

Certainty and Uncertainty in Zodiacal Archetypes

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*Version 1.1 (posted on 21 January 2020)
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Certainty and uncertainty are intertwined in human consciousness. As orientations and frameworks, each exists within human experience as potential and probably also as actuality. The twelve archetypes of the astrological zodiac each come with characteristic slants on both states.

My use of certainty and uncertainty as categories is not quite the same as "strengths and weaknesses." They correspond more to what might be thought of as confidence versus anxiety.

I'll start with certainty. What is each sign archetype certain about?

Aries is certain that action is better than non-action, that doing something in behavior is better than doing nothing.

Taurus is certain that caution is better than bravado, that waiting to see is better than jumping to conclusions, and that values should be absolute and anchored in the physical.

Gemini is certain that all experience is two-sided, and that flipping between the two sides is not only natural but correct.

Cancer is certain that personal emotions matter, that belonging is critical, and that family is the most fundamental and meaningful level of social organization.

Leo is certain that the self and the ego are sacred, and that we create ourselves in performance.

Virgo is certain that self-perfection is possible and worth working toward, and that helping others move toward their perfection is natural and correct.

Libra is certain that balance and harmony must be maintained.

Scorpio is certain that what is beneath the surface is more real and true than whatever is on the surface.

Sagittarius is certain that optimism is better than pessimism, that everything can be reframed in enlarged perspectives to reveal the positive meanings, and that being a team player is the best way to be.

Capricorn is certain that hierarchical structures of authority are inevitable and necessary, and that the ambition to rise to the top is a correct responsibility.

Aquarius is certain that the absolute truth can best be revealed through abstract principles, and that individuality is preferable to conformity.

Pisces is certain that faith in a larger reality is the ultimate good, and that this faith takes the natural shape of feeling and holistic intuition.

OK. Let's look at the other side of the coin — uncertainty — which includes some of the anxieties to which each sign is vulnerable:

Aries is uncertain of its existence as a personal self and must recreate that self over and over through perpetual activity.

Taurus is anxious that life may not be durable and lasting, so it works overtime to maintain stability and achieve permanence.

Gemini is uncertain that anything has meaning without its opposite and anxious about boredom.

Cancer is anxious about security and safety and does everything possible to protect those.

Leo is uncertain about social acceptance and strives to present the self to others in the most favorable light.

Virgo is anxious about the accuracy of its analyses and fears misunderstanding and being misunderstood.

Libra is uncertain about commitment and anxious about disharmony with others or rejection by partners.

Scorpio is uncertain about revealing its deepest feelings and beliefs.

Sagittarius is the least uncertain sign, but slightly anxious about social isolation.

Capricorn is anxious about failure and uncertain that duty, discipline, and ambition will be sufficiently rewarded in the marketplace.

Aquarius is somewhat anxious about the forced constraint of social norms.

Pisces is a little bit uncertain about everything, which is the murky underbelly of faith.

Keep in mind that the twelve signs of the zodiac are *archetypes*. People are not signs. Every human psyche includes all the archetypes. What varies from one person to another is the relative importance and strength of each archetype within the self.

The whole idea that "personality" is predominantly indicated by the zodiacal sign through which the Sun was passing at an individual's birth (i.e., "Sun Sign Astrology") was invented in the 1920s by astrologers (in league with publishers of books, magazines, and newspapers) who wanted an easy, convenient way to market astrology to the public. To do this, they needed to reduce all the

complexities of astrology to the lowest common denominator, requiring only information that almost anyone would know about themselves — their calendar date of birth, without an accurate birth time. By focusing on a simple (I would say simplistic) system — twelve “types” of people — astrology could be presented to the public without any consideration of the hundreds of other factors in a chart that are critical to coherent interpretation.

Of course, this would require astrologers to write about Sun signs as if they were valid and reliable predictors of observable personality characteristics or actual behavior, which they are not.

The result was a publishing cottage industry built around Sun Sign Astrology, which has been a fair success in marketing terms. Unfortunately, it’s also bogus and really bad astrology.

Hundreds of times (probably thousands) over my 50 years as a working astrologer, a client has said to me during a session something like: “*My daughter is a Pisces,*” “*My grandmother was a Capricorn,*” or “*My boss is a Leo.*” To suggest that this is aggravating to me is an understatement. Do people actually believe that by telling me someone’s Sun sign they are offering me relevant and useful information that will deepen our conversation?

People who haven’t studied astrology or truly thought much about it much can be forgiven for not knowing any better. Their primary exposure to astrology is through mass marketing: daily astrology columns in newspapers, books on the personality traits of each sign, or “The Year Ahead” paperbacks for each sign that are hawked from grocery store checkout counters. There’s no particular reason why beginners would realize that identifying people as signs is silly.

Experienced or professional astrologers, however, should know better. And yet, year after year, decade after decade, astrologers write these idiotic books about Sun signs. I am sick to death of it, but I understand why they do it. They’re trying to make some money. Even serious and brilliant astrologers struggle to maintain even a modest livelihood using their astrological expertise.

I’ve been lucky. I’ve earned a million dollars doing astrological sessions with clients and writing books and articles on astrology, but it took me 50 years to make that amount. That’s an average of 20 grand a year. Not what we’d call a lucrative career choice. So, I do have some sympathy for astrologers who hire themselves out to write Sun-Sign garbage. But not much.

At some point, I intend to write a commentary discussing what the Sun means in personal astrology and how to interpret the Sun in a natal chart. For now, though, I’ll close by repeating what I wrote above:

People are not signs.