

THE SKY WITHIN

Report for Ben Affleck
An Interpretation of Your Birth Chart
by
Steven Forrest



This sample report compliments of:

Matrix Software

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The Sky Within

Ben Affleck
Aug 15, 1972
02:53:00 AM PDT +07:00
Berkeley, CA
122W16'18" 37N52'18"

Planet	Sign	Position	House	House Cusps
Sun	Leo	22°Le39'	03rd	01 08°Ca34'
Moon	Scorpio	04°Sc46'	05th	02 28°Ca56'
Mercury	Leo	10°Le50' R	02nd	03 21°Le20'
Venus	Cancer	07°Ca28'	01st	04 19°Vi00'
Mars	Virgo	00°Vi14'	03rd	05 24°Li08'
Jupiter	Sagittarius	28°Sg39' R	06th	06 03°Sg23'
Saturn	Gemini	18°Ge34'	12th	07 08°Cp34'
Uranus	Libra	15°Li27'	04th	08 28°Cp56'
Neptune	Sagittarius	02°Sg29'	06th	09 21°Aq20'
Pluto	Libra	00°Li27'	04th	10 19°Pi00'
Midheaven	Pisces	19°Pi00'		11 24°Ar08'
Ascendant	Cancer	08°Ca34'		12 03°Ge23'

Planets within orb of 1.5 degrees of the following house cusp are displayed and interpreted as being in that house, except the Ascendant which uses 3 degrees.

*Orb Conjunctions with Sun or Moon are 8 degrees.
All orbs are set according to Steven Forrest's methods.*

THE SKY WITHIN

by Steven Forrest

Using Your Birthchart as a Spiritual Guide

A woman has a baby and is blissful about it. Another one does the same, and spends the rest of her life dreaming about how she might have been a ballerina. The same choice: having a kid. But only one smiling woman.

Nobody has a generic formula for happiness, at least not one that does the trick for everyone. That's where astrology comes in.

The birthchart, stripped to bare bones, is simply a description of the happiest, most fulfilling life that's available to you... personally. It spells out a set of strategies you can use to avoid boring routines, bad choices, and dead ends. It lists your resources. And it talks about how your life looks when you're misusing the resources and distorting the strategies -- shooting yourself in the foot, in other words.

All from a map of the sky?

Hard to believe. But think for a minute...

"How can the planets possibly affect us? They're millions of miles away." Astrology's critics are fond of rolling out that argument. But it doesn't hold water. Go out and gaze at the moon. What's really happening? Incomprehensible energies are plunging across a quarter million miles of void, crashing through your eyeballs and creating electrochemical changes in your brain. We call the process "seeing the moon." Certainly the planets affect us. The question is where do we draw the boundaries around those effects?

Let's go a step further.

Open your eyes on a starry night. What do you see? A vast, luminous space, full of shadows and light. Now close your eyes so tight they ache. Where are you now? What do you see? Again, a vast, luminous space, full of shadows and light. Consciousness and cosmos are structured around the same laws, follow the same patterns, and even feel pretty much the same to our senses.

"As above, so below." Just as the starry night awes us with its vastness, there's something infinitely deep inside you, a place you go when you close your eyes, a place that's beyond being an Aries or a Gemini or even a specific gender. At the most profound level, a birthchart is a map back to that magical center. It describes a series of earthly experiences which, if you're brave and open enough, will trigger certain states of consciousness in you -- states that operate like powerful spiritual catalysts, vaulting you into higher levels of being.

In the pages that follow, you'll tour your personal birthchart. But don't expect the usual "Scorpios

are sexy" stuff. You are a mysterious being in a mysterious cosmos. You're here for just a little while, a blink of God's eye. You face a monumental task: figuring out what's going on! In that spiritual work, astrology is your ally. How will it help?

Certainly not by pigeon-holing you as a certain "type."

Astrology works by reminding you who you are, by warning you about the comforting lies we all tell ourselves, and by illuminating the experiences that trigger your most explosive leaps in awareness.

After that, the rest is up to you.

YOUR TEN TEACHERS

Freud divided the human mind into three compartments: ego, id, and superego. Astrologers do the same thing, except that our model of the mind differs from Freud's in two fundamental ways. First, it's a lot more elaborate. Instead of three compartments, we have ten: Sun, Moon, and the eight planets we see from Earth. As we'll discover, each planet represents more than a "circuit" in your psyche. It also serves as a kind of "Teacher," guiding you into certain consciousness-triggering kinds of experience.

The second difference between astrology and psychology is that astrology's mind-map, unlike Freud's, is rooted in nature itself, just as we are.

The primary celestial teacher is the Sun. What does it teach? Selfhood. Vitality. How to keep the life-force strong in yourself. If the Sun grew dimmer, so would all the planets -- they shine by reflecting solar light. Similarly, if you fail to stoke the furnaces of your own inner Sun, then you'll simply be "out of gas." All your other planetary functions will suffer too.

How do we learn this teacher's lessons?

Start by realizing that when you were born the Sun was in Leo.

When we hear "Lion," we think "fierce." But that's misleading. Go to the zoo and have a look at the "King of the Beasts." He's lying there, one eye open, looking regal. He knows he's the king. He doesn't need to make a fuss about it. The lion, like Leo at its best, radiates quiet confidence. A happy, creative, comfortable participation in the human family -- that's what Leo the Lion is all about.

The evolutionary method is deceptively simple: creative self-expression. As we offer evidence of our internal processes to the world, we feel more at home, more accepted, more spontaneous -- provided the world claps its hands for us! That's the catch. Leo needs an appreciative audience. That audience can be a thousand people cheering or one person saying "I love you." Either way, it's applause, and for the Lion, that's evolutionary rocket fuel.

Toughing it out, not letting oneself be affected by a lack of support or understanding, may well be an important spiritual lesson -- but not for Leo. Here the evolutionary problem comes down to lack of real, ultimate trust in other people. The cure isn't toughness; it's building a pattern of joyful give-and-take. So perform! And if no one claps, go somewhere else and perform again.

With your Sun in Leo, you are naturally creative. Your task is to express that side of your character vigorously and confidently -- and to make sure that what you offer is appreciated. What is the best truth you know? What's holy and pure in your life, worth living for? That's your gift. Dramatize it. Package it somehow. And perform! You may be drawn to the arts. But just as possibly, you might express your creativity in a business, or in some public service.

Beneath the colorful surface of your character, there is an insecurity. Hardly anyone sees it. It's the fundamental spiritual problem you've come into this life to work out. Your "yoga" lies in tricking the world into clapping its hands for you. Be wary, though: even if you win the Nobel prize, it won't mean a thing unless you win it for expressing your SELF. Otherwise, your deep-seated doubts and insecurities about your SELF go untouched and unhealed.

One more thing -- if you're doing your best and nobody's clapping, remember this: your act is fine; it's the audience that needs to be replaced.

We can take our analysis of your natal Sun a step further. When you were born, that solar light illuminated the Third house. What does that signify?

Start by realizing that Houses represent twelve basic arenas of life. There's a House of Marriage, for example, and a House of Career. Always, we find an element of "fate" in our House structures; the "Hand of God" continually presents us with existential and moral questions connected with our emphasized Houses. How we react and what we learn -- or fail to learn -- is our own business.

One brief technical note: Sometimes the Sun, the Moon, or a planet lies near the end of the House. We then say it's "conjunct the cusp" of the subsequent House, and interpret it as though it were a little further along... in the next House, in other words.

Learning to see what's before your eyes -- that's Third House territory. Traditionally, this is the House of Communication. Perception might be a better word. The words on this page are "communicating" with you. But so does the blueness of the sky and the warmth of a friend's touch. Through your perceptions, the universe floods you with a continuous storm of raw information. Trouble is, we tend to miss most of it. How? By filtering it through the thick mesh of our preconceived notions and pet theories, often symbolized astrologically by whatever planets lie in this part of the birthchart.

The evolutionary question you're facing in this House is simple... to say. Can you keep a radically open mind? Can you really see what is before your eyes? Can you bleach your senses as clean as buffalo bones in the desert?

Spirit has given you intelligence and a capacity to communicate. It's given you curiosity. The discipline here is talking -- and listening. Experiencing -- and digesting. Understanding -- and endlessly questioning your understanding.

With your Sun in the Third House, you're bright and communicative, generally curious about the world around you. You've probably been given the gift of gab. You're a natural teacher, too, born to explain things. From an evolutionary perspective, everything depends upon keeping yourself... confused! That is to say, keeping yourself in a state in which what you've allowed yourself to experience is a few steps ahead of what you've figured out.

The next step in our journey through your birthchart carries us to the Moon.

As you might expect, Luna resonates with the magical, emotional sides of your psyche. It represents your mood, averaged over a lifetime. As the heart's teacher, it tells you how to feel comfortable, how to meet your deepest needs. While the Sun lets you know what kinds of experiences and relationships help you feel sane, the Moon is concerned with another piece of the puzzle: feeling happy.

When you were born, the Moon was in Scorpio.

The Scorpion! A spooky image for a spooky sign. There's a scary side to life. People get terrible diseases. Kids get damaged. Old people are forgotten. Everybody dies. Socially we're conditioned to avoid mentioning those things, or to mention them only in ritual contexts -- like jokes or political speeches. For Scorpio, the evolutionary aim is to face those shadowy places. To make the

unconscious conscious. To break taboos.

The Scorpio part of you is deep and penetrating. It has little patience with phoniness or hypocrisy. Trouble is, a little phoniness or hypocrisy often make life a lot easier for everyone! Be careful of becoming so "deep" that you lose perspective. In the Scorpion part of your life, you could slip into brooding and heaviness. So laugh a little! And find a few friends you can talk to. Do that, and you'll keep you balance well enough to find wisdom.

With the Moon in Scorpio, your inner life is a cyclone of intensity. Your instincts are penetrating, probing, deeply aware of the dark undercurrent of need and fear that runs beneath our facades of normalcy. It's as though your ability to hold painful or dramatic emotional material out of consciousness is diminished; you face the dragons every day. The trick is to slay them before they cook you! How? It's essential that you find people who'll help. Allies. Who are they? The only kind of folks with whom you're comfortable: people who never take refuge in "politeness," men and women who look you right in the eye. You may sleep with them; you may not. It doesn't matter. All that counts is that you communicate.

The trap you need to avoid is a kind of psychic implosion; you could hold so much inside yourself that you become a human black hole, seething, but emitting no information.

Going farther, we see that your Moon lies in the Fifth house of your chart.

Pleasure -- that's Fifth House territory. It's as though God marched you off the end of the cosmic diving board with the words, "Go down there and try to have a good time!" That sounds pretty lightweight, but think about it: feeling good in this world isn't so easy! We've got global pollution, schizophrenics with AK-47s, ego-maniacs with nuclear warheads... not to mention disease, taxes, mosquitos, cars that won't start....

How do we feel real pleasure here on planet Earth? Alone, the "pleasures of the flesh" can't cut the mustard; money, alcohol, orgasms -- they help, but they're not enough... just look at the usual life-expectancy of a "purely physical relationship." Where to turn? To the pleasures of the mind, the heart, the soul! The joy of learning. The spiritual high of athletic excellence. The bliss of meditation. And, perhaps above all, the sheer pleasure of creative self-expression.

Astrological force is focused here in your birthchart. It offers joy -- and warns of the addictions that can overcome you if you miss that joy, or seek it all in one place.

With the Moon in the Fifth House, there's clearly a playful streak in your character, a desire to express yourself whimsically and creatively. Trouble is, it's fairly easily abashed. Your evolutionary challenge is to keep that "child within" alive and confident, despite the wounds of life's early years. You have a terrific imagination. You can build inner worlds before breakfast. Make sure you enjoy the bliss of expressing that fantasy-life. If you don't, you'll try to make up the pleasure deficit in less healthy ways: stupid self-indulgences, typically with food or sex.

There's a third critical piece in your astrological puzzle -- the Ascendant, or rising sign. Along with the Sun and Moon, it completes the "primal triad." What is it? What does it mean? Simple -- the Ascendant is the sign that was coming up over the eastern horizon at the instant of your birth. It's where the sun is at dawn, in other words. In exactly the same way, the Ascendant represents how you "dawn" on people -- that is, how you present yourself. It's your "style," or your "mask."

The ascendant means more than that. It symbolizes a way you can help yourself feel centered, at ease, comfortable with who you are. If you get its message, then something wonderful happens: your style hooks you into the world of experience in a way that feeds your spirit exactly the kinds of events and relationships you need. Your soul is charged with more enthusiasm for the life you're living -- and you feel vibrant, confident, and full of animal grace.

When you took your first breath, Cancer was lifting over the eastern horizon of Berkeley, CA. Let's begin our analysis by considering the meaning and spiritual message of the sign of "The Healer".

Opening the inner eye, mapping the topography of consciousness, learning to express compassion -- these are Cancer's evolutionary aims. To assist in that work, Cosmic Intelligence has cranked up the volume on the Crab's ability to feel. No other sign is so sensitive -- nor so vulnerable. A certain amount of self-defense is appropriate here; after all, this world isn't exactly the Garden of Eden. Trouble is, legitimate self-defense can degenerate into shyness or a fear of making changes. You really do care about the hurts that other beings suffer. That's good news. You also have an instinctive ability to soothe those hurts, homing in on the source of the pain. More good news. The bad news is that you could choose to remain forever protected within the safe (and invisible!) role of the Healer, the Counselor, or the Wise One.

With Cancer rising, you face some unique challenges. Basically, Cancer doesn't like to be rising! The ascendant is our outward self; the Crab's nature is inward -- and it protects its inwardness with a shell, perhaps of shyness, perhaps of comfort-giving. One point is sure: getting to know you isn't easy, although it's probably rewarding. You watch people carefully before you open up to them. For you, uninhibited self-expression is a gift you may choose to give, but people need to earn it first.

That's half the picture. The other half is that, paradoxically, people feel an almost compulsive urge to open up to you, to tell you about the parts of their lives that hurt. If you had a penny for every stranger who has unburdened himself or herself on you, you could retire to Monaco and live off the change.

What have we learned so far? Quite a lot. Astrologers use the primal triad of Sun, Moon, and Ascendant in much the same way people who know just a little astrology use Sun signs. The difference is that while there are only twelve Sun signs, there are 1728 different combinations of all three factors. So when we say that you are a Leo with the Moon in Scorpio and Cancer rising, that's a very specific statement.

Here's a way to make those words come even more alive. Traditionally, signs are connected with Bulls and Sea-Goats and Scorpions -- creatures we don't see every day. But we can translate those images into more modern archetypes.

We can say you are "The Performer", or "The Aristocrat", or "The Clown". Those are just different ways of saying you have the Sun in Leo.

We can say you have the soul of "The Detective", or "The Sorcerer", or "The Hypnotist"... your Moon lies in Scorpio, in other words.

We can add that you wear the mask of "The Healer", or "The Wise One", or "The Invisible One". Those images capture the spirit of your Ascendant, which is Cancer.

You can combine those archetypes any way you want. And you can go further: Once you have a feel for the three basic signs in your primal triad, you can make up your own images to go with them. Whatever words you choose, those simple statements are your fundamental astrological signature. It's your skeleton. Our next step is to begin adding flesh and hair to that skeleton by considering the planets.

Unsurprisingly, planets can gain prominence in a birthchart through association with the Sun, Moon, or Ascendant. These three are power brokers, and any linkage with them boosts a planet's influence.

We find exactly that situation in your case. Venus lies in your First House, a part of the chart which is really just an extension of the Ascendant. Thus, Venus adds yet another tone to your "mask," modifying and deepening some of what we've already seen.

Venus is the part of your mental circuitry that's concerned with releasing tension and maintaining harmony. Its focus is always peace, inwardly and outwardly. As such, it represents your aesthetic functions -- your taste in colors, sounds, and forms. Why? Because the perception of beauty soothes the human heart. Venus is also tied to your affiliative functions -- your romantic instincts, your sense of courtesy or diplomacy, your taste in friends. Invariably, this planet has one goal: sustaining your serenity in the face of life's onslaughts.

Venus was passing through Cancer. Thus, both your aesthetic sensitivity and your taste in partners is shaped by the imaginative, womb-like spirit of the Cosmic Mother. In the realm of beauty, whether natural or wrought by human hands, you have a taste for subtlety, for enclosure in dream-like, intimate spaces. The same goes for friends and sexual partners -- you are drawn to people who open up slowly, like yourself, people who promise a long, unfolding journey, with the challenges of radical emotional nakedness made bearable by an absolute commitment to faithfulness.

With Venus in the First House, you are blessed with a kind of animal magnetism. People seem instantly to trust you, to feel as though there's rapport between you. You are instinctively courteous -- that is, you mold your behavior in such a way that others are put at ease. From an evolutionary perspective, you center yourself most effectively when you identify yourself as a peacemaker or an artist.

Your own birthchart is complicated by the fact that, at your birth, Mars was aligned with the Sun... or "conjunct" the Sun, to use the proper astrological term. Thus, the energy and spirit of that planet is fused with your solar identity. In a sense, you are an "incarnation" of Mars."

What can that mean? Start by understanding the significance of the planet.

Pale red Mars suggested blood to our ancestors, and they named it the War God. That's an effective metaphor -- Mars does represent violence. But today we go further. The red planet symbolizes the power of the Will. Assertiveness. Courage. Without it, there'd be no fire in life. No spark. Where your Mars lies, you are challenged to find the Spiritual Warrior inside yourself, the part of you that's brave and clear enough to claim your own path and follow it.

Mars is steaming in the searching, questioning, restless field of energy we call Virgo. The Warrior inside you is bent on one target: seeking out flaws, weaknesses, errors. Like a magnetic compass, you unerringly home in on the fracture zones in any monolith -- be it an argument, an idea, a strategy... or a person. Spiritually you're learning two lessons here. One is how to be scrupulously honest in naming

problems. The other, which makes the first enduring, is forgiveness.

With Mars occupying your Third House, the War-God sits on the tip of your tongue. Your speech tends to be direct, effective, and brusque. Reflexively, you satirize, even tease. It's rare that you'll be in a logical argument that you lose -- even when you're wrong! Be careful that in your sincere search for truth, you don't put people off with overly dramatic one-liners. After all, this is your life, not an Elizabeth Taylor-Richard Burton outing.

While a fairly large number of people have Mars in that sign and house, the fact that it lies conjunct your Sun gives it special emphasis. By pushing the strengths it suggests toward their limits, you charge your solar vitality, approach your destiny, and set the stage for fulfilling your spiritual purpose.

Your birthchart displays another area of heightened activity: the Sixth House. The reason for that is simple -- there's a lot of planetary activity. With Jupiter and Neptune in that area of your life, it is charged with activity, soul lessons, and opportunities for personal development. Before we even consider the planets separately, our first step is to explore this piece of existential real estate in broad terms.

Craft, responsibility, the joy of competence -- that's Sixth House territory. Traditionally, it's the House of Servants. The label still works -- provided you recognize that it's not your butlers and chambermaids we're discussing here! You're the servant, and that's not nearly as bad as it sounds.

There's a myth in our culture that encourages us to believe everyone is automatically depressed on Monday morning, happy on Friday afternoon, ecstatic 'til Sunday around dinner time, then crashes down into the pits again come Monday. Don't believe it! With a Teacher in the Sixth House, you've got a good shot at shattering the myth, at least for yourself. A big part of you likes to work, enjoys being good at something, prefers to be useful.

The trick lies in finding the right crafts, skills, and responsibilities. Let's let the Teacher speak.

Take all the planets, all the meteors, moons, asteroids, and comets. Roll them up in a big ball of cosmic mush. They still wouldn't equal the mass of the "King of the Gods" -- Jupiter. Exactly that same bigness pervades the planet's astrological spirit. Jupiter is the symbol of buoyancy and generosity, of opportunity and joy. At the deepest level, it represents faith... faith in life, that is, rather than faith in anybody's theological position papers.

Jupiter stands in Sagittarius. This is an important piece of information -- maybe a pivotal one. Being human is tough sometimes. When you need to boost your elemental faith in life, your answer lies in following the Way of the Gypsy. That is, break out from under the tyranny of the familiar and the "practical." Stretch out into amazement and adventure. Start a Quest... or just hit the road.

In your chart, the "King of the Gods" reigns in the Sixth House -- traditionally the "House of Servants." Jupiter expands things, and here it's expanding your work and responsibilities. That's not as bad as it sounds! If you're unhappy with your job or your duties, ask yourself this: "How have I been underestimating myself?" Spiritually, you are learning to have enough faith in yourself, enough self-worth, to go out and find the kinds of work that fill you with a sense of meaningfulness, prosperity, and joy.

You're lying in your bed, going to sleep. Suddenly a jolt runs through your body. You just "caught

yourself falling asleep." Where were you two seconds before the jolt? What were you? Astrologically, the answer lies with Neptune. This is the planet of trance, of meditation, of dreams. It represents your doorway into the "Not-Self." Based on the sign the planet occupies, we identify a particularly critical spiritual catalyst for you... although we need to remember that Neptune remains in a Sign for an average of a little over thirteen years, so its Sign position actually describes not only you, but your whole generation. Its House position, however, is more uniquely your own.

Neptune was passing through Sagittarius. Thus, to trigger higher states of consciousness in yourself and to stimulate your psychic development, you may choose to follow the Path of the Gypsy... that is consciously, intentionally to expand awareness, perhaps through pilgrimage to holy places, certainly through a study of metaphysical philosophy. Without exposure to the purifying, soul-bleaching effects of that kind of mind-stretching activity, you tend to drift away from Spirit, losing yourself in the mazes of daily life.

Neptune, planet of transcendence, occupies the Sixth House of your birthchart, where mystical dimensions become linked to your natural skills and instincts for service. You grow spiritually through helping others -- and not because God hands out brownie points, but rather because service, more than any other spiritual discipline, teaches us humility and compassion. One more piece of the puzzle: You have a special instinct for working directly with other people's unconscious minds. This may mean you were born to help others unravel their dreams, or that you should work with guided imagery, or with hypnosis.

Your birthchart shows still another area where planets congregate: the Fourth. By combining forces, Uranus and Pluto emphasize that department of your life almost as powerfully as the Sun or Moon would.

Peel away the layers of the psychological onion, get down to the core of your being, the realm of your heros and nightmares -- you've entered the Fourth House. This is psychic bedrock. Traditionally, it's the House of the Home. That's a valid notion in lots of ways. First, with any astrological factor in this part of the birthchart, you're at least "minoring in psychology" and that process requires a safe haven; hence, you feel an elevated need for the privacy and security of the "nest." Second, much of your psychic bedrock was profoundly influenced -- or scarred -- by your childhood experiences. Many of your most fundamental challenges spin off the effects of a powerful parent upon your present character. Third, "Home" is "where you're coming from" -- and this House answers that question in the deepest way: it's the core of your being.

If Uranus were the only planet in the sky, we'd all be so independent we'd still be Neanderthals throwing rocks at each other. There would be no language, no culture, no law. On the other hand, if Uranus did not exist, we'd all still be hauling rocks for Pharaoh. All individuality would be suppressed. This is the planet of individuation... the process whereby we separate out who we are from what everybody else wants us to be. Always it indicates an area of our lives in which, to be true to ourselves, we must "break the rules" -- that is, overcome the forces of socialization and peer pressure. In that part of our experience, what feeds our souls tends to annoy mom and dad... and all the "moms" and "dads" who lay down the law of the tribe.

With Uranus in Libra, the process of individuation for you is tied up with the Path of the Lover. That is to say, you strengthen and clarify your own Uranian identity primarily through contact with

soulmates, although that process isn't always as romantic as it sounds. Those soulmates will often help you be true to yourself by putting you under enormous pressure to do just the opposite! Don't be seduced. Your integrity is more valuable than that.

House of the Home -- that's the old name for the Fourth House, where your Uranus lies. The issues are broader; not just home, but also your psychological "home base" -- the innermost "Myth of Self." Uranus is your Teacher here, and the myth or archetype upon which your outer life must be founded is that of the Genius or the Revolutionary. But to achieve the expression of that brilliance you first face some friction: something happened to you in your early life, something that antagonized the expression of your individuality. Find it and conquer it.

"Life's a bitch. Then you die." Go to any boutique from coast to coast; you'll find those words on a coffee mug. Meaninglessness. Like most truly frightening ideas, we make a joke of it. That's Plutonian territory: the realm of all that terrifies us so badly we need to hide from it. Death. Disease. Our personal shame. Sexuality, to some extent. Initially, Pluto asks us to face our own wounds, squarely and honestly. Then, if we succeed, it offers us a way to create an unshakable sense of meaning in our lives. How? Methods vary according to the Signs and Houses involved, but always they have one point in common: the high Plutonian path invariably involves accepting some trans-personal purpose in your life.

One more point: Pluto moves so slowly that it remains in a given Sign for many years. As result, its Sign position in your birthchart refers not only to you but also to your generation. The House position, however, is much more personal in its relevance.

Pluto was journeying slowly through the sign Libra. Thus the shadow material you are called upon to face has to do with the dark side of the Lover archetype: shallowness. In what part of your life or personal history have you chosen to preserve the appearance of peace and understanding at the expense of truth? (If your answer is "Nowhere!" then congratulations... you're Enlightened... or not looking hard enough.)

At the moment of your birth, Pluto gleamed in the Fourth House... the part of the birthchart where what we call "psychology" happens. Spirit has blessed you with sound instincts regarding the way people come to live with their old wounds, surviving, but also suffering. To create a sense of meaning in your life, you need to accept your role as a healer of spirits. To do that, you must first recognize the places where darkness touched you as a child.

In the final analysis, all planets are important. Each one plays a unique role in your developmental pattern, and failure to feed any one of them results in a diminution of your life. Just because the following planets aren't "having breakfast with the President" through association with the Sun, Moon, or Ascendant doesn't mean we can ignore them.

Look at a NASA photo of Saturn. The icy elegance of the planet's rings, the pale understatement of the cloud bands... both hint at the clarity and precision which characterize Saturn's astrological spirit. Part of the human psyche must be cold and calculating, cunning enough to survive in the physical world. Part of us thrives on self-discipline, seeks excellence, pays the price of devotion. Somewhere in our lives there's a region where nothing but the best of what we are is enough to satisfy us. That's the high realm of Saturn. In its low realm, we take one glance at those challenges and our hearts turn to ice. We freeze in fear, and despair claims us.

The buzzing terrain of Gemini offers a region of profound spiritual challenge for you, as Saturn was passing through that sign at your birth. You must learn to steel yourself in the face of the Twins' shadow side: chaos, and the inability to stick to a predetermined course. Will yourself toward sustained effort! And support that journey in practical, Saturnian terms by fortifying yourself with habits of mental focus. Those skills are especially pertinent in regard to Saturn's House in your birthchart. Which House was that?

The Twelfth! The arena of life where we experience self-transcendence... either voluntarily in the form of inner disciplines or involuntarily in the form of personal catastrophes that rob us of ego-support. With Saturn here, you've reached a stage in the spiritual journey that calls for total commitment, profound vows, and a willingness to sacrifice all other concerns. Fasting may be appropriate for you. Or vows of celibacy or simplicity. It's as though Spirit appears at the foot of your bed and says, "All... or nothing."

Mercury buzzes around the Sun in eighty-eight days, making it the fastest of the planets. It buzzes around your head in exactly the same way: frantically. It's the part of you that never rests -- the endless firing of your synapses as your intelligence struggles to organize a picture of the world. Mercury represents thinking and speaking, learning and wondering. It is the great observer, always curious. It represents your senses themselves and all the raw, undigested data that pours through them.

Mercury is roaring in Leo. That combination links your mental functions to the self-expressive, dramatic logic of the Lion. Your intelligence is hungry for an audience and knows how to attract attention. Spiritually you are learning about the importance of being heard -- and about the trap of sacrificing honest but threatening content for the sake of mere showmanship.

With the traditional "Messenger of the Gods" occupying your Second House, you prove yourself to yourself most effectively by constantly making an effort to stretch your intelligence -- and your capacity to communicate it -- to its limits. You may collect books... but make sure you read them too!

Your Lunar Nodes

The soul's journey

Here's a jolly baby. Here's a serious one. An alert one. A dull one. A wise one. Those are common nursery room observations, but they raise a fascinating question: How did that person get in there?

Most of our psychological theory, either technically or in folklore, is developmental theory... abuse a child and he'll grow up to be a child-abuser, for example. But in the eyes of the newborn infant, there is already character. How can that be? One might say it's heredity, and that's certainly at least part of the answer. A large part of the world's population would call it reincarnation -- that baby, for better or worse, represents the culmination of centuries of soul-development in many different bodies. A Fundamentalist might simply announce, "That's how God made the baby." Who's to say? But all three explanations hold one point in common: They all agree that we cannot account for what we observe in a baby's eyes without acknowledging the impact of events occurring before the child's birth.

In astrology, the South Node of the Moon refers to events occurring before your birth, helping us to see what was in your eyes ten seconds after you were born... however we imagine it got in there! The Moon's North Node, always opposite the South Node, refers to your evolutionary future. It's a subtle point, but arguably the most important symbol in astrology. The North Node represents an alien state of consciousness and an unaccustomed set of circumstances. If you open your heart and mind to them, you put maximum tension on the deadening hold of the past.

As we consider the Nodes of the Moon in your birthchart, we'll be using the language of reincarnation. Whether that notion fits your own spiritual beliefs is of course your own business. If it doesn't work for you, please translate the ideas into ancestral hereditary terms. After all, it makes little practical difference whether we speak of a certain farmer weeding his beans a thousand years before the Caesars as your great, great, mega-great grandfather... or as you yourself in a previous incarnation. Either way, he's someone who lived way back there in history who sort of is you, sort of isn't, and lives on inside you--influencing but not ultimately defining you.

At your birth, the South Node of the Moon lay in Cancer, the sign of the Great Mother. Anyone looking into your eyes as you took your first breath would have observed the results of lifetimes spent learning the ways of the Healer: nurturing, caring, an ability to attune yourself instantly to a person's deepest wounds. You've grown compassionate, but now--like a lonely psychotherapist--you must learn a new lesson: how to see to it that your own needs are met.

That nascent ability to meet your own needs is symbolized by your North Node of the Moon, which lies in Capricorn -- the sign of the Hermit. As we saw earlier, the North Node can be seen as the most significant point in the entire birthchart. Why? Because it represents your evolutionary future... the ultimate reason you're alive, in other words. How can you accomplish this Capricornian spiritual work? The "yoga" is easy to say, harder to do: you must temper some of your nurturing instincts and consciously release your attachment to the idea that others depend upon you. That is, you need to intentionally place yourself in situations where you're watching out for yourself, pursuing your own

projects, and letting others take care of themselves.

There's another piece to the puzzle: The Moon's South Node falls in the First House of your chart. This implies that previous to this lifetime you had accumulated considerable experience as a leader. That sounds glorious, and maybe it was. But now the evolutionary issue is that you had centuries in which the buck stopped with you, and you had no one to whom you could turn. This bred self-containment, but also a terrible burden of isolation.

In this lifetime, with your North Node of the Moon in the Seventh House, you must act to counterbalance some of that focus on self-sufficiency... not because it's "wrong," but because you've already learned everything you can from it. The time has come for you to concentrate on listening and learning, accepting the alien wisdom of your soulmates, weaving it into your own wisdom. Two moves are essential: one is finding partners whom you honestly respect, and the second is letting them change you.

And that's your birth chart.

Trust it; the symbols are Spirit's message to you. In the course of a lifetime, you'll make a billion choices. Any one of them could potentially hurt you terribly, sending you down a barren road. How can you steer a true course? The answer is so profound that it circles around and sounds trivial: listen to your heart, be true to your soul. Noble words and accurate ones, but tough to follow.

The Universe, in its primal intelligence, seems to understand that difficulty. It supplies us with many external supports: Inspiring religions and philosophies. Dear friends who hold the mirror of truth before us. Omens of a thousand kinds. And, above all, the sky itself, which weaves its cryptic message above each newborn infant.

In these pages, you've experienced one reading of that celestial message as it pertains to you. There are others. You may want to consider sitting with a real astrologer ... micro-chips are fine, but a human heart can still express nuances of meaning that no computer can grasp. You may want to order other reports, ones that illuminate your current astrological "weather," or that analyze important relationships. Best of all, you may choose to learn this ancient language yourself, and begin unraveling your own message in your own words.

Whatever your course, we thank you for your time and attention, and wish you grace for your journey.