

Martin Schulman

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# THE ASCENDANT

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Your Karmic Doorway

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- To all who are searching for enlightenment*
- To all who appreciate the value of the selfless self*
- To my wife Diane, whose selfless love is an inspiration to admire*
- To my daughter Penny Sue, may she forever blossom into the light*



**The Ascendant:  
Your Karmic Doorway**

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## The Ascendant

Although students of astrology understand that the ascendant is one of the most important parts of the chart, there tends to be much confusion as to its purpose and function. The question of whether the ascendant is more or less important than the Sun sign has been answered only vaguely because a clear definition of the ascendant has never really been made. Most students see the ascendant as merely that part of the chart that influences one's physical appearance, or that governs one's personal view of life. The ascendant has traditionally been viewed as the way in which we find personal expression through the ego. We think of the ego as our conception of self. If we look a little bit deeper, we realize how much our conception of self is based on our effective relationship between our being and the outer world in which it tries to manifest. Thus, the ascendant symbolizes an individual's personality for the personality is simply the way in which the inner being makes its contact with the external environment. When people are not using their ascendant cor-

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<sup>1</sup>For an increased understanding of karma, the reader is referred to *Karmic Astrology, Volumes 1-4*, by Martin Schulman (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser), and *Edgar Cayce's Story of Karma*, by Mary Ann Woodward (New York: Berkeley, 1972).

rectly, the inner being misinterprets its relationship with the external world. As a result, some people experience personal difficulties or problems with the personality. When the ascendant is used correctly, the inner being and external environment flow through the personality like a two-way current, creating new progress in both.

We usually study the horoscope in order to better our lives and enhance our contribution to the evolution of our species, and we tend to ignore the meaning of the ascendant. Most students concentrate on the placements and aspects of planetary configurations. We look for potentials while we overlook reality. Thus, instead of seeing the individual as he or she truly is, we envision future possibilities which may or may not manifest. Every person's chart contains within it all of the possibilities that the person needs for a full life. But it is only when we are "plugged in" to the way in which our inner being receives and gives illumination (from and to the outer environment) that the fullness of life becomes a realizable fact.

I feel that the ascendant is the expression of each person's reality. When we think of the world as being composed of the totality of all individuals, then the ascendant shows us the true structure of world reality. The potential of an individual, or the potential evolution of the human race as a whole, is an important ideal. But the *reality* of individuals functioning with what they are in touch with is what truly makes the world the way it is. The ascendant then becomes a doorway to understanding reality — not through the potential it can reach, but rather through the essence that it is reaching.

The ascendant as "doorway" becomes the filter between all that exists inside the chart and all that exists in the outside world. If we view the chart as a closed circle with a door at the ascendant, this becomes easy to understand. You have many different thoughts, feelings, and ideas about yourself

and others. You may even see thousands of different ways in which you can emulate others or copy the achievements that you admire in the external world. You may feel possibilities within yourself that, for unclear reasons, you are somehow unable to tap. It is the ascendant that focuses all these thoughts, feelings, ideas, and activities, so that you can eventually find meaningful expression in a meaningful world. If we think of the chart without a circle around it, then all of the feelings, ideas, and possibilities that you sense within yourself would spill over into the environment creating a life of meaningless dispersal. You might be magnetized by so many externals that you would feel hopelessly small in a world that seemed too big to receive you. But, if we close the circle and leave only the ascendant as your personal access in and out of the external world, then we have a condition in which you can focus and concentrate your energies within a meaningful field of expression. The ascendant is the filter through which we may gain control of ourselves.

An individual's inner being is composed of many things—some personal, and some not. You can hold within yourself the intimate memories of past experiences, the knowledge (both personal and impersonal) that you have acquired, and a sense of how the world is perceived. Naturally, different planetary placements and aspects affect the ways in which your inner being perceives all of this. To study your inner being is to see only half of the picture. The Guru who sits on a mountain can understand many things. But he may have no conception at all of what it is like to ride on a crowded train or bus. Some people's total consciousness is in awe of the external environment. These people watch everything—somehow detached from a sense of belonging to all that is happening in the world. Both points of view are uncentered, for neither the inner nor the outer life is complete without the other. The ascendant brings both together.

When you view the chart as closed circle and the ascendant as the doorway, then you begin to see the boundaries that constructively limit your existence to that which you can do most positively. The ascendant focuses the concentration of your ego and your identity into those areas through which you can truly be yourself. Once you learn how to focus your chart energies through the ascendant, the meaningless interferences which keep you from being all you could be begin to disappear. Instead, the ego begins to define itself and establish a sense of identity by clearly knowing its relationship between your inner being and the external world. The question of identity cannot be solved by searching for psychological complexes which may be inherent in certain planetary positions within the chart. These placements, even though they reflect your inner being, do not represent the integration between you and the world you live in.

As we go through life, we take some things into us and we push others out. We are forever experiencing a give-and-take process, or a yin and yang flow, which is constantly remolding the personality. If we do not use our ascendant, we can easily take in so much of the environment that we hardly know who we are. At the other extreme, we can be trying to express more than our environment finds meaningful. But when this two-way current is kept within the perimeters of the ascendant, it is much like an electric wire that is protected by insulation. We can focus and selectively choose what comes into us and what emanates from us through this protective filter. If we use the analogy of an electric current, the flow of electricity must be equal in both directions if the lamp is to light. When we are taking more into ourselves than we can understand how to express, the flow of life becomes imbalanced. As a result, we hold too much inside, which keeps us from seeing the light. If we are expressing more than what is coming in, then the current is again imbalanced and there is no illumination. Neither pas-

sivity (being receptive to the influences of life) nor activity (trying to impress one's inner being on the environment) represents the fullness of life that we are meant to experience. What is even more interesting is that the planets within the chart cannot function to their potential if the energy flow through the ascendant is imbalanced. If we think of the planets as receivers or transmitters of energy, and planetary placements as the way in which different energies can be interpreted, then we can easily understand how too much or too little current coming through the ascendant can either impede or overload the entire mechanism.

The ascendant links the void between the inner person and the world he or she must face. To achieve a state of being, one must be able to relate all that emanates from within the self to a larger reality than can receive it. If "all that is within oneself" has no way of coming out, then a sense of hopelessness and waste can pervade one's inner being. If, on the other hand, the external world is unable to receive all that an individual can possibly offer, then a sense of despair and non-integration can occur within the inner being. The ascendant acts as the balance so that all that is inside an individual can ultimately find understanding through contact with the external environment.

Sometimes we see people who hide behind themselves, creating illusions within their inner being, while watching how the outer environment impersonally impresses itself upon them through the ascendant. Sometimes we see people who feel they must push the chart through the ascendant—literally forcing the energy of the planets and aspects outward. By doing so, these people tend to lose their inner being in the environment. The Hindus say that life is much like standing on a low bridge while watching the current of the stream. Events move toward you and away from you, and as they do, you feel them and experience them, but the inner being remains intact. The ascendant symbolizes this low

bridge, or meeting place, between the inner being and the events in life it will experience. If we allow our inner being to experience life openly through every house in the chart (as most people unfortunately do), we can lose sight of the "current" that can focus and direct our experiences within the frame of reference we naturally understand. Even the river has a bank. A river has size, width, shape and direction. Without a river bank, water would be everywhere. If we experience life through the different houses in our chart without relating this back to the ascendant, it is much like watching a river changing shape and direction without even knowing why we are watching. When the experience of each house is related back to the ascendant, a centered understanding between inner being and outer experiences can be maintained. This is what gives us a feeling of control over our lives.

The ascendant is your point in consciousness. It magnetizes and leads the rest of the chart to those experiences through which the inner being and the outer environment can relate to each other. If an individual is using his ascendant correctly, he will feel close to those experiences in life which are similar to the qualities of his ascendant. At the same time, he will be able to experience a feeling of distance from all those experiences in the environment which do not directly relate to his ascendant. In this way, the ascendant magnetizes one's consciousness, fixing it at points in time and space so it can make contact with all it needs to absorb from (and give to) universal consciousness without experiencing excess interference from vibrations, events, or circumstances which are basically off the track. It is easy for someone with Gemini rising to be in tune with the current quality of newspapers, magazines, radio, or television because this rising sign contains the quality of media communication within it. At the same time, an individual with Aries rising would be in tune with the vibrations in consciousness that relate to personal

activity and bold confrontations with the challenges of life. There are many different qualities of vibrations and experiences that exist in the external world. Each ascendant selectively focuses its attunement to those experiences which are most like itself. Because of this, each ascendant experiences its perception of life differently. And, regardless of what else is in the chart, the individual will experience his relationship with life through the focused perceptions of his ascendant. This is how the ascendant leads the rest of the chart. When a person uses his ascendant correctly, it becomes easy for him to be in harmony with both himself and his environment.

To understand this, we have to understand what the ascendant actually means. It symbolizes the sign coming up to the horizon at sunrise. If an individual views a sunrise for a few minutes, it becomes easy for him to perceive the quality of the day that it will bring. Sunrise symbolizes hope, optimism, and the growing birth of what is to come. The sign moving up to the ascendant at sunrise (the rising sign) is the focal lens through which one actually views the sunrise. Thus, it colors the individual's expectations for the ever-becoming day.

The sun rises each day and appears in different rising signs. But, on an individualistic basis, a person carries the same rising sign with him through life. His expectations of all that is becoming in his future is always viewed through the same ascendant. If each of us uses our ascendant correctly by allowing it to focus the chart to the point in consciousness in the world which most agrees with the ascendant, and then by regulating the in and out flow of information and experiences that come through the ascendant, we can actually hope to realize much of what we expect of ourselves. However, how can we actually regulate the influx and outflow of experiences when we consider our relationship with the external world—over which we apparently have no control? It is true that the world continues its sequence of changing events

regardless of what we desire. Still, not all world events are for us. Often when we are insecure in our environment we tend to take in more externals than we really need. When we are secure in our environment, however, we only receive that which is necessary for our output. The insecure individuals tend to be reaching out in all directions, groping for “handles” or “banisters” in life to hold onto. Those people tend to see nearly all externals as somehow affording them more security than that which they can perceive within their inner being. They view the outside world as full and the world within as empty. Thus, they tend to magnetically absorb all that could add to the fullness they seek inside. As a result, they tend to indiscriminately absorb more than their inner beings can assimilate. The lack of understanding that ensues only tends to perpetuate original insecurities they feel. Secure people know how to selectively absorb only what they need for creative output.

The question of security or insecurity—which we so often attempt to solve through intensive attention to psychological complexes—is really a question of how well each individual knows how to use the ascendant as a filter. If one stays inside the ascendant anchored to the inner being, then all that one perceives in the external world cannot shake the roots of one’s stability. If an individual tries to perceive himself in reverse fashion by going outside the ascendant and looking at himself through the eyes of others, then he is building his life on a false sense of security. When an individual does this, he tends to judge how his chart should work by what he has created in the external world. Thus, a lifestyle of “being on the outside looking in” is the natural result. The environment becomes the center that the inner being keeps trying to please. Since the environment is always changing, the focal point of the circle that the inner being keeps moving around is also changing. In this condition no central frame of reference can be established, for the individual’s point

of consciousness is always changing. Even if the inner being could fulfill the restless, changing demands that it identifies as the environment, it could not possibly experience fulfillment.

Fulfillment in any area of life must come from the source. The universe impersonally fulfills itself. Any individual can personally fulfill himself. But, an individual cannot personally fulfill the universe nor can the universe personally fulfill the individual. The healthy use of the ascendant occurs when the individual understands that the universe has much to offer the one who stays in his own center. And, from that center the individual can also offer much to the universe. The important thing to understand here is that each individual's point of consciousness must have an individualistic frame of reference if it is to have any meaning at all.

To use the ascendant correctly, one must understand that to perceive oneself in terms of worldly expectations is to identify with a changing impersonal universe that cares not whether any singular individual in it is actually fulfilled. To perceive one's place in the universe through the personal viewpoint of the ascendant, however, is quite a different story. Let us consider how both of these viewpoints can actually make the ascendant work in different ways.

In the first instance, an individual is living outside of himself by identifying with an impersonal universe. The intake and output of energy (through his ascendant) is governed by universal consciousness. The entire chart vibrates to the demands of the external world rather than a personal sense of being. Intake and output often seem to be beyond personal control and life becomes a series of experiences that are impersonally dictated by the changing whims of external consciousness. In the second instance, the individual personally sees himself as one of the many actors contributing to universal consciousness. The intake and output flow (through the ascendant) becomes more or less a selective mat-

ter of individual control. Thus, one is either a drop in the ocean—moved about by the changing impersonal current—or one can view the ocean, fish from it, row in it, draw water or consciousness or inspiration from it, and ultimately learn how to selectively express its essence. In the first instance, the individual lives with basically no control over his life. He must endure hardships that may ultimately convince him that the universe is testing his ability for survival. In the second instance, the individual can purposefully and meaningfully feel the essence of his inner being through those selective parts of universal consciousness to which he is most attuned. Thus, the ascendant, if used wisely, can be the point of consciousness through which an individual can discover his creative role in the ever-changing scenario that surrounds his life.

The ascendant plays a very important role in the ways we fulfill our karmic destiny. Some individuals fulfill much of their heavier karma earlier in life, while others tend to drag their karmic burdens well into their later years. Overcoming the negative effects of past-life causes, and learning how to change patterns into more positive and productive expression become a matter of realizing how to focus in on those conditions which need to be changed.

Individuals who never learn how to focus stand little chance of alleviating their karmic burdens. However, when the ascendant is used correctly it becomes the doorway through which new experiences help us to restructure negative past patterns. To do this effectively, it is important for us to learn how to live inside the energies of our chart, rather than being on the outside looking in. From a karmic point of view, those individuals who try to please an impersonal world by identifying with it—by attempting to make their chart energies (which are karmically individual) fit in with the collective whole—may find momentary peace. But in the long run, they will discover they have done little to evolve their

individual karma. The collective whole is always changing while our ascendants remain the same throughout our lives. It is important for us to adapt to changing conditions in the outer world, but it is more important for us to selectively identify with those conditions that directly affect the evolution of our own karma. In this way, the ascendant becomes the doorway through which we selectively receive and express that which our being is ready for.

## Karma

The concept of karma as a reason for the reincarnation of souls brings to astrology the fascinating overtones of life's essential meaning. We are all here to learn lessons. We go through different experiences so we can gain understanding which eventually leads to our evolution. Without experience there is no growth. And, our experiences are focused through the point of consciousness that we perceive through the ascendant. In this way, we learn about our place in the world through all that must filter through the personality.

Sometimes lessons are extremely difficult to learn. In fact, we may find ourselves going through similar experiences for years before we are able to relate to what we have taken in from the external environment. Each time we learn a karmic lesson, life gets easier; for we no longer have to carry the weight of information, emotions, or attitudes that were part of that lesson. For this reason we are not only anxious to learn what our karma is, but we also want to find ways in which we can effectively learn the lessons that the soul wants us to comprehend. One of the reasons why so many people have difficulty meeting karmic obligations is because there are actually two different types of karma.

On one level, there is personal karma. This is comprised of past life errors or misunderstandings in thought, feeling,

or action which the soul has brought forward as residue to be corrected in this life. In the same way we have errors and misunderstandings in our past, action taken in the current life will also affect us now. In both instances this refers to personal karma.<sup>1</sup> There is another type of karma which Carl Jung, the noted psychologist, referred to when he said "karma impersonally recreates itself." In this instance, Jung was alluding to the impersonal actions of an impersonal universe. What we consider to be "acts of God," such as unusual weather conditions, rare occurrences, or even the impersonal action of the planets, all operate within the laws of cause and effect which we call karma. In this sense, karma is not personal, even though people may impersonally be affected by it. Thus, we see that life is in part made up of the individual experiences that we go through along the road toward personal evolution, and it is also the impersonal experiences that we witness as the universe unfolds.

Fads are an excellent example of impersonal karma. They are personal only to the people who start them, or those who perhaps profit from the echoing waves created. All other people who are lured by the changing fads from year to year or decade to decade are allowing themselves to be personally influenced by segments of the impersonal karma that exists in the world.

Some people are strongly influenced by what others think of them. These people try to impress themselves by being approved of by others. Naturally, this reverses the point of consciousness by rooting their centers of being in others. Their personalities become the product of external influences. When this occurs, it becomes easy to see how some people can experience difficulties of identity, ego, or in their relationship to self. What is more important is the effect that such identifications have on the ability to handle our karma.

If the personality is centered in external conditions in the environment, then it runs the danger of identifying with impersonal karma. In this way, the individual takes into himself much of what external consciousness says he should. His inner being is influenced not only by the changing fads in the external world, but also by changing customs and traditions in an ever-changing society. When a particular style of clothing is popular, he feels obligated to perpetuate the trend, and so forth. Without realizing it, he may become personally involved or intimately defensive of the variables in universal consciousness which only distract him from his own personal karma. In this case, the lifestyle can easily become nothing but "keeping up with the Joneses" or putting out a great deal of effort to compete with that which is not personally competitive. If he uses his ascendant in this manner, it becomes practically impossible to even know what his karma is, let alone feel the impetus to fulfill it. And, when we think of how many individuals are actually living their lives "inside out," it becomes easy to understand why the evolution of the species is so overwhelmingly slow!

When the point of consciousness is in correct perspective, however, it becomes easy for the personality to view Jung's definition of impersonal karma as a stage upon which the play of personal karma is enacted. The ascendant can protect us from participating in karma that is not necessarily ours to experience, and it can guide us to exactly the specific thoughts, actions, or awareness which helps us live our personal karma.

In every human being there is a personality and a soul. Sometimes the soul appears to be sleeping, because it has not yet been awakened to its spiritual purpose. In such cases, the personality functions quite meaninglessly, much like a cork floating on the watery current of day-to-day emotion. When the soul is awakened to its purpose, however, life is not like this. Instead, all that the personality

experiences reflects the symbolic acting out of greater meanings, higher awareness, and a deep sense of personal fulfillment within an impersonal whole. What is it that makes the soul awaken? The Moon's Nodes symbolize the individual life lessons that must be learned for soul growth. They, in fact, symbolize a person's soul contact with God's plan. In this way, the linear direction (or opposition) between the North and South Nodes becomes a direct path of progress from the past through the ever-becoming present, and to the possibilities of the future. Still, it is one thing to know one's lessons in life and quite another to be able to relate to them. Humanity, as an expression of God's desires, is an ethereal concept, and as such, is often difficult for an individual to truly grasp. Still, the possibility of personal evolution, the bettering of oneself, and the ultimate blossoming of one's being are what intrigue our sensitivities enough to be the impetus on a universal scale for human evolution. When we think of the individual, however, there must be a point of contact between high aspirations in consciousness and the ability to function in the mundane world. The Nodes must have a vehicle to function through so the lessons of the soul can be experienced and demonstrated here on Earth.

The rest of the chart provides this vehicle. The different planetary placements, and the aspects between them, show an individual's potential. They are, in fact, his blueprint for life. The planetary aspects within the chart help fix an individual in space. The vectors and qualities of these aspects act as a frame of reference so he can understand the quality and quantity of his potential. The Nodes put him in touch with the transcendental quality of eternal time. The chart must function within the context of what the Nodes are saying. An individual's potential is directed along the path that will bring his soul the most possible evolution that he can achieve. If the chart is not viewed in this manner,

human potential has no framework within which it can manifest. A person's potential could spill out into areas that are either meaningless to the inner being or do little to enhance the evolution of mankind. The chart merely becomes a container through which the needs of the soul flow. The relationship between the Nodes and the chart could be called the dormant potential being directed along a specific path. But, there is still one link missing. An individual may know the lessons he is supposed to be learning through his Nodes, and he may even be in touch with the potential he has for mastering these lessons through the planetary energies and placements within the chart, but he still needs meaningful contact with the external environment through the personality if these lessons are to be part of his relationship with the world in which he lives. This third link occurs through the ascendant. Here the individual can express the direction of his soul (the Moon's Nodes) with the potential he has (planetary placements and aspects contained within the chart) on a level which he can personally relate to in his everyday experience of living. The ascendant becomes the doorway through which all that an individual is and aspires to be ultimately manifests.

## Impersonal Karma

We spoke earlier of Jung's theory that karma impersonally recreates itself. This is easy to understand if we realize that for any given locality it's possible to draw a horoscope for any time of day. If we do the chart for sunrise, we have a chart that shows us the flavor (or quality) that will unfold through the rest of that day in that locality. We can know what the universe in any given area impersonally offers at any given time. To see how this works, consider a sample chart: Let us suppose that on some given day in any specific

locality, sunrise occurs at the fifth degree of Gemini. We could draw a horoscope with the fifth degree of Gemini as the ascendant. Using an equal house system, where (each house cusp also begins at five degrees), the ascending sign will change equally every two hours. This chart will represent what is impersonally available through universal consciousness during the course of one specific day. We mentioned earlier the type of individual who looks at himself through the eyes of others. For such an individual this impersonal chart will act as his center for the day while his chart will move around the wheel changing its quality of experience and expression every two hours in accordance with the external, cosmic clock. To see how this works, let us consider someone who has Taurus rising. But, rather than understanding how to use the ascendant correctly as a point in consciousness through which the potential for soul growth is expressed, let's pretend that this individual tries to find himself through the acceptance of external forces. This kind of living on the outside and looking in means that every two hours during the course of a day his thoughts, feelings, emotions, actions, and even experiences will be a product of how his chart is being stimulated by whatever is coming through in consciousness.

To see how this works, think about our Gemini ascendant chart. At sunrise Taurus is in the twelfth house. For the sake of simplicity, let's assume that sunrise occurs at approximately 6 A.M. Since this individual has Taurus as the ascendant, his relationship with his environment between 6 and 8 A.M. puts his ascendant in the twelfth house of the impersonal chart (with Gemini rising). Thus, during these two hours, the individual can personally identify with the background of things, the thoughts and feelings of seclusion, and the inner contemplation that is the basic quality of the twelfth house. During the next two hours (when Cancer becomes the ascendant in the impersonal chart) the sign

Taurus moves to the eleventh house. During this time (8 A.M. to 10 A.M.) the individual may desire the social qualities of friendship. During the next two hour period (from 10 A.M. to noon), when Leo is rising in the impersonal chart, Taurus moves to the tenth house. The individual may experience at this time a greater concern with career matters, prestige, and social dignity. As the day moves on, the ascendant in the impersonal chart keeps changing. And, as it does, the sign which corresponds to the individual's natal ascendant (in this instance Taurus) keeps appearing in a different house. What does all this mean? If his point of consciousness is centered in what the impersonal chart is offering, every two hours he will quite literally become a different person. His entire chart, including the Nodes, is following the way the ascendant is lining up to the different houses of the impersonal chart. As a result, he is basically unable to gain control over his life. One meaningless experience after another may make his entire being a product of the ever-changing environment. This is natural for a leaf that blows in the wind. But it is quite unnatural for someone with human intelligence, feelings, and evolutionary possibilities.

If someone allows his life to be directed in this manner, then his attitudes allow him to agree with people who do not agree with each other. His thoughts allow him to experience more than what his inner being is capable of understanding. And his actions can become a meaningless sequence of unrelated experiences.

If, on the other hand, an individual realizes the correct link between the Nodes, the rest of the chart, and the ascendant, and understands the ascendant to be the doorway through which the personality filters the inner being as he or she comes in contact with the outer world, then the quality of life takes on a different complexion. Let us consider how the natal chart relates to the moving wheel of houses in the

impersonal chart of a given day. We will use the same example: the impersonal chart starts with Gemini rising while the individual's chart has a Taurus ascendant. The ascendant in the impersonal chart will be changing every two hours as before. The difference this time is that the frame of reference or point of consciousness comes from within the person rather than external conditions.

The individualistic outlook on life with a Taurus ascendant is one of constructive creativity. This individual seeks to build things in matter and things that matter to him. The gaining of substance and the building of self-confidence through beauty, form, harmony, money, and acquisitions becomes the focal point of personality experience. In a realistic way, this individual can achieve this through a variety of choices. He can enjoy the harmony of music, the beauty of painting, the building or acquisition of objects that symbolize wealth and comfort, or any of the earthly activities that give a feeling of inner security. Let us assume this individual is a painter, seeking to build and develop a style which expresses all he feels in his inner being. Let us suppose again that painting, which could easily be a continuation from a past life, is the ultimate destiny his soul has chosen to reach through his North Node. In this instance, the Nodes are directing the potential within him toward the ascendant which must selectively filter through the circumstances and experiences in the world which in turn will lead him to his true destiny. Now, when we consider the relationship between this individual and how his personal karma (painting) meshes with the impersonal karma of the external environment, we have quite a different picture.

In the morning between 6 and 8 A.M. (assuming that sunrise is at 6 A.M., in our example) the individual must deal with a Gemini ascendant in the external world. This means that all of his needs to express himself through painting would manifest during this two-hour period through the

qualities of Gemini. Thus, he might spend this time thinking about what he wants to paint, contemplating the ideas he would like to express, and understanding the relationship between the things he sees and his ability to recreate them. If he attempted to paint during this time, however, the quality of his painting would have much understanding in it — with little reference to the feelings that are pouring through the Taurus ascendant. Two hours later, at 8 A.M., the ascendant in the impersonal chart changes from Gemini to Cancer. And the emotions that he could know, but could not really be in touch with, take on the warm, feeling quality of Cancer. During this time, the external environment offers emotional intuition, sensitivity, and the creative, fluid output that painters thrive on. If the individual with Taurus rising were to paint during this time, the finished quality of his painting would be more in harmony with all that he is trying to express. Two hours later, when the ascendant in the impersonal chart moves to Leo (forming a square to the Taurus ascendant in the natal chart) he may feel discontented at his inability to achieve the expression of grandiose power that he feels in the external environment. If he stays within the protective filter of his ascendant, he can quickly realize the difference between himself and the changing external energies that he experiences. By doing this he comes to understand that his painting was originally not meant to be in competition with the external creative powers that he feels in the universe, but rather an expression of all that was emanating from within. Should he choose to attempt to paint under the Leo ascendant in the impersonal chart, he could, for a period of time, tap great creative powers in universal consciousness. And these may well show up in the finished product. But, because he is functioning from the depth of his inner being, he never loses sight of this reference point. Thus, regardless of what sign is rising in the impersonal chart at different times during the day, he is still

a painter. At different times during the day his quality of expression will change as it feels the different qualities of different ascendants in universal consciousness. And although a certain amount of external consciousness is bound to seep in, it becomes filtered because he is using his ascendant correctly. As a painter, he chooses to absorb those qualities in nature which potentiate his inner being. At the same time, he can easily filter out all other unnecessary trivia because it is not a part of his purpose. In this way, he can feel and experience himself in relation to his environment without losing his point of consciousness. In the course of days, months, and years, the individual unfolds the intention of his soul within the impersonal soul of mankind. His paintings may indeed be a contribution to humanity, for he has certainly tapped the available creative force in external consciousness. And, he has never lost himself in the process.

The question, then, of losing oneself or finding oneself — which is so important in the seeking of meaningful identity — is really based upon what one uses for a reference point. To see the opposite of this analogy, the individual who lives on the outside looking in, identifying with the changing waves of universal consciousness, feels impelled to achieve all that he experiences as flowing through him. But, because he is not in touch with his inner being, he cannot truly express his own creative power. He may feel an idea in impersonal consciousness, but a moment later it goes, and he is left in frustration. Repeated mind associations formed through this kind of identification can actually lead an individual to a wasted lifestyle.

When the environment becomes the center of our circle, we inadvertently experience karma that is not even ours. We personally identify with thoughts, feelings, and actions that are outside of our personal center. Our lives can be a series of inconsequential actions and experiences which are

merely manifesting the changing energies that we feel in the ether. In the meantime, our personal lives can be in total shambles, for the needs of the inner being crying for expression are not heard. The many levels of personality that exist are so complex that it literally takes years to see through them. If we are on the outside looking in through this multitude of filters, it becomes almost impossible to know or to follow the needs of our inner being. When people live this way, they cannot relate to whether or not they even have a soul, let alone learn how to follow its intention. Since the personality is so complex, with filters that are so numerous that they can actually keep people outside themselves, we must assume that this same mechanism is powerful enough to protectively keep us inside ourselves as well. The painter we discussed previously fulfills his karma because it is his karma, not because the external environment tells him what he should or should not do on any given day. He perceives the world as something that can be painted, because his inner being is painting everything. In this way, his life has continuity to it. If his point of consciousness was rooted in the changing ascendants of the impersonal environment, then each hour and each day would not feel connected to that which it emanated from. One minute he would have one quality and the next minute another, without either having any relationship to the other. He would feel as if his life were somehow out of control. But the individual who stays within his chart never experiences such confusion. The karma in the world can impersonally recreate itself all the time, and it continues to function continuously within each individual. Thus, we are able to fulfill the much easier task of doing our own karma without confusing ourselves in the impersonal karma of others or the changing thoughts of a changing world.

We can see, then, how the ascendant acts as a karmic doorway. It filters and protects the inner being by focusing

people to what they truly need and guiding them away from all they do not.

## Individuality

The Sun sign which most represents someone's potential for expression is part of the inner being that must be activated. Interestingly enough, young children tend to display more of the qualities of their Moon sign than their Sun sign. Only at mid-life (sometime between age 30 and 40), when we have had enough personality experiences, does the Sun (the true seed of being) actually begin to shine. All through life the Sun must filter through the ascendant before it reaches outer expression. If the ascendant is not functioning as it should, an individual may not be able to express the constructive qualities of a powerful Sun position. For example, consider someone who has a Leo Sun and a Pisces ascendant. Through the Leo Sun, the inner being contains much potential. The will and the power to be fixed at the center of one's life, to maintain command over one's self, is possible with this Sun sign. The personality, however, bears the qualities of the Pisces ascendant, and since the ascendant represents one's conception of the sunrise in life, the individual would think of himself as being negatively receptive to many things in life which weaken and dissipate the power of the self. Identity confusions, illusions, and images tend to pervade much of what this individual thinks about himself. What really happens is that the fiery power of the Sun cannot easily push through the extinguishing waters of the Pisces ascendant. Instead, the bright, optimistic outlook of Leo grows more timid when it functions through the personality filter of a Pisces ascendant. As the individual focuses his identity toward expression in external activities, his place in the world is seen through Pisces rather than Leo.

Thus, the individual perceives universal consciousness as accepting his creativity, but may not see his capability for assuming power.

If you have a Virgo Moon you may feel the need to order your emotions. If Capricorn is the ascendant, you will be sensitive to those vibrations in the outside world which symbolize accomplishment. Thus, as the Virgo Moon filters through the Capricorn ascendant, you may feel that the only way to accomplish anything of lasting value is by activating your potential to organize your emotional structure. The same Moon sign with a Libra ascendant would have a very different lifestyle. In its natural position, Libra symbolizes the setting sun. When the potential of a Virgo Moon filters through a Libra ascendant, its crisp need for order becomes mellowed much like the waning sun (approximately at 6 P.M.). Thus, the inner being doubts its ability to impress itself with any power on the external environment.

In quite a different example, consider the Sun in Pisces filtered through a Leo ascendant. You would spend much of your inner being in attempting to fill the power you feel in the Leo ascendant.

It is not only the Sun that works this way. Every planet in the chart holds within it the potential for individuality. It is the blend of how these planets filter through the doorway in the ascendant that ultimately shows the true individuality of each person. A powerful chart with a weak ascendant will not denote an expansive, vivid life. At the same time, a more modest chart with a powerful ascendant indicates a much broader give and take between your inner being and all that you can experience in the environment. Individuality is the result of the many different possible ways that the chart can manifest through the ascendant. Meaningful individuality occurs when the lessons of the soul prompt the potentialities within the chart to manifest through the personality. Naturally when you use your environment as your

center, the ever-changing qualities in external consciousness make you appear to have an extremely individualistic lifestyle. But, because the center is always changing, the appearance of his individualism is misleading, for your life is one of extremes. The individualism you display is not personally yours.

## Overcoming Negativity

One of the greatest problems that we face—in the world as well as within ourselves—is negativity. And, whether it comes through attitudes, thoughts, feelings, or actions, it can easily pervade our entire conception of ourselves as well as our outlook on life. Negativity comes from discontent. Often, we look in the wrong areas for the source of this discontent, following many tangential possibilities, but never truly understanding the essence of such a negative condition. When we think of the impersonal karma of the universe, it is probably as much positive as it is negative. But, if we are living outside the chart and identifying with all the impersonal karma we feel within the universe, a sense of personal insignificance starts to form in the identity structure. We feel incapable of manifesting the quality and quantity of all that is flowing through us. This is the principle cause of negativity and it actually contributes negativity to the world.

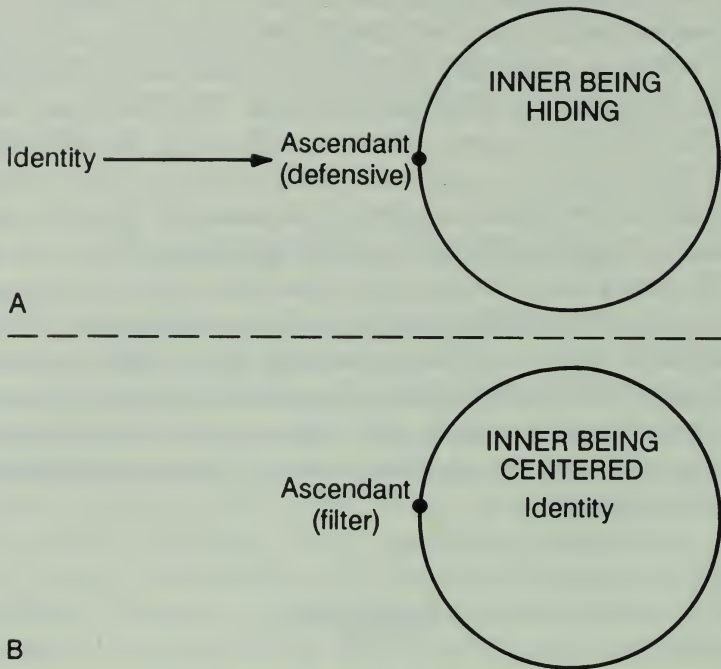
If you feel a sense of insignificance in your identity structure (because you are using your ascendant incorrectly) then you are very likely to use your entire chart negatively. From this frame of reference (centering in impersonal consciousness rather than in your inner being) you question what the world is doing to you. Actually you are trying to make your own chart catch up with all you feel in the external environment. This, however, is impossible because the

quantity of information, thoughts, feelings and experiences that exist in impersonal karma will always be ahead of you. Whatever you do, you will always sense that you are somehow losing an imaginary race with a world that is progressing and expanding faster than you are. The discontent that results from this causes a lifestyle built on an identification with frustration, or a general negative sense of self-worth. In order to overcome negativity, the sense of identity must emanate from your inner being. In this way, all that you do in life comes from the potential that your soul is prompting into action through the personality. As a result, you are not competing with external influences, but rather joyously striving to fulfill possibilities. From this frame of reference, the awe-inspiring wonder of the external environment, instead of leading to negativity, actually helps you positively express yourself.

## Insight

Many people talk about the importance of gaining insight if one is to evolve. Perhaps astrology's greatest contribution to the world has been in this direction. But if we are to truly understand how one becomes, grows, and unfolds, we have to take a second look at the practical and realistic meaning of the word "insight."

The path to gaining perception about oneself can take many varied turns. Unfortunately, if an individual is to see into himself at all, he must be outside of himself to do it. In this instance, the individual seeks the advice of other people who may appear to be more knowledgeable. He may consult astrologers, psychologists, psychiatrists, gurus, or spiritual leaders in order to help him see into all that he cannot perceive within his inner being. In doing this, however, he must actually identify with the thoughts, emotions, and



*Figure 1. Insight (A) compared with indwelling (B).*

ideas that are being presented to him from the external environment. Then, armed with these pieces of impersonal karma that he believes will help him, he faces his own personality in an attempt to look into himself. When he does this, he is not truly "in" himself. As a result, the personality increases its defenses because it does not know what it is about to be barraged with in terms of impersonal karma. At the same time, the potential within the inner being lies dormant because it cannot express itself through the personality which is being blocked by the ascendant in order to defend against the now impersonal identity which is trying to infiltrate the individual. This is why astrologers and other

humanitarians meet with so much resistance when they try to get an individual to confront him- or herself. By looking at Figure 1 we can see the problem clearly.

It becomes easy to understand how individuals can actually fight themselves, be afraid, or become resistant. The entire concept of gaining (through whatever means an individual chooses to use) becomes an extremely difficult task. And, what makes it even more difficult is that when one is on the outside looking in, the personality (symbolized by the ascendant) becomes defensive but does not become selective. The ability to selectively discriminate about what comes into oneself can only be controlled when an individual's identity is connected to his or her inner being. If one lacks selectivity, the attempt to gain insight can actually allow much more information in than is actually needed. As a result, the inner being becomes confused and can become so scattered that it may actually forget the reason for its original search.

There is a different process, however, that is far more desirable than insight. In this process, which we can call "indwelling," the identity stays inside of the ascendant filter. The personality is linked to the inner being which in turn is linked to the soul. In this instance, the individual can be himself rather than attempting to see himself through the eyes of others. He can listen to advice and assimilate ideas from the impersonal karma in the external world, but it is easy for him to know the difference between that which has the ring of truth to it and that which will only lead into confusion. A person does not have to go through years of seeing himself in order to be. One could attempt to see oneself quite literally for lifetimes without ever truly making contact with the inner being. He could find all the answers, but never the solution. In fact, once an individual leaves himself to identify with impersonal karma, he is often too afraid to come back inside himself because he does not know

what he will bring with him. When he learns the value of "indwelling" and establishes a home within himself, insight becomes a natural and effortless experience. Because the soul is prompting the potential of the inner being to express itself through the personality, the individual can soon discover that any questions his personality is asking can be answered by his soul, which originally prompted him to ask the questions in the first place.

## The Ascendant and the Nodes

When an individual is linked up with self through this process of indwelling, it is only natural to grow. But, if the person is on the outside looking in, the process of individual evolution becomes stifled because the karmic flow is in the wrong direction. We mentioned earlier some of the negative influences that come as a result of identification with externals. The most important of these is what happens when too much impersonal karma seeps through the ascendant, which is unable to selectively discriminate what should come in. When the inner being has absorbed too much, it must be dumped somewhere, for the potential of the individual can only do with a limited amount of input. The excess has to be undone or somehow released through a part of the chart which will not impede the individual's ability to function. The South Node proves to be the natural dumping ground for this excess input. As the impersonal consciousness is forever prompting a sense of progress and forward motion in the individual who is identifying with it, the excess information and input filtering out through the South Node of the chart moves in the direction of the past. Since so much is moving in that direction, the individual finds himself magnetically distracted from whatever his present purpose may

be. Thus, he tries to take in more information, to remagnetize with the present, but the more he takes in, the greater the flow is towards the South Node. As a result, he creates a vicious cycle that keeps remagnetizing the past he is trying to overcome.

In this instance, the individual finds that the present consciousness absorbed from the external environment keeps repowering the past he is trying to let go. As a result, undesirable habit patterns are restimulated. Conscious and unconscious memories of childhood (and even other lives) can be triggered by all the person feels will help him move forward. The more he absorbs from impersonal consciousness, the more he must turn back into the past to try to understand the overpowering influx that overwhelms the present. If the individual tries to move forward, he absorbs more. The person trying to find his identity is actually asking the soul to repeat past lessons because the personality is overwhelmed by the present. By experiencing life this way, an individual can spend many years trying to learn obscure lessons that may never lead to the blossom of fulfillment.

If on the other hand, an individual has the point of consciousness inside himself, the ability to select the flow that comes in and out of the ascendant makes him able to avoid absorbing too much stimulation from the environment. The South Node can then function as a safety valve, releasing excess as it is used, while the North Node can potentiate the chart.

When we think of the flow of life, we can consider the symbol of water—which must always pour from the higher places to lower places. In this natural condition, the favorable North Node pours the meaning of its lessons down through the potential of the chart (and the personality) which can then function with meaning. Karma is more easily dealt with because the individual is not forcing himself against himself. When he identifies with the external environment,

there can be such a struggle within the self that the individual actually shortcircuits his flow, freezing himself at trauma points in past karma. Thus, he acts, and reacts, as he always did (regardless of the ways in which his ascendant is stimulated) because of impersonal past karma he has already dealt with. No matter how he may have dealt with past traumas, he expects all present and future experiences to bend to their methods: he has built mental and emotional constructs of how the world and his relationship to it actually are. In truth, he shows little contact with reality. But, because he is on the outside looking in at himself, he can justify reality to suit himself because he is, in fact, the only person in it.

It is much easier to ride on a ship than to steer it. One needs no compass or knowledge of navigation to float with the ever-changing current. If one has acquired an ability to float in the past in this manner, then the tendency to repeat dealing with life this way is very strong. When this occurs, the personality is trying to rule the soul. What makes this kind of lifestyle so hectic is that the personality is lost in the impersonal karma of the external environment. The path of the soul becomes lost. It is important to remember that if an individual wants to grow, unfold, and evolve, that it must be the soul that rules the personality and not the other way around.

Traditionally, we understand that each ascendant has constructive and destructive qualities. What has always been difficult to comprehend is the reason why some people use their ascendant constructively while others use the same ascendant in a non-productive manner. We can understand this by realizing that the personality will always function constructively when it is controlled by the soul that directs it. The personality will often function negatively when it feels it is being controlled by an external environment that offers neither protection nor direction.

## Levels of Consciousness

There are primarily three basic levels of consciousness. Multifaceted experiences or points of view are possible and hundreds or thousands of other levels of consciousness exist within the framework of these three levels.

First, there is "instinctive consciousness." At this level, life experiences are not based on thought, but rather on the instinctive impulses of the being, which are geared towards survival. An animal will instinctively avoid running into a tree because it is his nature to do so. He does not give forethought to this, nor does he congratulate himself afterwards for having successfully used his instinct for survival. Many of the things we do as human beings are also based on instinct. We experience many body movements and sometimes unexplainable modes of behavior which are based purely on instinctive consciousness. To rely completely on this, however, would be to reduce the human ability to think to the level of animal consciousness. Mankind has the opportunity to experience other levels of consciousness which help us to rise above the need to rely purely on instinct.

The second level of consciousness is "self-consciousness." At this level, an individual perceives the world and all experiences in terms of a personal subjective reality. One sees the self as a separate and distinct entity contained within the confines of the intimate thoughts, ideas, and memories with which he or she identifies. In this consciousness, we seek to find the lower self. We see the identity of others as uniquely different forms of expression which we may either choose to emulate or compete with. We view life as an endless succession of challenges, successes, or defeats, amidst which we must somehow personally maintain and enhance all we mean to ourselves. We are particularly responsive to the opinions and attitudes of those who we

come into contact with. And, because consciousness is self-oriented, we can be particularly possessive and defensive about our own attitudes and outlook. At this level of consciousness, it becomes difficult for individuals to see themselves because when we try to momentarily step outside of our personal identity, we lose ourselves in the personal identities of others. Because we look at things through self-consciousness, we cannot see beyond the "self" in anything we look at.

The third level of consciousness is "super-consciousness." At this level, we have the ability to rise above the demands of the personal self. Identity comes from the soul and its relationship (not only to other souls, but also the one soul that rules all). We can see the relationship with impersonal karma from a point of view that is above the intimate personality. When we use the expression "stepping outside of oneself" to see things from a better vantage point, we really mean the ability to abandon one's personal hold on self-consciousness. People can perceive the lower self through the higher self. They can understand the pointless motives that operate on lower levels of being without becoming intimately involved in situations that could lead them away from their true divine nature.

Super-consciousness implies an understanding that the self can be distinctly unique from all other identities in the universe and yet in some very special way nevertheless be the same. At this level, the individual does not put aside personal being or purpose for the sake of others, nor does one try to see oneself through others' eyes. It becomes easy to understand that life resembles a stairway of evolution. The step on which another person stands may be a different level of consciousness. It becomes easy to allow others to unfold at their own rate. It is not necessary to be jealous of individuals whose consciousness is beyond our own.

The ability to stay inside of one's ascendant does not mean closing up, closing off, or locking personal identity within the seclusion of intimate personal self-consciousness. Instead, it implies the understanding that each and every individual has the potential to all that can be reached in life.

The *Tao Te Ching* says, "A good walker leaves no foot-steps." An individual can experience the world without seeking to find himself in it. He is, through the energies within his chart, a complete being. In a state of super-consciousness, the instincts work naturally—the self is as conscious as it can be amidst its egocentric source. The super-conscious part of any person is capable of perceiving the self (and the instinctive consciousness) through a higher and more meaningful sense of purpose. Through this, the individual knows that the quality of all he seeks is slowly unfolding within himself. The external environment can mirror what is emanating from him and can offer opportunities to discover the abilities and potential within. The external environment cannot provide the sense of self that he already has. It tempts him in all directions and often leads him to scatter and dissipate his own fullness. Jesus, himself, said "I am in this world but not of it." These carefully chosen words show us how we can differentiate between functioning through impersonal karma and experiencing ourselves in the world—but not being the proud branches of trees growing impersonally in other gardens. Super-consciousness implies the dignity of our inherent soul quality, and while few individuals have actually attained this level of consciousness, the opportunity to experience it is there for us all.

Each of us has a particular talent and ability. We all have an inherent blessing which is God's gift to mankind. In this way, we are not different from each other. Should we seek to receive only the blessings of others, we tend to lose the focus of what is truly for us. A seed will grow because that is God's way. A person will grow regardless of how much, or how

little, he emulates others. If he stays within the doorway of his ascendant, his evolution will be the product of his own seed, and the ultimate outcome will be the pure pedigree of his own consciousness, rather than that of a hybrid plant which has no identity of its own.

Self-consciousness has so strong a tendency to competitively compare self with others, it can only clearly perceive where you have been. When you look at a chart as an outsider, it is sometimes easy to understand how the chart energies have been used. This kind of understanding is, however, a reflection, rather than the true vision. When a person functions from within the self, glimpses of super-conscious states take the place of self-consciousness and the individual is able to command, control, and teach his own personality rather than being the victim of it. When this is achieved, the individual's entire being starts to retune itself so that it functions through higher vibrations which create a more pleasing life experience.

**The Ascendants  
of the Zodiac**

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**2**



## The Aries Ascendant

The Aries ascendant represents a unique point of consciousness. It gives you the opportunity to focus the potential of the chart through a singular identity. Opinions and attitudes of others can easily be secondary to your oneness of mind.

If you have this ascendant and you identify with impersonal karma, then it is only natural for the thrust of the Aries ascendant to work in reverse. You may try to impress yourself rather than express all that can emanate from the soul. You may experience a great deal of frustration for you cannot keep up with a world that is consistently making you feel inadequate. Thus, you develop a strong sense of competition. Whatever you achieve can never really fulfill you, because the true needs of your inner being are not manifesting.

The desire to be first can never rest in a world that is always offering new beginnings. The sense of failure at missing thousands of opportunities that exist in the external environment can easily become overwhelming. You may strive for peace of mind and never find it. You seek to forge ahead, hoping to achieve one goal that would put you on a plateau where you can rest. The more you seek, the more you are giving power to the impersonal consciousness that you are mistaking for your source. As a result, you feel as if you are in competition with everybody, never quite realizing that you

are competing with your own dissipated identity. From this frame of reference, you can easily become bored and will need to change your source of external stimulation all the time. You can't finish all the things you start because the energy within your chart may not be capable of handling the myriad opportunities which are powering your impersonal identity. This ascendant experiences a particular difficulty when it identifies only with external karma because Aries has a very personal quality to it. A great deal of frustration occurs if you are not able to personalize all that you identify with. You may actually achieve great things, and never feel you have even made a start in achieving anything at all. The personality filters in this ascendant are under the rulership of Mars. Speed of thought, feeling, and activity are imperative to express the rest of the chart. When you identify with impersonal karma, you feel the need to grab onto things before others do; you must capture opportunities before they slip away. Your personality can develop a selfish quality which tends to perpetuate a false sense of ego.

Your potential can take many years to unfold. A flower can die if we force it open before it's ready to blossom; a child cannot comprehend the work of an adult. If the personality mistakenly identifies with external karma, it will push objects, people, or experiences into the inner being so quickly that you become completely out of tune with yourself. You may try to tap resources of inner being before they are ready. Your experiences with life may be unfulfilling. You may begin one project after another, never experiencing contentment.

Because Aries has the quality of speed, identification with the external environment can push many things into you quite rapidly without your even realizing it. The personality filters of this masculine ascendant are generally accustomed to thrusting outward. When you are trying to impress yourself through externals, you actually cause a battle through the

door of your ascendant which creates a discontented lifestyle. You can be belligerent with little provocation, for you are always armed to do battle with yourself. In conversations with others, you may try to be brusque or get to the point too quickly and sharply. Because you use others as your center you will have trouble experiencing fulfillment.

You can easily offend the sensitivities of those whose love you need without even realizing it, for your basic instinct is to jump at challenges. You overextend yourself rather than allowing yourself to gently push through others' psychic space because you want to lead. You have difficulty accepting advice. Feelings of envy, greed, or jealousy can easily lead you to live outside yourself. When this occurs, the primitive qualities of Aries begin to take over the South Node. As a result, you instinctively leap before you look, repowering past lessons that you may have already mastered. You grow younger but can also get more irresponsible and childlike as the years go by. The potential in the natal chart becomes used to make the same new beginnings over and over. You may experience the appearance of growing, starting, and initiating, while in fact you are using your personality to push the potential of your inner being back into your past.

The lifestyle becomes more meaningful if you use the spirit of Aries as the filter through which the North Node can direct the rest of the chart. In this way, you stand inside the doors of the ascendant and are able to focus the entire chart through a singular frame of reference. Rather than competing with the world, you try to make your best better. If your reach is exceeding your grasp, it is only because the Aries energy in impersonal karma always exceeds the Aries energy in the natal chart. You perceive challenges in the external environment, but only accept the challenges that are within yourself. Instead of fighting with yourself, you keep initiating new beginnings in using your potential. You may be years ahead of your time, but if you stay within the doorway of

your ascendant this does not bother you. It is only if you compare yourself with others that you can feel the aloneness of being at a point in consciousness when no one else has yet arrived.

Oneness of being is what keeps you at the source. When your personality can identify with this idea, the entire chart functions toward a singular purpose. Naturally, the purpose can change as some Node lessons are being learned and replaced with others. You don't become scattered by experiences which are out of harmony with the soul. The lesson the Aries ascendant eventually understands is that it is not what others think of you that is important, but rather the total essence of what you think of yourself. Even more important is the quality of being yourself rather than thinking what that should be. You can initiate new beginnings in life for many years and never truly make any real beginning with the self.

The North Node carries with it the quality of the sign Virgo in its search for human perfection. Regardless of the sign the North Node is in,<sup>2</sup> it is always the idealistic struggle to the higher divinity of that sign that perpetuates the soul's optimism for the future. When the hope for a more enriching soul existence directs the chart through an Aries ascendant, it seeks to discover self-esteem. It is not important whether you exceed the expectations of others unless your particular North Node placement compels it. It is more important that you look at your own potential and decisively know how to use it. You may have a pioneer spirit, but this is not because you desire to impress others. Your own unique sense of self-expression emanates from the ability to detach from duality in order to link up with the essential point of consciousness that symbolizes true identity.

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<sup>2</sup>For descriptions of each North Node placement, see *Karmic Astrology, Volume 1: The Moon's Nodes and Reincarnation* by Martin Schulman (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1975).

The spiritual lesson in this ascendant is to never compare yourself with the expectations of others. Be able to establish and control a point of yourself. Once this is accomplished, any negative feelings, thoughts, or actions which you might experience can only occur if you misuse ascendant energy. The true challenge is to stay within this point of self and trust it. Even though you may feel you are ahead of yourself, you must trust that the North Node, and the rest of the potential emanating from your inner being, is standing solidly behind you, protecting you from failure or supporting and guiding you. You must not look back or you will doubt the strength of your foundation. The Aries ascendant can be a powerful focal point for all that is seeking expression from within. Power is powerful only when it is used well. Strength is strong only when it is directed with meaning. If you can learn the value of modesty, you will not create adverse situations which put others between you and your inner self. You can regulate the current of your ascendant in accordance with how much you need from the external environment and you can use it to fulfill the potential within your chart.

When the spirit of the Aries personality must account for itself in the light of the soul, it becomes easy to see how you need to avoid self-contradictions if you are to grow. The personality filters on this ascendant are such that you need not account to anyone else for your thoughts or actions, but in your accounting to yourself you must be straight, truthful, and sincere. Only then can your identity sustain itself through contact with the impersonal ego of the external world.

## The Taurus Ascendant

If you have a Taurus ascendant, you have natural potential for great resources. A natural sense of warmth and affection

creates a gentle flow between the inner being and the external environment. You can feel solid and secure without being brittle, and your great affinity for nature puts you in tune with natural harmony.

If you root your identity in impersonal karma by trying to emulate others, you can easily get stuck in base motives. You can find yourself obsessively concerned with money to the point that you believe it to be a measure of personal worth. There is a tendency to financially compare yourself with the overwhelming, impersonal wealth in the world. You may see yourself as inadequate. This ascendant may manifest greed without even realizing it, for when your Taurus ascendant identifies with a world that is too big for it, you actually perceive yourself on an inferior basis. Attachment to possessions for the purpose of feeling secure can be obsessional. You feel change in the world and try to anchor yourself through objects and circumstances which represent no change. The more you seek stillness in the world, the more you become dependent upon externals for inner peace. You may be extremely sensitive to the environment, for you personally identify with whatever brings harmony or disturbance.

Because Taurus is ruled by Venus, you can absorb a great deal from the environment. You can somewhat permanently take into yourself the enduring qualities of impersonal karma. What is assimilated tends to stay regardless of whether it is actually useful or not. You then find it difficult to shake off past experiences, which, as time goes by, you would rather feel free of.

When the Taurus energy is rooted in external influences, you may, through your basic gentle nature, inadvertently absorb others' problems. By thinking you are possessive of yourself, you actually become possessive of "pieces" of other people's needs that you eventually believe are your own. Unfortunately, you are most sensitive to those elements of

karma that have a sustaining quality to them. Thus, whatever you become enmeshed in can truly bind you. Your possessive need for objects and people ultimately comes to possess you. And, because your gentle, soothing nature does not like to disturb the external world (which you have absorbed into yourself), you can find it extremely difficult to regenerate yourself through the weight of burdens that have become your identity.

A search for pleasure through beauty, music, money, or sex can actually overwhelm your lifestyle. Through these avenues you try to reassure yourself of your worthiness. You can even imagine yourself as having the substance of others because you can unconsciously absorb the essence of others' achievements, convincing yourself that they are your own. When you do this, however, you can become lazy in terms of perpetuating your own resources. What originally begins as a search for security can ultimately become an unconscious fixation on the security of others that ends up making you feel timid, shy, and worthless in a world that has more than you could ever possibly hope to obtain.

There is a difference between seeing the world and attempting *to be* the world. When you feel too much of the world happening within yourself, there is little need to change a basically ineffective lifestyle. What began as jealousy ultimately becomes a false sense of security as you divide your loyalties between the impersonal self you believe you are and the personal self that is reaching for fullness. The danger of identifying with the essence of another, or feeding off another's identity, can become very real as you grope for "handles" in a world that is changing too fast for you to comprehend. It is interesting that with all the effort that this takes, you may fail to tap the potential resources within yourself. Thus, if you achieve anything, it is not truly your own, but rather, what you have either taken or borrowed from impersonal karma. Thus, you can experience a

sense of futility in the one area you truly seek; the ownership of yourself.

One of the greatest karmic difficulties of this ascendant occurs when you identify with impersonal consciousness for you tend to see others—not as they are—but rather as cohesive parts of the self you think you are. Because you unconsciously know that thoughts of money, jealousy, and insecurity are coming from the impersonal consciousness of the world, you can actually believe that everyone else in it feels the same way. Thus, you pull other people into yourself to confirm your convictions. The more you do this, the more you meet with resistance from others. Other people see you as stubborn, staid, or obstinately refusing to realize the differences between your personal understanding and the outlook of others. When this occurs, your sensitivities become rejected and you tend to turn inward upon yourself only to find you do not know how to use yourself because you are too accustomed to identifying your resources and sense of fullness with the external environment.

When this ascendant stays inside the doorway of the ascendant, however, you discover that life has a very different outlook. Rather than identifying with impersonal substance (which may change at times when you have no control over it) your identity is linked with your potential for expression. As the chart energies filter through the Venus-ruled ascendant, they harmoniously blend into a sense of usefulness. You see the potential in the environment, but personal thoughts, actions, and feelings are emanating from what you realistically understand you can do. The sense of security that this ascendant seeks comes from slowly learning how to usefully employ talents and abilities that are inherent within the horoscope. In this way, the world can change while you still experience the stability within the self. You learn the value of loving self amidst situations and circumstances which impersonally may or may not exude the love you have. Feelings

come from the soul and a great ability to feel leads to a lifestyle of gentle fullness. You may acquire things or collect objects, and may accumulate many possessions. But, in this case, a great appreciation of beauty is what prompts the acquisition of possessions rather than using possessions to impress others. Whatever you feel within your inner being (when it comes through the ascendant) becomes effectively earthed through the gentle, practical love that is natural for the Taurus ascendant. You understand how to do things and make things work. This ascendant can also enjoy and appreciate music without technically having to understand it. Most of all, the outlook on reality affords one of the best personality filters in the entire zodiac. It has an uncanny ability to shut out all impersonal karma that is not useful to the expression of inner potential. You can even become oblivious to impersonal interferences which might otherwise distract you from your purpose. You have the gift of continuity, and once started on any given course, can easily follow it through to completion. The external environment may offer distractions but it can be ignored if it ultimately has no value. In this way, your Taurus ascendant can perceive its place in the world by the way in which you are useful, and you will ultimately discover that the more you do the more you have the ability to do. Rather than looking for "handles" in life to hold onto for security, you feel the solid earth and the knowledge of what to do with it within yourself. You may not always verbalize all that you know but there is a natural quality in the personality that understands how to flow. Taurus ascendants are extremely sensitive to weather conditions and clairvoyantly can feel the ways in which the vibrations of any given day will either hamper or contribute to whatever is planned.

There is a sense of continued meaning in the Taurus ascendant that comes from the ability to plan and follow a plan to its successful conclusion. If you were to identify outside yourself, you would find too much interference for plans

to effectively manifest. It is only when you stay inside that you can selectively glide through the changing circumstances in impersonal karma while maintaining your original purpose.

There is an innate generosity in this ascendant. The potential of your inner being is drawn out by the Taurus ascendant so that it can give. Your personality wants to give and feels most comfortable with itself when it can please others by giving what others value. And, since Taurus is the sign of values, you have an instinctive ability to know the needs of those you love. Thus, the acquisition of money, wealth, and fullness is for the expression of putting more love and beauty into the world. You know how to cohesively express these energies by making yourself and the things you do, and stand for a gift of meaningful value to those whose life you touch.

It is only through doing with love and giving with feeling that the personality of the Taurus ascendant can be itself.

## The Gemini Ascendant

The Gemini ascendant is founded in literacy and understanding. You are keenly perceptive and have the ability to eloquently express all that you feel in your inner being. You can understand the nature of duality, and although you may seem at times hypocritical to others, it is your inherent ability to understand conflicting ideas that makes you popular.

When you live outside yourself and identify with impersonal karma, you fall into the trap of curiosity. Having to know all that you are identifying with, you soon learn how to copy the mannerisms, deeds, and ideas of other people. By doing this, you absorb a great deal of information, much more, in fact, than your inner being knows what to do with.

As a result, you flit from one "personality" to another, avoiding confrontation with your inner being. Unfortunately this leads to a lifestyle of comparison. You can easily become discontented with what your own life stands for when, through envy, you vicariously experience so many ideas from others. Not being in touch with your center, you often speak of things of which you have no real knowledge. This brings on competitive language challenges with others which only tend to frustrate and scatter you.

Although your mental agility is admirable, it can often be pointless. And, because you are not functioning from your center, you may become dependent on others to focus the potential for your inner being. This is the only ascendant that may so easily lose itself in others that you only superficially see yourself. Perhaps the most unreliable thing in impersonal karma is the changing kaleidoscope of ideas that exist every day. If you momentarily identify with these changing ideas, then you become unable to maintain a focused center in reality for the expression of your inner being. You may have many friends and be extremely popular because of the myriad of ideas of interest to you, but you may still lead a life that is ultimately pointless.

One of the greatest difficulties of this ascendant occurs when you identify with impersonal karma in the external environment and begin to subconsciously fear the effects of words on your inner being. You are particularly sensitive to language, words, and the way in which you are being perceived by others. Yet, because you are glib, you will often hide these sensitivities or hide yourself from yourself. Here is where the duality of Gemini gives you its greatest challenge. You want your words to have meaning for others, but you can actually be frightened of how deeply the words of others affect you.

One of the most common experiences with this ascendant is that although you can engage in a myriad of activities

you may still have the feeling that you are not doing what you are supposed to. This comes from external identification, which, because of its impersonality, cannot truly guide your personal life. The more you seek to understand ideas, the more restless and changeable you become (in tune with the changing ideas in consciousness that can so easily scatter your sense of purpose).

Having an interest in everything can be no better than having an interest in nothing. You may pride yourself as being the only person you know to understand what a "widget" is. But external identification fails to help you realize that there are better things to do with your ability to understand. An attraction to crossword puzzles, word games, riddles, and the thousands of questions that life poses every minute can bring the mind to the ultimate state of analyzing. All during this time your inner being lies dormant, unable to respond because you are too busy identifying outside the ascendant.

When the identity is rooted inside the doors of the Gemini ascendant, however, you experience a completely different outlook on life. All the different potentials within the chart become focused through an ability to perceive their relationship with each other. You perceive the great reservoir within yourself, and are able to activate ideas through an eloquent stream of thought that is forever pouring through your being. Rather than acting out ideas and attitudes inspired by others, you understand how to compose your thoughts so that they best express what you are feeling. Your instinctive sense of curiosity is based on interest rather than competition or comparison. As a result, you can learn much from the ideas that exist in impersonal karma, but they never sway you from the ideas that emanate from within. You can understand world concepts that are sketchy outlines or parts of the integrated whole that come from inner potential. You are a born communicator, and by staying within the doorway

of your ascendant, can have fluent control over the ideas you transmit and the means you use to express them. You could be a poet, a writer, or a teacher, for your words (rather than coming from disassembled pieces of impersonal karma) are being stimulated by the inner being as it is being directed by the soul. You have a natural ability for using all forms of media to transmit ideas. Your true talent, however, lies in the ability to educate, learn, and experience an ever-increasing understanding of yourself.

This is one of the most complex ascendants in the zodiac, for Gemini is symbolized by the legendary twins, Castor and Pollux. With one twin being mortal and the immortal, you experience the duality of these two different outlooks. The mortal twin knows that ultimately it must die and, therefore, is always running away from everything that symbolizes endings. The immortal twin sees beyond this and understands life as an eternal flow of ideas. This immortal twin usually has no difficulty staying inside the door of the ascendant. The mortal twin runs away from the self every time you experience some form of completion (which the mortal twin fearfully interprets as death). When this occurs, the mortal twin tries to establish temporary identification with anyone else just so that it experiences thoughts of survival. You are forever dividing yourself between identifying with impersonal karma or race consciousness and the personal karma that must be dealt with through your inner being. As a result, the personality experiences a definite sense of cleavage, ideas become two-sided, issues have different truths when viewed from different frames of reference. Even your sense of self is a duality. You are both a transmitter and a receiver of ideas. If you can manage to keep both twins within the ascendant, you can reach self-understanding. But if one twin keeps leaving the ascendant out of fear, then the external identity and the internal identity will always be at odds.

People who need to communicate have a desire to be understood by others. If you have Gemini rising you often reach out so hard that you unconsciously stay with the other person in consciousness until that person's ideas have been assimilated by you, causing more of a split. The mortal twin ego seeks an acceptable home for its thoughts in the mind of another. When you realize this, you can learn to control the mortal twin through the higher knowledge of the immortal twin. Thus, rather than leaving yourself (either out of fear or the desire to make your understandings better known), you can keep both halves of yourself inside the doorway of the ascendant and experience thought agreement within the totality of your own creative expression. This does not mean that feedback from the external world is unnecessary, for truly a communicator needs to experience a multitude of ideas to be able to add color, scope, and meaning to all that you are trying to express. But the way in which you experience the ideas in impersonal karma should be impersonal. Gemini rising must learn how to use the ideas coming from others without becoming only a mime.

There is a double channel of understanding when both halves of the ascendant line up with each other. The mortal twin questions what the immortal twin innately knows. The mortal twin collects and remembers information from the external environment so that it can confirm and validate all that the immortal twin expresses through the personality. Each time an idea emanates from the inner being it is confirmed by a like or similar idea that the mortal twin has envisioned as already existing in impersonal karma, and then the mortal half of the ascendant discards the idea, while the immortal half can express itself with the full potential of the individual's chart behind it. Thus a controlled flow of information is always working through the Gemini ascendant. And through this process of thought being confirmed and expressed, you are able to constantly validate your relationship with the world of ideas.

When you have Gemini rising and live outside of yourself, you tend to identify with communicators and writers for that makes you feel more literate and more aware. Thus, you can experience a very superficial existence. You can become so obsessed with trivia that you never see the full scope of understanding that it is your karma to perceive. When you live inside of yourself, you are able to go past personal identification with those you admire, and can experience the essence of the communicators' or writers' period in history, place in civilization, contribution to culture, and deeper meaning of what is actually being said. You can be free from analyzing the specific meanings of words, phrases, or forms of expression, and realize the true spirit of communication that is your contribution to a civilized world.

## The Cancer Ascendant

The Cancer ascendant contains within it the ability for nourishment, warmth and the essence of feeling a home for the self. Under the rulership of the Moon (which is directly linked with the soul) this very special ascendant has the ability to express the entire chart on a soul level. You have a great sensitivity to the values of loyalty, devotion, and the protective quality that sustains valuable feelings. To truly understand and use this ascendant, you must realize the difference between feeling and emotion. Feeling has an enduring quality that overrides the changing tide of emotions. The ability to care for things, people, or the world in general, is a feeling emanating from the quality of the soul. The day-to-day emotions that you experience stem from changing reactions to your environment. Feeling is less dependent on the environment, and because of its continuity, affords you a sense of stabilized identity within yourself. The emotional quality of

this ascendant only becomes pronounced when you identify with external karma.

The world is always changing—its moods are more variable than changes in the weather. When you have Cancer rising, and seek to find yourself through others, you tend to become particularly sensitive to the absorption of negative emotion. Your natural instinct is to warm, soothe, mollify and nourish. If you are unconsciously identifying with impersonal karma, these qualities are always activated in what you believe is your attempt to make yourself feel secure. Thus, you can feel moody and try to focus yourself on the remembrance of past positive emotions in order to calm and soothe the emotion you are experiencing. Still, you do not realize that the emotion was never yours in the first place.

There is a gathering and retaining quality in the sign Cancer which makes you almost a veritable magnet for assimilating the environment. The atmosphere sticks to you. Because these experiences or feelings actually come from different impersonal centers in external consciousness, you don't feel more secure through them. A natural sense of intuition can be of more benefit to others than yourself if you allow yourself to sympathize with every passing complaint in external consciousness.

You cannot build for everyone (or in fact, anyone) before you have found the home within the self. Identifying with external influences can make you cling to the momentary appearance of security in others. Time after time there is disillusionment, disappointment, or disenchantment as the changing world impersonally creates and recreates its karma.

This ascendant has an intimate, personal quality and you find it difficult to be aloof to anyone. As a result, the little slights or lack of affection that you can feel in the impersonal environment can easily be misunderstood as personal rejection. And, because you are on the outside looking

in, you can easily use imagination negatively and turn this sense of personal rejection against yourself. In such instances, you can imagine that your needs are unnoticed by a world that is too big or too busy to realize how much you personally want to be a part of it.

You often gives to others much more than you realize. This occurs because the individuals who receive your gifts are moving on with their lives while you stay rooted to the past. This attachment to past memories occurs largely because of your identification with the external consciousness. If you are acting autonomously, you can basically proceed with life at your own pace. But, when you try to draw your center from external karma, then the flock of thoughts and emotions which change so slowly can actually keep you stuck in your conception of how the world *was* rather than how your relationship to it now actually is. On the surface this seems to be a paradox because impersonal karma changes every minute. It is within these changes that the bulk of world karma hardly changes at all. And, it is this larger essence of decadence that Cancer rising can be magnetized to if you are trying to maintain past feelings of security while living outside of yourself.

You may experience many emotional new beginnings and fresh starts but may never truly establish a feeling of emotional security that you seek. You apply a sense of loyalty and devotion to ideas and people who always seem to grow past you. And, while you try to retain your sense of world family through the togetherness that makes you comfortable, your psychic receptivity keeps being distracted from the central focus you are trying to establish. One of the greatest joys in life is giving, nourishing, or experiencing the birth, growth, and blossoming of that which has been given. When you have your identity rooted in external consciousness, you are unable to experience these feelings. Instead, your lifestyle is the result of a hectic turmoil of impersonal emotion that

keeps taking the foundation out from under you. The more you try to secure yourself, the more you absorb and retain the insignificant emotions, which, because they have no center within you (and come from all that is personally not a part of your life), are dissipating and pulling in different directions at every moment. Thus, you experience many emotional extremes which cause you great frustration.

In this condition your natural sense for retaining objects, experiences and people works against you. You retain burdens, and although you try to develop strength to carry them, you keep reabsorbing excess emotion from other sources which will ultimately become more burdens. Thus, you live in a vicious cycle, clinging to whatever has the appearance of emotional security. You can become attached to money and people if you feel they can protect and provide for your needs. When you do this, you unconsciously offer emotional dependency as payment.

Most karma is the result of emotional memories. And, because Cancer is so vulnerable and susceptible to the emotional memories in the environment, you can easily absorb the karma of others without even realizing it. When you try to find your personal security in a home outside the self, you tend to create and recreate the problems of others within your own sphere.

When your identity is kept inside of the doorway of this Cancer ascendant, the entire outlook on life is different. You perceive everything through feelings rather than emotions. All that is within must filter through the ability to intuitively and instinctively feel yourself or your environment before you express emotion. You can sense the fullness within yourself rather than reaching for fullness from others. You feel at home within yourself and the protectiveness of being guided by the feelings that are linked with your soul. Instead of being sensitive to negative emotion in external karma you are able to use sensitivities to be in tune with the changing pat-

terns of nature. You understand the daily and seasonal flow of natural currents; you know how to feed on the beauty and harmony that are nature's way. You even instinctively understand what foods bring out the natural rhythm of your soul.

There is a very special blessing in the Cancer ascendant for it symbolizes the miracle of birth. And, whether it be physical birth or the birth of an idea, it is nevertheless the beginning source of feeling. All that is within your soul can be made manifest if you identify with your true feelings. In this way, your divine nature, unaffected by external stimuli, can pour through you in everything you do. Sometimes child-like, at other times somewhat overprotective, you are the essential sap in the tree; pouring its nourishment to the branches that depend on you.

Any time you go against your true feelings, you will be susceptible to countless discouraging emotions in impersonal karma. But, when you stay in your true feelings, you will discover that you are in touch with the warmest and the most gratifying experiences that life has to offer.

## The Leo Ascendant

The Leo ascendant contains within it the creative principle of life. You have both the will and the power to express the radiant beauty that you feel within. You understand how to ride on the wings of golden opportunities so that your potential in your inner being can expand through the sunshine of your personality. You have more hope and optimism than any other ascendant in the zodiac. And, as a result of these two qualities, you are able to successfully achieve whatever you desire.

Sometimes the strength in this ascendant becomes too overwhelming. And, instead of staying inside yourself, you reach for more than what is emanating from the inner being

and starts identifying with impersonal karma. You then become attracted to glitter, glamor, and the folly of theatrical, melodramatic circumstances or events which can ultimately come to rule the life. The Leo ego is a powerful one. And, when you identify with the impersonal ego in the external world, it tends to multiply beyond your control. As a result, this ascendant can easily become lost in all that enhances self-aggrandizement. Unfortunately, when you do this, it is not you yourself that is being enhanced at all! Instead it is the impersonal thoughts, feelings, and actions that you are calling your identity. Thus, regardless of how financially successful you may ultimately become, or how magnanimous, generous, or expansive you may actually be, there is always an unrewarding sense within telling you that something is missing.

More than any other ascendant, it is extremely important for you to stay inside the self. The Sun symbolizes the center of things, and if it is to be effective, its power must emanate from the point of a circle outward toward the circumference. When you are identifying with impersonal karma in the external environment, this is not possible. Instead of being at the center of the circle, you try to stand at the center of other people's circles, and be for them what you truly should be for yourself. As a result, you go out of your way to command attention. You seek admiration and try to exemplify for others all that they could be doing with their lives. But, as the impersonal karma in the environment changes, so do the examples you set for others. As a result, your point of consciousness is always changing to protect a lost ego from being shattered.

Leo rising can center around wealth, fame, notoriety, or the applause of those kept near because of their inferiorities. But, this is momentary and doesn't truly afford this ascendant the opportunity to blossom.

You can create many illusions about self and the world because when living outside the self you become like a magnifying lens to the ego illusions that exist in impersonal karma. Excess becomes a normal way of life and pride is the chariot of splendor that you ride. Whatever flack you receive from others only tends to spur you on in what ultimately becomes a quest for power. You give advice freely and generously as this gives a false sense of control. You would do things for others to show them how little they do for themselves. In essence, you can easily become the example of everything everybody wants. And, to sustain the image, you must also develop a powerful martyr complex. The more you are burdened by carrying others, the more you can easily justify why you do it. As a result, your personality becomes wrapped up in a vicious competition in which you are creating not only the actions but also the reactions of others. When this is done, it becomes almost impossible to see into yourself, for your light is too bright, your power too much, and your control too strong for the inner being to respond positively to such force. Thus, you must continue to stimulate others rather than yourself. And, the more you find you are able to gain their attention by creating dramatic illusions, the less you feel the need to live in the real world. As a result, you conceive of a universe in which you alone, are in control of the rules which govern everybody else. Knowledge and understanding become above reproach in this unconscious kingdom in which you are somehow separate and above those whose love you truly need.

You may ultimately come to see yourself as the source of other people's brightness. You are their hope, salvation, and the only guiding strength that can lead them out of their mundane struggles. The more you create this type of image, the more you must seek those things, people, or circumstances in the external environment that support it. Instead of being in control of yourself, you become controlled by

your environment. Challenges lure you. Promises of success and attainment in divergent areas can distract you from your purpose. And, the widely disparaging needs of others can easily dissipate your energies as you try to prove all that you truly doubt in yourself.

The creative principle has a very special blessing inherent in it. It is the very first hexagram in the *I Ching* (the Chinese *Book of Changes*). To create is to imitate one's creator. It is the very inspiration of life itself. Thus, whatever you create is a reflection of how you interpret the creative power of your God. Creativity then carries a strong responsibility with it. Whatever your interpretation of divinity might be, it seems likely that we are on this Earth for the purpose of expressing creation. When your Leo ascendant learns how to stay inside of the self, then all that is created not only comes from the potential within your inner being, but is also directed along the path of your soul's progress. Thus, instead of being obsessed with power you do not know how to use, you are able to emanate all that is seeking expression from within. If challenges are met, it is not because of competition with others but rather because of a nature to master whatever is confronted. To exert control is not to control others, but rather to understand how to take command of the inner being. Instead of pride and the lost ego that usually causes pride, a quality in life is sought which will not make experiences an embarrassment to the conception of God being emulated. Thus, staying within the doorway of the ascendant, you are in harmony with the greatness and power of creatively expressing the potential of your soul. And, within this greatness, there is much room for humility and modesty since you are not competing with others. You can see the lures to the ego in impersonal karma, but understanding your creative purpose controls and keeps you safely within the limits of your personal life path.

Under the rulership of the Sun, this ascendant symbolizes the quintessence of the enlightened personality. When the

identity is kept inside of the ascendant, the qualities of sincerity, loyalty, and moral decency become the focal points of consciousness for the entire chart. As a result, you can experience the quality of goodness in life that creatively brings all good things into expression. Rather than living through false pride, you can use a powerful sense of self to avoid using others. Thus, a Leo ascendant can be a glorious example of the grandeur of humanity in its most shining hour.

## The Virgo Ascendant

The Virgo ascendant symbolizes humanity's ability to order the personality. If you have Virgo rising, you can understand how to discriminate between that which is good, better, and that which will ultimately bring forth the purity within the soul. Here is the most sensitive personality filter of all the ascendants in the zodiac. You have an extremely narrow channel through which an innate sense of decency can be contained and protected from all which might otherwise destroy pureness of the ideals. You can be thoughtful, cultured, and humane within a framework of reason, which is the very essence of your personality.

If you identify with external karma (and live outside the ascendant), a lifestyle of utter frustration may be experienced. In the course of but a single day there are literally millions upon millions of thoughts or ideas that flow through the ethers. A great sensitivity, along with a need for order makes you critically examine all thoughts that are absorbed. This may be experienced as a steady flow of nervousness, for no matter how much is analyzed, nothing can be resolved. Behavior may have a frenetic quality to it which unceasingly pushes you to criticize and deal with karma that is not truly personal.

You can become overly health conscious, even hypochondriacal, or obsessional, depending upon current fads or advice assimilated from others. You can be overly excessive and fastidious about your work in order to out run the nervous energy that is inadvertently being created. In searching for what truly bothers you, you can become involved in so many details emanating from the external environment that you can become trapped in "micromania."

The more you personally attempt to order your environment (which impersonally must follow its own order anyway) the more you become out of tune with the reality of your relationship to the world. You attempt to solve riddles which are not within your power to solve, or you react to the changing balance of nature as if somehow it was personally upsetting the order you planned. Of course, when you are living outside of yourself, and have a good sense of order, then disorder in the environment easily becomes a personal affront. The greatest difficulty of the Virgo rising personality (when you identify with external influences) is the way in which you deal with others as human beings. Through nervousness, and the attempt to insulate yourself against absorbing all that is either too crude or too disordered to fit into your planned personal conception of the universe, you tend to block your personality structure. You can divide yourself into little compartments as different parts of yourself are neatly organized. You don't experience the flow of life that allows your personality to easily integrate with others. In relating to others, you become overly mechanized, rigidly defensive, or critically narrow minded as you try to judge whether or not your personal universe is either being accepted or toppled.

You judge yourself by your ideals. You judge others by their actions. And you systematically seek to establish a circle of friends and acquaintances which fits the order you have

constructed. People are all imperfect and this knowledge is disappointing. Because you identify with others, you realize the possibility that their imperfections may wear off on you. In a way, you perceive the world as a contagious place in which you must either be strictly defensive (in order to survive) or you see people as extensions of the things they do and the things they own (rather than as the human beings they are trying to be).

When you live inside the protective doorway of your ascendant, your perception of yourself, as well as your relationships with others and the external world, is radically different. This outlook means you can no longer be judgmental of the external world. You will seek to purify your own motives. You will be sensitive to the potential within your inner being and understand how to express this through order and reason. Rather than being critical of yourself or others, you use your keen discriminating ability to best express yourself whenever you have the opportunity.

Virgo is a unique ascendant. When you live inside yourself, it raises the quality and purity of the entire chart. Even when aspects are indicated in the horoscope which pertain to mankind's lower nature, these aspects become refined as they express through the filter of the Virgo ascendant. If you live outside of yourself, the ideals of the Virgo ascendant become too high to achieve. Thus, no matter what you do you cannot please yourself. But, when living inside the karmic doorway of the ascendant (connected to your source), you can easily function at positive karmic levels. Nothing can emanate from this chart that is beneath the standards of your high moral character. In this sense, you do not compromise yourself, for rather than being critical of others, you seek to maintain a level of consciousness through which the finer potentials of inner being can manifest. You know the moral value of identity and that you must be obedient to yourself if you are to

serve yourself. Rather than forming judgmental opinions concerning the rules of society that exist in impersonal karma, you maintain a finer discriminating ethic within yourself. If you were to identify with external karma, then you would personally be identifying with everything in the world that needs to be corrected. As a result, it would seem that everything you think and do is somehow wrong or others must somehow correct you. As a result, you could experience powerful feelings of inferiority. You can criticize others in an attempt to balance this, but it is never fully convincing that your personality adequately functions at the level which satisfies the soul. Thus, you can be a perfectionist with no point. But when your identity is firmly rooted within yourself, you are able to devise systems which make you feel capable of functioning in any given situation.

Because of a natural attention to detail, you have a tendency for a great deal of mental self-examination. You constantly study and analyze ways you can put your mind in better order. You devise "computer-like" methods of sorting and storing information. When your identity is rooted outside the ascendant, you tend to manipulate your mind, and the more you are able to find storage places or categories for all that is coming in, the more you feel that your personal consciousness is functionally effective. The difficulty here is that you can spend your entire life solving problems of personality which exist only because you have personalized enough information to prove the ways in which you can make your mind work. As a result, you work on your mind rather than through it, attempting to mechanically construct a consciousness which is livable. You become preoccupied with a great deal of extra thoughts which lead you to answers but not solutions. The more you try to order your consciousness, the more dehumanized you actually make yourself. As a result, rather than experiencing life the way it is, you can fall into the trap of becoming a puppet-like robot, often

reacting negatively to strings pulled or buttons pressed by yourself.

When you stay inside this ascendant, you don't have to manipulate. You become your own source of consciousness, rather than being external pieces of impersonal karma that are somehow trying to put the pieces of your puzzle together. Once this consciousness is purified and expressed, the ideals of Virgo act as a discriminating filter allowing you to function through your mind rather than working on it. You seek quality rather than quantity in life. You are able to do this without having to criticize that which is not for you in impersonal karma. You can see an order in the way of things, and rather than being puritanically critical, you are able to function modestly while achieving much. You have a strong sense of presence in the here and now, and know how to use the best potential of your chart without splitting yourself into pieces. The more you function from inner being, the more the Virgo ascendant takes you to the top. You can instantly sense the divine essence in objects and ideas. Rather than filling your mind with extraneous nonsense you are able to achieve an efficient lifestyle.

Since the North Node (through its purifying quality) is very much like the sign Virgo, you can easily learn the lessons your soul leads you to. You don't have to compromise. The Virgo ascendant, when used properly, is not a product of ego. Instead, you seek a higher understanding of self-potential, not only within the framework of what you are capable of, but also within the context of how obligations can be meaningfully fulfilled through useful contact with the impersonal environment. Thus, you do not have to analyze yourself to understand yourself. All you have to do is allow the different parts of yourself to function through the categorical filters of the Virgo ascendant.

## The Libra Ascendant

This is one of the most unique ascendants in the zodiac. To understand it, remember that the ascendant itself signifies the rising sun in the morning. This is the hope of mankind for the entire day. We optimistically expect that, as the sun rises, so, too, will our dreams, our plans, and the need for expression that we feel emanating from our being. When any of the first six signs of the zodiac are on the ascendant, the individual's lower nature tends to follow the expanding course of the rising sun. Thus, in a small way, our human qualities emulate the natural qualities of the universe in which we live.

As the seventh sign of the zodiac, however, Libra represents the setting sun. After mankind has tried to express its personal individuality, there comes a point at which we realize the implications of sunset. Here, in the Libra ascendant, mankind does not have the hope or optimistic expectations of the rising sun to carry us through the day. Instead, we feel the exhaustion of personal effort and see the futility of attempting to impress our will upon others.

When you have Libra rising, your personality is made up of love, harmony, and an ability to cooperatively share the essence of beauty that you feel. Graceful in nature, affable and friendly, you find outward displays of the ego as something which takes you away from the peaceful existence you are entitled to experience. It is difficult for you to contact your ego, for it is against your nature to use ego only for yourself. This is the one ascendant that can truly achieve a state of selflessness, as you bring yourself to be more in harmony with nature's balance. Because ego expression is extremely weak here, it is easy for you to live outside yourself.

When you allow your identity to link up with sources outside your ascendant, you experience a lifestyle of

extremes. In trying to feel the harmony and love within yourself (which is truly your basic nature) you continually attempt to harmonize the different types of impersonal karma that you internalize from your environment. As a result, you often are at odds with yourself, and you try to balance one thing with another. You may experience too little of one quality in life, and as an extreme, go to excess with some other unrelated characteristic which gives you the illusion of balance. In this sense, you can watch too much television to balance feelings of rejection that you have absorbed. Or, you can overeat if the clothes you buy do not fulfill your sensitive taste for color and design. In both instances, the solutions you seek do not ultimately balance the reason you seek them. You may absorb a disharmonious idea during the course of everyday conversation and then go miles out of your way to find an opposing idea which gives you a false sense of balance. In this way, you can become contrary kaleidoscopes of extremes, never truly feeling or belonging to any of the ideas that flow through, but nevertheless attempting to maintain a sense of equilibrium in a world of opposites.

In conversation, you will often present the opposite point of view; not necessarily because you agree with it, or even stand for it, but because both sides of an opinion need to be presented.

The nature of love, rather than coming from a world of opposites, is the true acceptance of all that actually is. When you live outside yourselves, you cannot experience this. Instead, you experience the disharmony of ego disappointment that exists in impersonal karma. You cannot forcefully express the discontinuous array of ideas that flow through you because you are unsure of your sources. Thus, you experience a great deal of indecision and may never clearly understand the nature of truth. Rather than being original and unique, you tend to muddle around with second-hand ideas and you may not know how to put ideas into action.

On unconscious levels, you marry yourself to everyone whose ideas bring you a sense of peaceful acceptance. Thus, you subtly form intimate partnerships and relationships with many people. Finding in each individual that place where harmony and love are missing, you try to fill the gap. This helps to overcome personal feelings of rejection that you might have. Because these subtle unconscious alliances are really not personal at all, you never really experience the fulfillment of love that your soul actually seeks.

Life, then, is basically a self-created dream world. But, because your Libra ascendant is identifying with impersonal karma, the dream you live is not even your own! You mirror dreams of other people and when you try to see yourself, you can hardly see through the mist of what you have allowed the world to impress upon you. Being almost obsessed with creating harmony in others, you often find it difficult to maintain contact with your own true needs. Thus, your sense of well being becomes almost totally dependent upon forces and people outside of yourself. You use others for the sunrise of life, and rather than emanating from one center of being, you become a circle revolving around the centers of others.

You may eventually sense that you express abilities not truly your own. This causes frustration and gives the feeling that nothing will bring you to your personal niche in the world. You are not self-demanding and are, therefore, unable to compete with powerful, expressive drives of other egos. You can experience more strength of self by identifying with others, but then lose your sense of personal identification.

You seek a gentle, calm lifestyle; but, when you latch on to other egos for strength you tend to disturb your own sense of calm. And, because you unconsciously know how much you take from others, your divine giving nature tends to make you overcompensate in an effort to repay and balance the scales of karma. Thus, you can help others learn karmic les-

sons. Although this outlook on life is practically void of selfishness, it nevertheless tends to create confusion within. The environment guides you rather than your true inner nature. You may become the changing expression of the inner nature of others, unable to understand your own special qualities.

When you live inside the doorway of the ascendant, however, your lifestyle is totally different. All the potential of your inner being filters through a gift of love before it reaches expression. You still do for others, but not because you want acceptance. Instead, you give because you are a giver and what you give you never take credit for—silently understanding that the gift of giving is felt not through what you give but how you give it. The focus is an identification with love, and although you still need other people with whom to share, you do not lose your personal center in the process. The greatest gift of the Libra ascendant is the ability to give another person himself. To do this you allow your inner being to express lovingly through your ascendant—without quibble or reservation. In relating to others, you do not offer competition.

You know that when you are connected to your inner being nothing in the world could possibly hurt or take away from yourself, for you are love, and love is an endless pouring stream that replenishes itself in direct proportion to the amount you allow it to flow. Rather than seeing the world through rose colored glasses, you see artistic and aesthetic possibilities in your environment. When living inside the ascendant, you can easily accept the scenery of impersonal karma without feeling a personal mission to change it. You know how to let things be. The beauty in this sunset ascendant comes, not from feeling the exhaustion of ego, but rather from understanding that you do not need a powerful ego to function harmoniously in the world.

You see the use of power and force in the world, but are not interested in aligning with it. Where others compete for

survival, you can placidly experience a sense of contentment. Others may view you as lazy, but it is your sense of gratitude with all that is, that makes you avoid forcefully impressing yourself on the world of impersonal karma. You know that one cannot punch a feather. The more an individual tries to be *more* than others, the less he ultimately is to himself.

When the potential of your inner being filters through your personality's capacity for love, your lifestyle becomes one of high quality. Karma that can be worked out through love is handled, and karma that cannot be done through love cast aside as a lesser and more primitive form of expression. Warmth and affection exude from you because you have these natural qualities and not because you hope to gain anything material from it. When this ascendant is used correctly, you do not have to question your capacity for love. Karmically, you see the mistakes in the world that are caused by mankind's selfishness and you fulfill yourself most by finding ways to put more harmony and beauty into the world you love so much.

## The Scorpio Ascendant

This is the most mysterious ascendant in the zodiac. If you have a Scorpio ascendant, you feel the never-ending power for regeneration surfacing through your personality. Personal ideals are extremely high and you will go to great lengths to improve all that you feel is capable of being reformed. You experience great transformations, and from the depths of truth within yourself, you can see the unconscious planes of existence through which others delude themselves.

You are a seeker of the first order. Not content to scan the surface, you must push away all that disturbs your idealistic nature until you find the causes of whatever bothers you.

Through an ability to intuitively understand the unconscious, you are able to correct the very roots of dissension, bringing meaning, purpose, or the fulfillment of your expectations for a greater future.

When you live outside yourself, you can become overly sensitive to unconscious sexual vibrations in impersonal karma. You can come to believe that your personal sex drive is overwhelming, when in fact you are identifying with the sex drives of other people. Since Scorpio is the sign of elimination, through which society exudes its waste, you can experience a tremendous amount of discontent and frustration in all that you believe to be yourself. You can become angry, quarrelsome, bitter, or resentful. If you are vibrating at a negative level, you can easily believe that the world is doing things to you when in fact it is only impersonally fulfilling itself. From this point of view, you can experience strong feelings of paranoia which force you to seek a secluded island or haven for yourself—away from the incessant persecution you perceive. You can be sharply critical of others, for you see the worst in everyone. Your outlook is often biased, and turbulent emotions are still the result of your response to negative emotions in the external environment.

You can become preoccupied with death, the power of occult forces, or thousands of superstitious beliefs which you may believe is personal karma to overcome. Thus, you keep testing yourself, or putting your personality through one challenge after another to prove that ultimately anything can be conquered. The more you seek to find the point of your incessant seeking, however, the more you become obsessed in a self you have no control over. The greed, envy, and jealousy that exists in impersonal karma possesses you and you are unable to reach your higher self. Your personal shrewdness outsmarts you for when you try to see yourself or others through the eyes of others you lose your naturally keen sense of perception. It is your individuality that sharpens your

senses. When you allow your identity to dissipate in others, you blur your vision and lose your sense of perspective. You may believe that other people always have ulterior motives, or that there is always reason to be on guard. As a result, you live in lurking suspicion, hiding behind the defensive walls of others. In this way you seek refuge from all that your mind is obsessively creating.

It becomes difficult to "lighten up" when what you perceive is actually the waste products of society. When you have a Scorpio ascendant, you often try to reform these waste products because you identify with them. To discard waste would be to discard yourself. Thus, you must attempt to create transformations where they may not be possible or even desirable. As a result, you can find battles where there are none. You can follow the tail end of impersonal karma, complaining all the while about an inability to impress your personality in the niche you seek. You may even grow dependent upon finding people whose internal battles provide fuel to perpetuate your own negative flow. You can prove that you are right, even if you aren't. And you can easily find weaknesses in others, which help you to perpetuate your own myth. The more you see weaknesses in others, the more you can convince yourself that your own lot in life (amidst the waste and debris of society) is sufficiently desirable. Competing with waste, you can easily win any rat race, not realizing you are only proving that you can be the biggest rat.

Since Scorpio rising is extremely intuitive, however, you do sense somewhere within that you are not being true to yourself. Regardless of what level in life you function on, you nevertheless maintain a higher self through which you can perceive all that you do. Thus, the more you lie to yourself, denying the true nature of your inner being, the more you come to hate yourself. When this occurs, you try to destroy your personality for you sense the unworthiness of

your lower self as it tries to hide from your higher idealistic qualities.

When you live inside the doorway of your ascendant, however, your entire outlook on life takes on a different complexion. The Scorpio ascendant has great depth, and can act as a direct channel through which your potential of your inner self can emerge. Rather than denying possibilities that seem to be beyond your capabilities, you can see the fullness within yourself as the very core of your personal being.

Scorpio is the center of the soul. It is through this sign that you are able to perceive all that is unconsciously directing life. When this ascendant is linked up with the potential of the inner being and the lessons of the soul, you feel a powerful sense of dedication and purpose in all you do. Rather than attempting to transform the waste products of society, you see yourself as an endless succession of growth experiences. And because of these experiences, you can easily discard the past, for it no longer exists in your consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

If you were to identify with impersonal karma, it would be only natural to begrudge your past mistakes and project them into future experiences. This would occur because of the echo-pattern through which impersonal karma keeps recreating itself. When your identity is strongly rooted inside the doorway of your Scorpio ascendant, you know how to close doors behind you. Rather than being the victim of destructive thoughts which keep rambling through your mind, you are able to shut out and turn off anything no longer necessary for future progress. Your senses are sharp, intuition is keen, and you are guided by the ways in which the soul chooses to use your inner being. Thus, instead of wasting energies fighting with waste, or peering into the lives of others for no ultimate

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<sup>3</sup>See *Karmic Astrology, Volume IV: The Karma of the Now*, by Martin Schulman (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1979).

purpose, you are able to direct your own divine qualities through an intense personality that enables you to accomplish what your soul came here to do.

Seeing waste in the world is not identifying with it. You can be content with your purpose, regardless of whether or not others are fulfilling their capabilities. It is less important to transform the world than to transform yourself. Rather than possessively holding onto feelings about objects, people, or experiences, you discover that you can easily regenerate yourself by letting go of what you cannot control and being wise enough to know that the most you can ever hope to master is yourself. As a result, you don't expend excess energy in useless places. You are functional, precise, and live through a clear, but deep, stream of consciousness which enables you to cut through the sham in life easily. You have the power of healing and can heal yourself as well as others without losing yourself. You can feel secure in the most insecure situations without having to build your foundation on the defeats of others.

You are basically realistic and although you can see things as they could be (through your efforts), you never lose sight of the way things actually are. Instead of competing with others, you accept challenges within yourself and measure your successes in life, not through competitive achievements with others, but through the manifestation of your own divine nature.

You are a loner but are not alone, for within yourself you sense the fulfillment of life's regenerative processes. You can easily discard ideas once believed without feeling you are losing anything valuable. You can leave friends, relationships, and marriages at a moment's notice if you sense a higher calling.

When your identity is rooted outside of yourself, you become obsessively preoccupied in solving the deep problems you sense in others. This occurs because you see yourself as

part of that impersonal force in the world through which change comes about. Unfortunately this kind of an outlook can lead to martyrdom. Viewing the world through the keen and perceptive doorway of the constructive Scorpio ascendant, you gain the opportunity to deeply perceive the great mysteries of life without having to be personally involved in the karma of others.

When the Scorpio ascendant is used in this way, you do not experience a selfish lifestyle. Instead you understand that deepest needs will always be fulfilled if you stay at the depths which only this sign has the capability of reaching. When this is done, it becomes possible to dissipate a great deal of negative karma quickly, and to personally experience the miracles of evolution which bring you to new levels of self-awareness.

This ascendant has a particularly intimate relationship with the very roots of life itself. If you have Scorpio rising, you can feel the subtle undercurrents thrusting forth from the forces of nature. You understand the hidden meanings within yourself and the world you live in. Thus, you have the ability to sense the inner core of life at its deepest essence and can see how outward appearances are the result of the true inner nature of everything. From this vantage point you personally feel a deep sensitivity to life's essential essence. This sensitivity also helps you understand the reason for the sweeping changes that are constantly moving through you as your soul pushes you to regenerate your purpose and your function while moving toward achieving the eventual mastery of yourself.

## The Sagittarius Ascendant

If you have a Sagittarius ascendant, you experience a wealth of opportunity in all areas of life. You have many possibilities for experiencing abundance. While you do not go deep in

any area, your breadth and scope of prophetic vision give an innate sense of wisdom. Instantaneously you know the "all" of any given situation rather than having to sort through the details. Your spontaneous, up-lifting outlook is a veritable joy to those around you. And, your gift of spontaneous communication can solve within a few words the thousands of thoughts that bewilder the lower mind. You are a master at getting to the point and finding expedient ways of self-expression.

When you live outside of yourself, however, and identify with impersonal karma, you become completely scattered. Your attraction to all that is abundant in life makes you the victim of excess. Your span of attention is short, and although your interests are many, they change before you can realize their fulfillment. Like the changing winds of a forest fire, you seem to blow in many directions at the same time, and enthusiasm becomes easily dissipated as one frustration after another clouds your gift of vision.

The great number of opportunities that exist in impersonal karma are so vast that no one individual can ever truly expect to realize even a small percentage of them. If you have Sagittarius rising and you allow your identity to be influenced by all of the momentary attractions in impersonal karma, you become overwhelmed. First, your ego conception of yourself grows out of proportion. Then, because you are identifying with the possibilities of others, your hope for ever achieving anything at all is falsely rooted in forces outside yourself which you cannot control.

This question of control is a particular problem for the Sagittarius ascendant. Not digging too deeply into anything, you find it hard to establish the anchors in life that give you a firm sense of grounding. Thus, the value and meaning in life is lost almost as quickly as it is found. You can be "a jack of all trades," while never truly realizing the fulfillment you could find in any one of them. There is such a fear of missing

out on something that you cannot even commit yourself to things that have meaning for you, because it might preclude new and attractive opportunities which might be in your path in the future.

Of all the signs in the zodiac, Sagittarius rising is most easily magnetized by the changing sensations of external influences. Marriage, or other confining experiences are difficult to endure. The more you see the external world, the more restless you become. And, your tremendous thirst for life and experience ultimately begins to own you.

You are an overdoer, but the quality of what you do lacks completion. You begin different projects, different relationships, and put your mind in different places at the same time. As a result, you cover much ground very quickly but your vision is so farsighted that you rarely see the center of your own being. When things go wrong, you reach for other things, other people, and new experiences which carry the bright promise of hope that you are seeking. The more you repeat this process, the more your life becomes one of inexhaustible activity with little progress. There is often much movement, but it can be pointless folly which keeps you from ever being your true self. The more you identify with excessive experiences in impersonal karma, the more you become judgmental of all the things in life that do not work for you. And yet, you lack the ability to discriminate, because discrimination takes time, patience, and a great deal of impersonal thought.

Your identification with impersonal karma causes you to be thrown into the arena of life, and you are unable to keep your distance from experiences which could be harmful. In effect, the world seems to be happening inside of you rather than you functioning within it. The greatest problem here is the discontent and frustration that is felt because impersonal karma changes so quickly that you never quite settle down into what might be rewarding. Your great attrac-

tion to amusements of all sorts keeps you vibrating at a pitch which goes too fast, and you may not notice how much of life's meaning you are actually missing. You seem to rush past life instead of stopping to know its essence. You use up people rather quickly, moving through their entire being without truly appreciating what they have for you. Again and again, you are disappointed as your changing enthusiastic outlook keeps reaching for what you have not yet experienced. Interestingly enough, each new experience holds no more fulfillment than the last. For it is not the experiences that can give you what you seek, but rather a more realistic outlook emanating from a more centered point of consciousness. It is easy to become opinionated without even realizing it, and you can seek an abundance of opinions to minimize the importance of any one opinion. When you do this, it becomes possible to justify almost anything. The world of impersonal karma has reasons for everything. It appears to present a multitude of truths but it actually only hides the center of truth.

The Sagittarius ascendant leads you toward the seeking of truth. But the more you try to find it in the external environment, the more you become confronted with the illusions of truth which are the products of other people's beliefs. Thus, you find that the more you know, the more you grow confused.

This ascendant has a great affinity for travel. When you live outside yourself, you believe that places affect the quality of your life and you seldom understand that all places are within yourself. Different textures and vibrational qualities at different locations show subtle contrasts in nature. If you believe that environment has a great affect on your outlook in life you are missing the point. The environment is for you to appreciate. It provides a place for you to express feelings, understandings, and an ability to be creative, but you are not your environment. You can realize this by understanding

how two people can perceive the same environmental circumstances differently because each is bringing something different to it.

When you identify with impersonal karma, you can come to idealize a philosophy (or way of thinking) which can ultimately monopolize your entire being. Since there are more thought vibrations in impersonal karma than there ever could be within any given person, you can believe that a philosophy is correct merely because of the power of thought attached to it. This can manifest in excessive attachments to communal or spiritual movements which confirm your identification with something larger than yourself.

There is confusion about where you fit into the world, for it becomes difficult to accept your own personal "smallness" in the world. It is much easier for you to align with religious, spiritual, or philosophical movements, for their scope and size make you feel more adequate to deal with life. This kind of identification, however, is false truth; and it can lead you to believe in false prophets, or you may follow the direction of false spiritual movements.

It is not quantity that is important in life; it is actually the *quantity of quality* that enhances life's meaning. Quality is a characteristic that comes from within your inner being. When you live inside the doorway of your ascendant, you can feel the quality within yourself. And, from your feelings, you can begin to know what the quality of truth is really like. If you project yourself into a myriad of directions, you cannot see the truth, for you have no sense of perspective with which to measure it. If you stay inside of yourself, however, you can view the external environment from the quality of your inner being. You can selectively discriminate between the appearance of truth and what rings true within your inner being.

Truth is not mathematically proveable, nor is it necessarily statistically repeatable. Truth touches you at the very

core of your being, and makes your entire essence quicken to the spiritual power within. When you stay inside of yourself, you cannot be fooled by the appearance of truth, the illusion of enticing words, or ideas that exist in impersonal karma. Instead, you know what truth is, for you are truth! As your soul directs the potential in the chart, only that which is true on all levels of your being can filter through your personality. Thus, instead of judging others, you are able to experience self-observation. The more you do this, the more you raise your personality to a higher level of consciousness. Because your sense of truth is linked to the soul, you can experience a great deal of wisdom. Your broad outlook is often prophetic. Peering far into the future while remaining in the present, you can easily sense the outcome of any course of action.

This ascendant puts you on the path of enlightenment if you stay inside yourself. You do not have to experience anything in life that does not increase your awareness of your divine nature. Your sense of intuition is excellent when it is not muddled with external thoughts. This ascendant rules the higher mind. Whether you live inside or outside yourself, your higher mind (or ability to understand the true essence of things) will carry you through life. If you live outside yourself, you will be directing intuition or expending energy on useless follies, such as luck at cards or gambling. You might excel at knowing how to be in the right place at the right time, or you could be a successful opportunist. All of these uses of the higher mind, however, are perversions of what you are truly capable of. If you allow your higher mind to be linked up with your soul, you can experience a higher quality of living which can fulfill you on all levels. You can express your inner potential smoothly and easily through a youthful, vivacious spirit centered in truth. Your expansive visionary quality can be applied to understanding the essence of lasting joy, and you can do your karma triumphantly, as you easily

extricate yourself from the lower thoughts of humanity which could otherwise bind you.

This ascendant symbolizes unfoldment. As you grow, the potential within your chart opens like the petals of a flower which will ultimately bloom. If you identify with impersonal karma, you try to rush the unfolding process, which puts you out of tune with the rate at which you can successfully assimilate knowledge. By staying within the doorway of your ascendant, you put yourself in tune with the entire chart and can learn how to grow in the order and direction that your soul has planned for you. The flower of knowledge will unfold slowly, petal by petal, as your inner being learns how to seek the wisdom of nature's way.

## The Capricorn Ascendant

This is one of the most difficult ascendants in the zodiac. If you have a Capricorn ascendant, you experience a karmic life. The effects of past causes are constantly reverberating throughout your entire being. As a result, you feel a rather vague, but nevertheless built-in, sense of duty and punishment. You understand the need for caution, for you alone will reap whatever you sow. Thus, you move through life prudently, checking and rechecking every decision or motivation, so as not to put yourself in a position where you might have to "pay the piper." So strong is your sense of obligation and duty, that you subconsciously create paranoid feelings of being watched by some superior force, authority, or religious deity if you even contemplate doing anything against your conscience.

This ascendant gives you the possibility of achieving great works. The feeling that your life is being observed can work positively toward making you truly concerned with the lasting value and enduring quality of your deeds. You seek to

live for posterity, understanding the importance of life's essential meaning. Somehow, your own life must be a measure of some great traditional principle which is dear to you. You will go to great efforts to uphold such a principle and only feel secure when your identity is contained within its framework. You could be someone who establishes civilization, cultivates moral codes or becomes an advocator of future rules through which human decency can be achieved. You are actually a builder of society. And, through the rules, principles and traditions of the Capricorn ascendant, you become the actual foundation of all that society can build upon.

You are practical, realistic and down to earth. You understand that great achievements cannot be expected at the beginning of any project. You are willing to put in the effort to progress from the inception of an idea to its actual completion. However, you live under a foreboding fear of failure that penetrates your insecurities at the slightest rejection. The more insecure you become, the harder you work; and the more your efforts seem to be unrewarded, the more you can apply yourself to achieving the principle you choose to live for.

The greatest difficulty when you have this ascendant is the failure to contact your real feelings. You try to step outside yourself to see your worth through the eyes of others. When you do this, however, you start to personally identify with impersonal karma. Needing the approval and inspiration of others to achieve the greatness you seek in yourself, you use others' standards rather than your own principle or intimate path of personal value. In actuality, you may have just a few specific principles, codes, or morals which you can follow because of their personal importance to you. When you step outside your ascendant, you tend to unconsciously put the entire morality of a civilization upon your head. You can internalize martyr-like ethics of people who express

ideals which they may never be able to reach. You, too, then become a propagator of the traditional binding rules which appear to create order in society. You hope that rules will help you find some correctness within yourself which can substantiate, validate, and reaffirm your own personal reason for existence.

You can feel guilty for almost anything. But, not being basically in touch with your own feelings, you tend not to realize this. You inhibit your life and fearfully avoid expanding your consciousness or letting go of your tie to a society which you feel protects you. In truth, society is your prison. Its rules possess you. Its ethics make you repress your unconscious, and its "eyes" make you retreat fearfully into available hiding places. When you identify with impersonal karma you may unconsciously feel that whatever is wrong with the world is actually wrong with yourself. As a defense measure, you can develop a negative attitude; attempting to reject all you are at the same time absorbing. You fight yourself in a battle in which you are neither the conquerer nor the defeated, but rather the exhausted ruler who cannot manage your own affairs.

In attempting to emulate the ways in which others achieve dignity, you become too attached to money, possessions, and symbols of wealth. You can be a status-seeker without even realizing you are doing it.

Most karma is the result of misuse of the ego. When you create rungs and levels to an imaginary success ladder in your mind, you tend to place other individuals on steps which are either above or below you. As a result, you must either compete with them (if they are above) or manage them (if they are below). In both instances you will be unable to relate to others through a modest flow. Instead, you perceive others through a self-created image which may not be at all accurate. This is a great problem if you have a Capricorn ascendant. Your image of life is often a mirage, but it is so crystal-

lized through your attempts to seek solidity that you cannot see through your own karmic wall. And, indeed, it is a wall; for the more you see others as being better or worse, rather than being merely different, the more you remove yourself from the very essence of life itself.

The Capricorn instinct is based on survival. When you stay within the doorway of your ascendant, you don't feel threatened by the strengths you see in others. Instead, you are able to feel the solidity of your own potential as it takes form through your personality. From this point of focus, you can easily put your life in order. You do this by limiting your experiences to that which is useful; avoiding, without regret, all that would take you off of your meaningful path in life. You see the way others achieve distinction and quality, but you know you are the source of all you will be. Thus, to follow others would be fruitless, for the very best you could obtain would be their purpose rather than your own. If you subscribe to certain traditions, it is because you truly believe in them, and not because they are going to gain you some form of outward acceptance or recognition. If you live by certain rules, it is because you find them efficient. Your ability to conserve is based on foresight and vision, rather than a fear of future lack. In fact, all fears, phobias and inhibitions that are so common to this ascendant only manifest when you live outside yourself. You must learn it is the recognition of your value to yourself rather than others that matters. It is this attitude which is your fortress of protection, keeping you from being swept along by the needs and appetites of an ever-expanding world.

Staying inside your ascendant, you learn how to reap the fullness of your own abilities. And, regardless of the changing fortunes in the environment, you follow the plan that is given to you by your soul. You are never sorry for what you do not do. You use your ability to consolidate as a means of focusing your potential to its best possible use. In this way,

you not only achieve order, but you work toward a sense of permanence. The things you do will have staying power. And, regardless of whether or not they are traditionally acceptable to others, they symbolize the very real traditions you are building for yourself. In this way, you achieve humility with others while reaching the true karmic status that your soul is seeking.

You are able to sense an importance to life through which you understand how each individual has his or her own personal mission to fulfill. Thus, you can see quality in yourself and others, without having to feel a sense of competition.

This ascendant can indicate a life of initiation through which you discover the spiritual building blocks of your karmic being. Thus, you keep learning better and more effective ways of being in tune with your inner spiritual worth. As it says in the *I Ching*, "He gives up the child and attains the adult." The values of youth are abandoned for the treasure of wisdom that is the goal of an initiate. Whether or not you experience spiritual training, you will in some way learn the lessons of self-discipline. The more the inner potential of your chart becomes disciplined, the greater your achievements will be. But here, you must learn the difference between repression, inhibition, sublimation, and a true sense of self-discipline which focuses the entire chart, for focus here creates a frame of reference within protective limits so you can safely build—in form and matter—all the enduring value that your inner being can conceive.

Karma does not have to be a series of negative experiences. The consequences of your actions are only as negative or as positive as the actions themselves. Since this ascendant has a powerful built-in conscience, the spirit with which you do things is ultimately the cause of your karma. While this ascendant can appear in the charts people who have overextended themselves or over-stepped their limits in past incar-

nations, it points to the road back to normalcy. And, as you discover that there actually is a road, a path, and a direction with enduring meaning, you come to find that karma is the ever-changing result of how you grow sincerely closer to the true needs of your soul.

## The Aquarius Ascendant

This is the ascendant of discovery. It focuses your consciousness toward the development of new and futuristic understanding about life. There is great inspiration here, not only toward your own spiritual evolution, but also through an impersonal concern for the evolution of humanity. With an Aquarius ascendant, you have an inventive mind, which includes the ability to grasp the essence of ideas, original theories, scientific principles, and a heightened awarenesses about the world in general. You have the opportunity to achieve an enlightened state of consciousness. You can be impartially detached from yourself, the result of which is that you can see the truth of personal situations in an unbiased manner. The more you are impartial, the more your consciousness expands. And, the freedom of mind which you seek is then able to bring you to the knowledge of your soul.

Your greatest difficulty arises out of your insatiable curiosity. This alone can cause you to live outside the ascendant and identify with impersonal karma. When you do this, you become keenly attracted to all in the world that holds the possibility of unique and different interests. You can be friends with people who have different opinions and attitudes about life. Still, you are able to "walk between the drops," without taking sides. When you do this a lot, however, you become so accustomed to disengaging yourself that you can easily lose your sense of perspective. You can be close to others and yet so distant at the same time that you appear to

be remotely disinterested in whatever you are actually talking about.

When you live outside of yourself, you tend to absorb the impersonal ideals of humanity. Thus, you become a veritable storehouse of information, collecting knowledge from unrelated sources, and forming your being from what you believe to be the most valuable from different attitudes, religions, or outlooks on life. As a result, you can inadvertently develop a "piecemeal" consciousness. While you may view this as an eclectic outlook on life, it tends to dissipate you away from your true center of awareness. Unable to commit yourself to any one idea, philosophy, or religion for fear of missing other important points of view, you can develop your own self-righteous attitude based upon your pride about being impartial. Thus, you can be the victim of a spiritual ego which causes you to misinterpret your realistic place in life. You may unconsciously feel sorry for others whose more partial viewpoints lead them to be intensely committed to their beliefs. You may even see such individuals as evolving through states of consciousness which you have already transcended.

Impersonal karma is related to the future as well as the past. If you have Aquarius rising, it impels you to focus your concern on the ways in which future karma is being created now. You can become so aware of the implications of your thought and action, however, that you can actually develop a fear of involving yourself in any situation which might have karmic overtones. Thus, in spite of all of your needs for intellectual stimulation, you may withdraw from life, preferring the solitude of a hermit to the actual involvement in life which brings you growth.

You are a rule-breaker, tearing away traditions that no longer have value. When you live outside your ascendant, however, you tend to absorb rebellious thoughts and attitudes from impersonal karma. Since your basic nature is

non-discriminating, some of what comes into you may be useful and some will undoubtedly be the extraneous residue of revolutionary attitudes that exist in the external world. As a result, you can develop a multitude of attitudes which may have little in common with each other except that they all symbolize the outskirts of traditional thought.

You can be eccentric, for your guidelines are not limited by the boundaries of any particular philosophy or school of ideas. Your real problem is that you are interested in so many different and unrelated ideas and activities that you find it difficult to achieve mastery in any one area. You seem to know something about everything, but the varied and scattered changes in the external environment pull you in so many directions that the measure of your life can almost seem pointless. You diffuse your consciousness through non-attachment. Thus, you can be interested in something, but not enough to allow that interest to center your consciousness. Your life may be very active, but it is only when you focus your activities along a meaningful path that you can actually feel a sense of progress.

Aquarius is particularly sensitive to television and radio frequencies. When you have this ascendant and identify with external karma, you have a tendency to live in the plots of soap operas, vignettes from movies, and lines from songs. You may even discover, years later, how you have, in fact, acted these out in your personal experiences. People in your life become characters of the unconscious media telepathy you are always transmitting. The direction of your life, rather than being guided by higher forces, may actually follow the month-to-month and year-to-year sequence of television programming. The more you try to be in tune with universal consciousness, the more you become sensitive to "television levels" in other people's minds. As a result, you can appear to have a sparkling personality that hampers you so much that you may never reach the mind level that the

Aquarius ascendant is capable of. Even if you are clairvoyant, you may learn that you pick up on scattered pieces of material that are transmitted over the airwaves at later dates. Not realizing this, you can spend too much time contemplating the theories that go through your head, only to find that it is universally available information.

Your true strength is only revealed when you live inside of the doorway of the Aquarius ascendant. By doing this, you desensitize yourself to extraneous vibrations which might otherwise pull you from your center. As a result, your polarity changes and you truly learn how to discover the fullness of your inner being. When you let the chart filter through the ascendant, you invent from your inner resources. You perceive the realizations that are directed from your soul, and ultimately come to realize your universal purpose.

From this point of consciousness, your insatiable curiosity leads you to find out why you are living this incarnation. Rather than being attracted to external influences, different spiritual movements, or various schools of thought, you can impersonally discover how your own universal consciousness works. You thrive on originality and trust that some higher form of intelligence guides your purpose. Thus, what you do in life may be quite different than the norm, but it will not be because you are rebellious. Instead, it is the result of your unique sense of originality, unbiased and unfettered by the shackles of tradition.

You are attuned to cosmic forces and can sense, long in advance, the changing ideas in the external environment. You are a forerunner of the future, but not because you like to lead. This occurs as the natural outgrowth of the true freedom you feel within your being. You are not involved in trends or fads. Instead, the higher calling of your soul helps you to understand the direction of your life.

If you live outside of yourself, however, you may try to find direction in life through impersonal karma. Everything

can become a symbol. You can read meaning into situations, circumstances, and events which really have no personal meaning for you. Thus, you can dehumanize yourself by creating a reality built on intellectual fantasy. When you stay inside the doorway of your ascendant, however, you are able to clearly know the difference between the real and the unreal. If you hear voices in your mind, you know it is part of external astral levels which you are momentarily sensitive to because you have allowed your consciousness to dip too low. Although you may not agree with the rules of society, you nevertheless have rules for yourself which help order and center your life. Varied interests which might otherwise distract you become controlled through the meaning emanating from the rest of your chart.

You see reality as a learning experience, and you grow through unbiased self-examination. You will find new ways to deal with old problems. And, whether or not your ideas are traditionally acceptable, they will work for you. Your karma is to discover, explore, and experience an enlightened consciousness. You may amaze yourself with your own ideas and be astonished at the miraculous flow of ingenuity that comes through you. You are an innovator with a great deal of natural wisdom. You see the different aspects of yourself and can appreciate the value of each, thereby being able to impartially experience the fullness of your being. You understand the current of life and your karmic role as a catalyst to change, bringing about evolutionary and revolutionary improvements in yourself and others. What you do for others, however, is not out of a sense of obligation, or because you desire acceptance. Instead, it is the natural outgrowth of a desire to remake, reshape, and restructure yourself through your impersonal symbolic representation of the human desire to evolve. You can break from the shackles of past karma and direct attention to the possibility of human potential in a new future.

Since your entire being is focused toward the future, it becomes easy to leave one walk of life and replace it with another. You can do this many times, for it is your karma to experience the disconnected links which make up universal consciousness. And, through your ability to put it all together, you actually create a consciousness of change which is humanity's hope for a greater future.

## The Pisces Ascendant

This is the most creative ascendant in the zodiac. If you have a Pisces ascendant, you can transcend the mundane level of consciousness and understand the quality of life through its natural essence. Great sensitivity enables you to gracefully blend and mesh with the infinite stream of colors and impressions that flow through you. When living outside of the ascendant, however, there is a tendency to lose your reference point. As a result, you absorb psychic and emotional impressions from the impersonal unconscious mind of the universe. Without a reference point, it becomes difficult to sort out these impressions or to know if what you perceive has any deep meaning or whether it is just an illusion. The difficulty with this ascendant is that you must be conscious of the unconscious if you are to function in a meaningful way. Pisces rules subtle layers of transparent pictures that keep crossing your mind. Sometimes these pictures have very definite meaning for you. But, if you are allowed to flow outside of the ascendant (helplessly being swept along by the tide of emotional current), then you have no way of knowing the difference between astral scenery and true meaning. When this occurs it results in great confusion. You can become so psychically open to everything that you don't understand what is happening to you. You feel beset upon by the circum-

stances of life, as the changes in impersonal karma seem to be controlling you.

Since the unconscious is open to suggestibility, you feel particularly confused in a world where you see others appearing to have a sense of order in their lives. Because you relate to essence rather than words, it is not what others say to you that influences you, but rather the essence of their being that you experience during each conversation. Thus, you seem to see transparent layers of different colors, subtle shadings, or psychic nuances which you interpret through your personal sensitivities. The great difficulty with external identification here is that you are never quite sure of yourself. You don't know who you are. From moment to moment, your identity keeps changing. You can, in fact, at times be a parasite, feeding off of the substance of others in order to fill the void you feel in yourself. This is where you create one of your most difficult problems. By aligning your identity with others, you can momentarily feel as if you are included in their lifespace. But, every time you do this, you lose your center, your sense of self-worth diminishes, and your lifestyle takes on a quality of pointlessness.

To find values in yourself you tend to overcompensate. By taking up one crusade after another you try to establish a sense of eternal value. This can result in martyr-like illusions which perpetuate each other. Unquestionably this is the most sensitive ascendant in the zodiac. You feel mankind's need to be needed. You sense the loneliness in the external environment. When your identity is allowed to diffuse outside of yourself, you unconsciously mistake this loneliness for one of your own personal qualities. You may even develop feelings of rejection, persecution, or paranoia from this uncentered view of life. You sacrifice in order to win the love of those you need. But, your sacrifices rarely bring the results you expect. Because you are so emotionally sensitive, and have a delicate threshold for being hurt, you can easily turn the

negativism you perceive onto yourself, going to great extremes to negate your own worth. You can live a life of negative self-fulfilling prophecies as the dissipating dreams of others flow through your being while you helplessly watch them fade. Identification with impersonal karma causes a sense of "losing" which you may find difficult to overcome.

When your identity is kept inside the doorway of the Pisces ascendant, however, your outlook on life is much different. Rather than identifying with impersonal karma, you can identify with the ethereal quality of the "atman."<sup>4</sup> You see life as neither winning nor losing, but rather as an infinite tapestry which your being is here to experience. You can see the illusions in life without being them. You allow your inner being to filter through the quality of divine grace. This way, all the potential within your chart takes on a truly spiritual quality. You dissolve what is meaningless, while keeping your attention on the intangible qualities you know as reality. You build security on faith. You build your identity on your trust in the infinite. All you do in life comes from the way your potential flows through your stream of consciousness. Thus, the more you can do to lighten, expand, and lucidly understand your consciousness, the more you can realize the fullness of your own potential.

You can disengage yourself from the bindings and trapings in life to experience the freedom your soul needs. When you have this freedom, abundant creativity begins to pour like a veritable fountain. You look at the yin and yang in life and are able to transcend both, for you see the purpose, the reason, and the very source of creation as you feel man's divine blessings manifesting through your life.

You walk through life lightly, touching things gently, and seeking that which is "evolving" rather than "involving."

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<sup>4</sup>The eternal circle of being which has no beginning and no end.

Your greatest gift is imagination, for through it you can achieve the consciousness which helps you ride on the waters of life rather than being tossed about by each wave. Imagination is stronger than willpower. And, once you learn this, you can find the true strength in your being. It may be difficult for you to overcome self-weaknesses through sheer power, but it is easy to turn negative qualities into positive ones through the vividness of your imagination. You can span centuries of time, selectively finding the most beautiful and positive places in which to keep your consciousness. You can imagine a beach scene on a rainy day. When only clouds are visible, you can imagine the sun — knowing that regardless of what you see, the sun is still shining. In these ways, you are able to glide through the negative influences of impersonal karma while the potential of your inner being continues to be colored by the way you use creative imagination.

There is a Christ-like quality in the sign Pisces. It understands nature's harmony and has the ability to blend with almost everything. If you have this ascendant and live outside yourself, your great sense of compassion for others can easily lead you to martyrdom. You can absorb the ways in which others try to solve things and somehow become trapped in the illusion of trying to solve the impossible. You see the way others try to pull things together and formulate conclusions. But, that is not your way. Instead of solving karmic problems, your path is to dissolve karma, letting go of problems. You can disengage your identity from the magnetic pull of impersonal karma and dissolve yourself into the infinite sea of wisdom that is yours to experience. Each time you give up a personal hold on something, you come closer to your divine consciousness. Thus, you learn how to do without doing. You learn how to work without being attached to what you create. And, you learn how to be without trying to take credit for being. The more you dissolve your ego, the more you understand the subtle point of pointlessness. As a result, all

of the strength within the chart can be used to loosen your hold on the ever-turning karmic wheel.

## The Illusion of Appearance

The ascendant has been shown to influence physical appearance and the way in which an individual presents himself to the outer world. Astrologers have done research on the different physical properties of the twelve ascendants.<sup>5</sup> This research has proved to be somewhat limiting for it tends to confine individuals to a rather narrow scope of understanding. More important than the noticeable effect that any ascendant can have on a person's physical appearance is the way in which people relate to their appearance, and how they base opinions on the physical appearances of others. Often we are so dazzled or enthralled on this level that we fail to see the real function of the ascendant in terms of how it helps the rest of the chart manifest.

It is interesting to note that some exceptionally handsome or attractive people spend a great deal of time, energy, and money further enhancing their physical appearances with clothes, accessories, perfumes, jewelry, etc. In these instances, the chart—rather than manifesting through the ascendant—is being used to enhance, expand and promote the ascendant's appearance aura. As a result, these individuals rarely feel the fullness their own chart has for them. Instead, they tend to see life through a rather one-dimensional viewpoint, and many of their problems center around feelings of emptiness, lack, and struggles for self-worth.

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<sup>5</sup>The most thorough effort in this area appears in *How to Judge a Nativity*, by Alan Leo (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1978).

The focusing of one's consciousness on physical appearance carries over into other levels. If a person is worried about his appearance then he is also asking, "Are my thoughts and ideas acceptable to you?" or "Are my opinions and attitudes acceptable?" or "Does my consciousness have meaning to you?" Through a natural extension of osmosis from one level to another, this kind of thinking puts a person outside himself. And, as a result, he may become susceptible to one illusion after another.

It is difficult for most people to imagine that an individual with a strong bone structure or harsh features could indeed be soft in essence. It is also difficult to imagine that an individual with calm, rounded features could actually have a very powerful inner being. Yet, in both of these extremes there is enough proof everywhere for us to realize how easily we can be deceived if we put too much importance on physical appearance.

It is impossible for anyone to establish a real identity if he does not know the nature of reality. Everywhere there are thousands of individuals striving for self-aggrandizement, wealth, power, and a sense of importance. Not one of these attributes contains the power to overcome time. Often an individual will identify himself by name, sex, religion, occupation, etc. But these, too, contain so many illusions that one must constantly reappraise himself in an attempt to discover who he is. In recent years the power of the self has become a point of interest, and here again, illusion hides the true understanding of reality. If one develops self-power (in any area of endeavor), one will surely meet others who have more. The endless cycle of competition for self-worth continues to be perpetuated.

What did Jesus mean when he said, "I am in this world but not of it"? To understand this, we must look at the real meaning of the ascendant. Truly, it is the front of oneself and the way in which one faces the outer world. But, what seems

difficult for most individuals to grasp is “why” one faces the outer world.

The essence of reality is that we are all passing through—living and breathing in one body, then resting, then apparently beginning again in another—thereby experiencing an endless number of incarnations. Can our real identity be a name, sex, or religion, if all of these change from life to life? In all the world there are basically two kinds of people; those who know, and those who do not. Unless a person understands he is attending this earth school so his soul can help to manifest God’s purpose here, he is apt to misunderstand his true identity. He is apt to believe that his ultimate purpose is for himself, and he may live under the illusion that he can somehow cheat the external forces of impersonal karma so he can somehow wind up ahead of others. This kind of thinking (even if one keeps it to oneself) is bound to create a life of disharmonious illusions, leading to unsuccessful struggles, failure to achieve happiness and ultimate disillusionment.

The only reality there is comes from the universal oneness. If we understand the chart is a symbol for all the possible energies and possibilities that the universe gives us, then we can understand the ascendant is that point through which the ever-flowing stream of divine consciousness pours through us to contact the external world. Only when we realize this can we begin to understand the implications of correct or incorrect identification through the ascendant.

An individual interacts with the external world so that he can manifest the universal and divine will of a higher consciousness here on earth. When he does this, the face he shows to the outer world becomes the eyes of God. Each lifetime helps him learn how to better express the divine meaning which the universe is always teaching. The ascendant helps the individual manifest the chart in the way it was meant to express—as a part in the cosmic plan that he is fulfilling.



**HOROSCOPE  
DELINEATIONS**

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**3**



## Rembrandt Van Rijn

In the horoscope of Rembrandt, the great master Dutch painter, we find a Scorpio ascendant. Usually this indicates a life of changes, transformations and a constant burying of the past in order to fulfill the expectations of the future. Most individuals with this ascendant see the negative side of life. They identify with all that society is eliminating as its waste products, and as a result they tend to secretly harbor bitter feelings of resentment at a world which they feel is not giving them its best. Identification outside of the ascendant causes much self-destructiveness, as passion emanating from the negative qualities of impersonal karma is directed back into the self.

There is little that one can do to greatly affect the course of history. But there is much that one can do within the scope of one's own destiny. Thus, if the Scorpio ascendant is used to eliminate all the waste and decadence it senses in impersonal karma, the individual is bound to feel his life as being frustrated. And, even if he achieves a lot, there is still too much negativity in the world for him to sense meaning in his achievements. If, however, the power of this ascendant is used to transform his own consciousness, then each new day is a glorious beginning, an end to

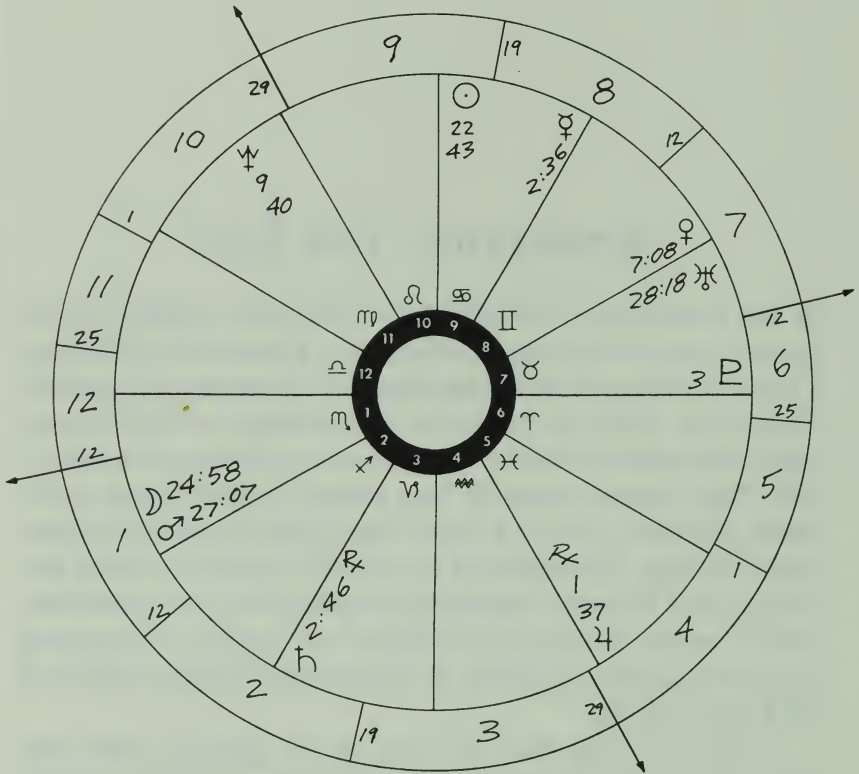


Chart 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, born July 15, 1606, in Leiden, Netherlands. Data from *An Astrological Who's Who*, by Marc Penfield (York Harbor, ME: Arcane Books, 1972).

one's past, and holds within it the promise of future understanding.

Rembrandt saw the torment of the old and the poor. He understood the richness that comes from human struggle. But, instead of identifying with it, he made it his favorite theme of study. Rather than complaining about the difficult conditions in the world, as one would do if his identity were fixed outside the ascendant, he found great beauty in man's eternal quest for salvation. Thus, the worker who never has more than the bare necessities of life, the religious prisoner who cannot openly practice his beliefs, and the tired, poor and weary dredges of society became objects of magnificent beauty to Rembrandt.

Because of all the suffering he sensed, his paintings grew richer, more vivid, and more deeply penetrating into the essence of human character. Each line in a face would depict man's ability to overcome inwardly oppressive circumstances in his outer life.

The Sun in Cancer usually shows a cohesive lifestyle, centered in family roots, traditions, and emotions that are peacefully protected from the harshness of unfamiliar karma. Rembrandt, unlike many great painters, had a family that meant a great deal to him. Even in the individualistic suffering that showed in his paintings, he depicted his characters as being part of a greater whole. Thus, a man would be part of a family or part of a tradition, and, in this context, the isolated suffering of the individual is symbolically portrayed as the impersonal struggle of all individuals who must live their lives within a similar framework. Thus, we can see how the Sun in Cancer filters through the Scorpio ascendant, which gives it the depth, passion, and meaning that enabled Rembrandt's paintings to transcend the personal without losing the essential essence. A man worries alone, but he worries for those he loves. And, it is not one man who worries about bread for his family, the safety of his wife and children, or

the protection of his home—it is every man. Rembrandt always strove to keep in touch with the basic feelings at the very core of human struggle.

When the Scorpio ascendant is misused, an individual can all too easily identify with impersonal sex karma, thus dissipating his energies, his abilities, and his potential, ultimately becoming the victim of his own abuse. Rembrandt was not a dispassionate man. But, he saw the value of centering himself within the doorway of the ascendant. As a result, he was able to produce not only the finest quality of his age, but also an immense quantity as well. He was responsible for over six hundred masterful paintings, three hundred etchings, and more than two thousand drawings.

Sri Chinmoy, the well-known spiritual teacher, has said that “the quality of what we do comes from God. But, the quantity of what we do must come from ourselves.” The great tumultuous passions of the Scorpio ascendant, when used correctly, can produce immense quantity of whatever qualities are coming from within the rest of the chart. Still, quality (in terms of mastering painting techniques) or quantity (almost three thousand works), do not show the full meaning of the Scorpio ascendant in Rembrandt’s life.

With Neptune in Virgo there would be a fetish for detail. When this placement is seen through the Scorpio ascendant, however, the need for detail becomes not one for exactitude, but rather to reach the deep hidden core of his subjects and thus portray their unconscious essence. It is in this area that Rembrandt achieved his greatest understanding of man’s basic nature. If he could not reach what he felt in one painting, then there would be another, and another to follow that, until the painter was satisfied that he had touched the center of all he was feeling within him. He even painted over one hundred self-portraits so that he could keenly penetrate into his own identity. Again and again, he would pierce deeper and deeper into the little-known or most hidden emotional

qualities that lie beneath the surface. Yet, with all of this intensity, Rembrandt was not a selfish man. With both the Moon and Mars in Scorpio in the first house, this might be difficult to perceive. But selfishness is a quality that exists in impersonal karma and is basically foreign to a soul that wants to give.

Regardless of all other obligations, including the immense volume of his work, Rembrandt always found time to teach. He taught all his life, for he was a great lover of people (Venus in Gemini). He wanted to share with others the great depths that he could see beneath the surface (Venus in Gemini filtered through the Scorpio ascendant). Rather than identifying outside the ascendant, which could make an artist jealous of other creative souls, he chose to keep to his own course with the unselfish knowledge that God had given him more than he alone could ever possibly use.

Many people think that creative genius and marriage tend to be at odds. Rembrandt's marriage signified a turning point in his career. His colors became more vivid. His feelings, enriched by the love of his wife, penetrated into his work, and her dowry enabled him to purchase the costumes which were to appear in many of his future paintings (Uranus in Taurus in the seventh house). He began seeking to uncover the facades in life, using the costumes in order to see past them (Uranus in Taurus filtered through the Scorpio ascendant). Thus, he could be an individual without being a loner. And, he could isolate man's individualistic nature without separating mankind from its source.

Pluto in Taurus and Jupiter (retrograde) in Pisces,<sup>6</sup> gave Rembrandt the power, scope and understanding that we find

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<sup>6</sup>Jupiter in Pisces retrograde is one of the indicators of artistic talent being drawn upon from a former incarnation. See *Karmic Astrology, Volume II: Retrogrades and Reincarnation* by Martin Schulman (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1977).

in his works. Rather than using this placement as a means for self-aggrandizement (the negative use of the Scorpio ascendant), he never forgot his devotion to his only son (Mercury in Cancer in the eighth house), he never ignored the old, the desolate and the poor (Saturn in Capricorn retrograde) which he painted all his life, and he never ignored the students with whom he sought to share his gifts (Venus in Gemini in the seventh house).

Caring not for loss or gain, using the Scorpio ascendant as a filter for the rest of the chart, Rembrandt was able to lead a successful life, full on many levels. He created a legacy (Scorpio rules the natural eighth house), of man's eternal struggle. He shows us what life was like, what it is, and what it will always be. And amidst the tattered struggles, sham, and human suffering, he shows us that the great beauty in man's soul is never lost.

## Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created one of the world's most realistic fictional characters in the person of Sherlock Holmes. Witty, sarcastic, and with keenly astute powers of observation and analysis, Holmes as narrated through the eyes of his roommate, Dr. Watson, has become nothing short of a literary legend.

In Doyle's horoscope, we find a Gemini ascendant, often indicative of writing ability. When this ascendant is used incorrectly, however, there is a great tendency for the individual to believe that much of his life is dependent upon his relationships with others. On a certain level this is true, but one's relationship with oneself is where the real meaning in one's life is found. Identification outside the ascendant can cause an overly strong desire to please others in the hope of creating a socially acceptable personality. When the individ-



Chart 2. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, born May 22, 1859, Edinburgh, Scotland. Data from *An Astrological Who's Who* by Marc Penfield (York Harbor, ME: Arcane Books, 1972).

ual stays within the doorway of this ascendant, the entire chart becomes focused on the free-flowing ideas that emanate from deep within, moving the individual like an endless stream of consciousness toward his contact with the outside world.

Doyle began his career by studying medicine, and it was Joseph Bell (one of his teachers) whose character was so intensely impressive that it eventually became the embodiment of Sherlock Holmes. The Gemini ascendant has a tendency to emulate mentors or people with noteworthy ideas. But, if Doyle were identifying with impersonal karma outside this ascendant, he would have tried to fashion his life after Bell. In fact, in his early years, he did try to become a practicing physician. When very few patients graced his doorway, he began writing fiction to alleviate his own boredom. It was at this point that the inner self began to manifest for now Doyle was able to express the qualities he admired by putting them into literature through the Gemini ascendant.

The writer's sharp and piercing mind (Mars in Gemini), although it had received its training in medicine (Pluto conjunct Mercury, Scorpio sixth house), could only find its true point in consciousness when ideas (Uranus in Gemini) were kept as ideas through the focus of the Gemini ascendant. This is a rather subtle point in consciousness. The Gemini ascendant serves humanity by transferring ideas so that the consciousness of the individual can be passed on to those who will survive him.

What becomes extremely interesting in the horoscope of any writer is how much of the person can be seen through the writing. If Sherlock Holmes (as a character) has his greatness, then Doyle must have been greater, for indeed, the creator is always greater than the creation. In 1893, Doyle wrote his first Holmes story. But, he surprised himself (Sun conjunct Uranus filtering through the Gemini ascendant), for in the story he had the great detective killed. When the story

became successful, he had to bring Holmes back to life. This incident gave Doyle his first glimpse that there is more to this world and other worlds than we consciously know (Neptune in Pisces).

If the writer had been identifying with impersonal karma outside of his Gemini ascendant, his Jupiter in Gemini would have forced him to make this decision as a result of trying to please his readers. When manifesting negatively through impersonal karma, Jupiter in Gemini tends to scatter the mind often leading a writer to focus scant attention on a multitude of different characters, incomplete ideas, and wispy concepts. Through his Aquarius Moon, however, Doyle was able to visualize the future possibilities of Holmes as a full character. Thus, he used his five planet stellium in the twelfth house to hammer away at the development of Sherlock Holmes through story after story. Five years after the first Holmes story appeared, Doyle pierced deeply enough into the character of his creation so he was able to write his first full length novel.

If we are to see Doyle through his books, then we must understand the relationship between the characters of Holmes and Dr. Watson. In the duality (Gemini ascendant) of the great detective and the non-practicing physician who admires him, we find the key to Doyle's own outlook on life. In part, he sees life from a practical and conservative viewpoint through which an individual is able to accept limitations without losing a keen interest in all that seems to be beyond belief (Saturn in Leo). Here we find the Dr. Watson part of Doyle's character. But through Sherlock Holmes we see that part of Doyle that wanted to experience everything first-hand. The amazing superself (Venus in Aries), impervious to obstacles and limitations—even to death itself—unfolds through this part of the writer's imagination.

Thus, Doyle acts through Sherlock Holmes and plays the observer through Dr. Watson. Doyle had to have another

part of himself which not only saw these two, but was conscious enough of both of them to separate them.

When the true identity of an individual is centered within the chart, the person is able to act, see himself acting, and yet know that both of these are lesser parts of the full integrated being that is always flowing from the soul level.

By 1915, after writing 56 short stories and 3 novels, a strange twist of fate (Sun conjunct Uranus, Pluto conjunct Mercury) brought Doyle to a new level of consciousness. For years he had studied the tiniest details, trying to unravel mysterious plots through the least obvious traces. Always he would try to perceive what others could not (Sun in Gemini in the twelfth house manifesting through the Gemini ascendant). After his son died, Doyle turned his attention away from writing, and, with his second wife, began a serious study of spiritualism.

He was to spend the rest of his life studying and lecturing on communication with spirits. Thus, where years earlier he saw his first glimpses of a quasifictional sense of reincarnation when he had to bring Sherlock Holmes back to life, he now was fully convinced that transitional states of consciousness exist.

If Doyle had been identifying with impersonal karma, outside his ascendant, he would never have been able to deal with the strange and mysterious experiences that were occurring through his twelfth house. But, by staying centered in himself, he was able to bear witness to spirit communication and understand it as part of man's unceasing quest for learning all that God had intended him to know.

Thus, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, as student, physician, writer, lecturer, and spiritualist, learned all that he could in each area. Through the Gemini ascendant he found the way to share his knowledge with the world. We can see how the karmic lessons of discovery, exploration, and the curious seeking of the existential possibilities of the Aquarius North

Node were filtered through this ascendant, as Doyle, intent upon giving something to humanity (Aquarius), was able to do it through his writing (Gemini ascendant).



## Allegory

Once there was a king who had two sons. To both he promised an equal share of his kingdom. But he told his sons that neither would know what the kingdom was until they had mastered a very special test.

“What’s more,” the father continued, “I am not going to tell you what the test is. Instead, I want each of you to go out into the world and discover the test for yourself. It may take you a few months, or it may take many years, but as soon as you have mastered this special test you may return to claim your share of the kingdom.”

Both sons looked puzzled, but they obeyed the wishes of their father. The next morning each set out to discover the test. One son traveled East, the other West. At the beginning of the journey each son expected to master the test their father had given them almost instantaneously. As months turned into years it became apparent that they were not even close to discovering what the nature of the test was.

The son who traveled East kept facing the sun. He searched in all the light places. The more he searched, the more illumination he found. But, facing the sun, he was never able to see his own shadow.

The son who traveled West was looking at his own shadow all the time. With his back to the sun he could only find darkness.

After many years, each son had traveled halfway around the world. Then they met. Weary from their long journeys, they stared into each other's eyes to see if the answer had been found. The son who traveled East was now facing West. The son who traveled West was now facing East. But neither found what he was looking for. They decided to travel home through the other's path, in the hope that one might see what the other had missed. When they arrived home, their father greeted them both with open arms. Each was ashamed to admit that he did not even understand what the test was.

The king understood their disappointment and smiled. "A share of the kingdom is not the kingdom," he explained. "You have each looked at darkness and you have each looked at light. You have traveled opposite each other and opposite yourselves. And you have gone through much effort and struggle to seek what was always yours."

At that moment, both sons looked at the king and realized what the test was about. Without having left his home, or neglecting his obligations, the father could see both the darkness and the light, and in fact, something more that was above both.















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# **THE ASCENDANT**

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