (and sometimes in maturity also) than many of their peers. Also, while age alone is no guarantee of either success or wisdom, the second time through a Saturn cycle is often richer in understanding than the first. Even if the precocious initial cycle “fails” (as it almost always does), we may be able to turn that hard-earned experience to our advantage as the second cycle begins in our 30s, to flower in midlife at 45–55.

Now consider the late-bloomer. A *disadvantage* of starting late, in our 20s, is that we may wander through our first two decades with little more than a dimly-felt sense of identity or purpose. Parents often have grave concerns for the late-bloomers among their children, for such individuals enjoy extended childhoods and may have little drive or direction. They are more likely to get into trouble, for they lack the radar of inner guidance. Of greater concern, however, is the possibility that late-bloomers’ personalities may be habituated in ways ill-suited to their true purposes, which then leads to conflict when their natural selves must break through the artificial shells to be born. Such wholesale changes can be difficult and disruptive.

An *advantage* of starting late lies in having a long time to get a feeling for how the game of life is played without taking on too much responsibility, rather like being allowed to practice blackjack in the casino without risking any of your own hard-earned money. No, you can't win anything when you're playing with Monopoly money, but you can't really lose anything either, and you get to learn the game without risk. Late-bloomers are often protected (almost as if sheltered by some unseen divine hand), and while they sometimes seem like ugly ducklings, they may emerge as swans.

So being precocious is about gaining the benefits of an early headstart, while the downside is a possible crippling of the joys of childhood. Late-blooming is about the benefits of long gestation contrasted by the downside of possible confusion or shock when real adult responsibility finally comes calling.

In writing examples of these different permutations of benefits and liabilities that go with each decade, I am able to offer only a modest sampling of the full range of possibilities. After three decades in professional practice, I saw all these and many, many more in the actual lives of my clients. The bones of this technique may have come from theory, but that skeleton was fleshed out by observation of real human beings living real lives. The variations are endless, and often deeply paradoxical. Advantage and disadvantage go hand in hand in lives often marked by simultaneous and contradictory success and failure.

conscious or not?

An important point that cannot be re-emphasized often enough is that the psychological implications discussed in the sections above operate beneath the level of normal awareness. This is true for nearly everyone, regardless of age, intelligence, or maturity. The process of these cycles (and indeed of all cycles in astrology) is essentially unconscious.

Saturn cycles are not part of the lexicon of ordinary consciousness for human beings. They are not taught in school, nor are they part of the cultural heritage of myth and storytelling that have been handed down in human history from one generation to the next. They do not come with clear signals announcing their onset. While it is certainly true that the various activations within Saturn cycles are accompanied by a wide range of psychological, emotional, and even physical experiences, some of which are quite striking and extreme in their impact, these occur within the masking pressures of the ordinary flow of events and reactions that mark everyday human life. Their operation and their meanings remain "hidden in plain sight."

This is part of the profound irony of esoteric knowledge, that most of the great and seemingly mysterious truths of life are not actually buried or secret, but are instead merely obscured by the background noise of normal living. Saturn transits are going on right here and right now, but we are not equipped to identify them, much less to consciously direct and manage their challenges over the nine to ten months of their active periods.

Even those of us who have studied astrology and are thus aware of the cycles are unlikely to be exceptional in this regard. While we can chart the beginnings and ends of the activation periods in transit, and while we may understand intellectually (and sometimes even emotionally) the meanings of these cycles in our lives, their implications go so far beyond the pale of our self-awareness and our comprehension of the surrounding world as to leave us adrift in stormy seas, mere mortals at the mercy of oceanic power.

The most we can do is batten down the hatches, set and reset our sails as best we can, either flowing with or briefly tacking against the winds and waves upon which our tiny boats of consciousness ride, hoping that we will reach port safely and survive to set sail again another day.

That sailing metaphor is stretched and inaccurate, however, because Saturn cycles are not simply ten-month storms. They are much more subtle than that, alternating between long troughs of seeming calm and less frequent peaks of turbulence. Times of no wind and no waves, when our sails are slack and our boats dead in the water, when we despair of ever moving again and fear that we must surely perish in the eerie stillness of the vast ocean, are every bit as much a part of the challenge of these cycles as are the storms that occasionally rise out of compounding circumstances. Saturn cycles are as much about outlasting boredom and persevering through lack of opportunity as they are about coping with crises. They are about survival and achingly slow change, about learning to do what is necessary for the long term—even when those efforts seemingly fail to produce any immediate or satisfactory results. Saturn cycles are about knowing intuitively where to keep persevering even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. And, just as importantly, they are about knowing when to cease trying and what to stop doing.

No one I have ever met (and this very much includes me) deals easily with these challenges. No one I know is sufficiently awake, aware, and mature to remain calm and confident in the face of such apparent denial, impossibility, or sheer misfortune. No one comes through all their various Saturn transits unscathed or smelling like a rose. No, success with Saturn is hard-won and takes a heavy toll in humbling and bringing us to our knees. Oh, we survive (mostly), but often we do so by simply muddling through any way we can, which is usually considerably less pleasant than we would like to imagine.

So if some young, inexperienced astrologer tells you that you can "work with the energies" and "turn the transit to your advantage," or suggests that "forewarned is forearmed" by having simple knowledge of the cycles, do not be fooled. I say again, birth is hard, and the continuing phase changes that follow every seven years are every bit as difficult.

Happily, we can slowly learn to cope with the challenges of our Saturn cycles even when our conscious minds fail us, for these kinds of life lessons are less about awareness than they are about our total experience and the gradual reprogramming of our unconscious habits and expectations. Try typing sometime by saying each letter in your mind before you type it. What happens? Typing speed goes way down and the number of mistakes increases dramatically. This is an example of a learned behavior that is handled perfectly well beneath the threshold of our consciousness, where the application of awareness serves only to interfere, reduce efficiency, and screw up the process. The same is often true of Saturn cycles and birth moments. Awareness is critical in the early learning process, but then it must get out of the way and let deeper programming take over.

regular versus average spacing

Since we have three cycle activations, each linked with invisible birth moments that follow physical birth, and three equal periods of time in which those births might occur, an "average" chart would have one cycle activation in each of the periods. Spaced evenly and placed on a linear timeline, the result would be *Figure 2a*:

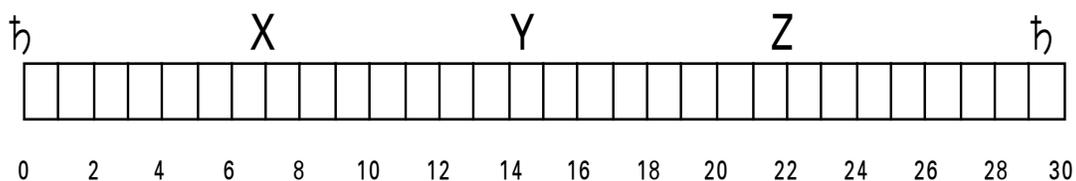


Figure 2a

Saturn is, as always, the first cycle activated, at physical birth. The other three invisible birth moments—here called X, Y, and Z, because with spacing we do not care which particular cycle is associated with each birth—occur at slightly more than seven-year intervals to make an average spacing. On deeper observation we would see that this spacing, “even” though it may be, is not at all average, since it would mean that Saturn, the Sun, Moon, and Lower Heaven form a perfect grand cross in the natal chart. This would imply that all four cycles always shift quarters together. Such a chart might look like *Figure 2b*:

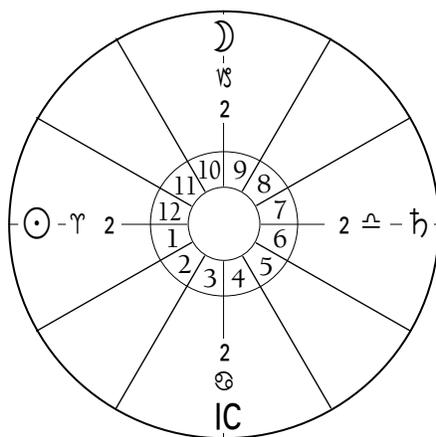


Figure 2b

While such a chart is regular in the spacing of its four birth moments, it is certainly not typical, and it’s far from normal. Despite this complication, readers can no doubt see the larger picture of what I’m trying to establish here. As a working rule of thumb, and, more importantly, as an “average” perspective against which to compare real charts, we would expect one of the three significant Saturn cycles that activate after birth to occur in each of the three decades: one activation early, during childhood; one middle, in adolescence; and one late, in pre-adulthood.

Using the Technique

Besides the obvious application of looking at one’s own chart and the charts of friends or beloveds, *The Four Birth Moments* lends itself especially well to certain situations that routinely arise in sessions with clients:

- If your client has children, a discussion of the order and timing of the birth moments and the Saturn cycles that follow can be immensely valuable in promoting more sensitive and effective parenting, to facilitate better tracking with a particular child's unique schedule of development.
- Younger clients—those under 30, but especially anyone younger than 20—are sometimes difficult to work with. Since they haven't been around very long, astrology's more sophisticated insights are often beyond the vocabulary of their limited experience. This is specifically important for younger clients who still have one or more birth moments yet to come. A discussion of the Four Birth Moments is always relevant, and, beyond that, provides a ready-made vehicle for establishing a flow in the conversation.
- Even clients in their 50s may still be going through the initial cycles following a late-blooming birth moment. Clients in their forties with adolescent birth moments may have reached a point where they are starting those cycles over, as will clients in their thirties who had childhood birth moments. These two groups are "rebirthing" themselves, making discussion of the original birth moments more timely.
- Discussion of the technique is *always* relevant whenever any client is going through one of the 16 possible major Saturn transits (conjunction, square, or opposition) linked with these four cycles. On average, one such transit occurs about every three years.

conclusion

As with any astrological technique, *The Four Birth Moments* is best applied as part of a comprehensive view of the overall chart—planets in signs and houses, aspects and aspect configurations, planetary patterns, element-mode analyses, other transits or progressions, etc.—all these alternate sources of astrological insight can and should be factored in before leaping to conclusions about a given person. Used in a vacuum, of course, this technique alone is vulnerable to the inherent flaw of all such isolated indicators. We want broad comprehension of life, not formulaic stereotypes that misinform rather than illuminate.

So apply *The Four Birth Moments* with care and consideration. But by all means, try it out. This astrological technique may enrich your understanding and appreciation of the different schemes and individually-tailored schedules that define personal human development—your own as well as others'.

