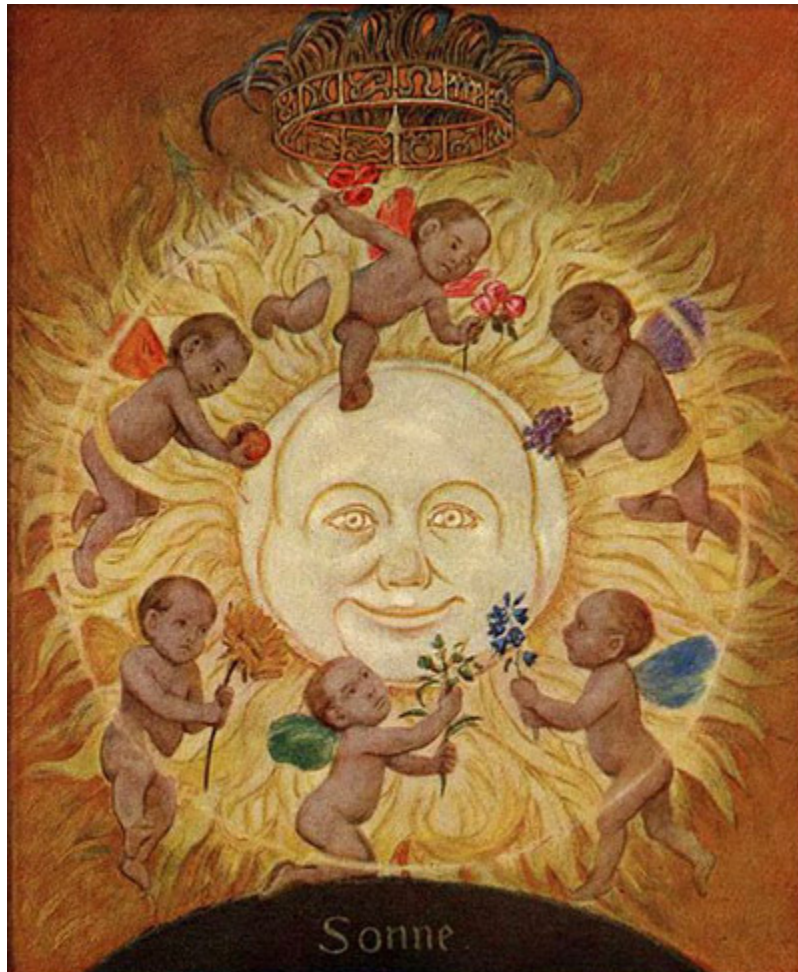


## Chapter One



### The Sun

You know those little Sun sign scrolls sold in vending machines and grocery stores? Years ago I met the founder of one such company. I'll never forget his enthusiasm. "Where else," he beamed, "can you buy a publication that's entirely about you?" Every line on every page is your story!" We can forgive his overestimating the depth and accuracy of supermarket horoscopes; nonetheless, he put his finger on astrology's

fundamental appeal. It promotes a pleasant narcissistic fiction. It makes the grand movement of the solar system all about us. It makes each of us a star.

We're mad for stars. Our obsession with celebrity culture reflects a deep and universal longing: everyone wants to be *someone*. We want to be more than nature's anonymous display, blooming and fading by the side of the road. Everyone burns (or desires to burn) with a unique and special purpose. We're on a journey—a *hero's* journey! And happily, Sun sign astrology understands our heroic mission. It democratically upgrades the ancient solar myth: where once astrology was exclusively for kings, now everyone can have a horoscope.

Yet something is amiss in the kingdom. Even as horoscope columns affirm our ambitions and celebrate our radiance, cheering us on our way, there's something awkward in their tone. Sun sign astrologers often mince and prance like servants who must repeatedly assure the king. "Yes, you *will* have a wonderful day! You'll win your true love, collect plenty of gold, enjoy excellent health, and find victory in battle!" Are such platitudes really the stuff for heroes? For little Suns? Can we imagine the bright center of our solar system quivering as it consults the papers for news of the day's influences?" ("What *are* Mars and Pluto doing to me today?") Maybe this is why some people feel compelled to bolster their spirits with astrological insignias on necklaces and coffee mugs, banding together with other Suns to proclaim "Aries/Taurus/Gemini/etc. rules!"

All this would have had ancient astrologers scratching their heads. For it wasn't until the last hundred years that Sun signs became so popular. Sun sign astrology was invented—by a Sun-ruled Leo, of course. Born in August 1860, William Frederick Allan, who later renamed himself Alan Leo, is considered one of the first modern astrologers. Leo strengthened the notion of character as destiny, steering horoscopes away from predictable fates into psychological profiles laced with spiritual

themes. But as a businessman, he was particularly astute. With offices in London, Paris, and New York, and a staff of nearly a dozen people, he produced thousands of horoscopes every year. Like any smart CEO manufacturing a product, he recognized the need to simplify his production line. He trimmed the birth chart to just one factor: the Sun sign. With this master stroke, he created a way to divide people into simple zodiac clusters. Everyone knows their birth date. Without any knowledge of astrology's true complexity, people could easily fit themselves into one of twelve astro-groups. And that's how Sun sign columns were born.

Sun sign astrology is a profitable but ultimately flawed business. Much like fast food, it adds weight without real nourishment, increasing one's craving more than giving true satisfaction. People now wonder endlessly about their identities. Having lost an appreciation for their journey's mystery, they instead keep acquiring more mass. ("On the Enneagram I'm '4,' in Vedic astrology I'm actually a Cancer, in the Chinese system I'm a Rat, and my personal destiny number is a...") Astrologers get calls from people who have jobs, families, mortgages, and driver licenses—yet are hoping the chart can tell them who they are. Our culture is as off-center as the celebrities we like to see crash and burn on our tabloid news.

Losing center is an ironic twist on the Sun's traditional meaning—which is apparent in the glyph itself. The Sun is depicted as a circle with a dot in the middle. A unity with a center as its focal point. There are possibly a trillion galaxies in the universe, each with a hundred billion Suns. Our universe is designed for many centers. Yet we lose this revelation when we worry over much about our personal identities. Our natural radiance dims when we solidify ourselves into conditioned objects, beginning our sentences with "I'm the kind of person who..." Pinned by the gravity of taking ourselves too seriously, like a star gone

supernova and become a black hole, being at center yields to merely being self-centered.

Alan Leo would be mortified. So to correct our Sun sign narcissism, I propose something even simpler than Leo's master stroke. Instead of reading daily horoscopes, people could start each day by reading their hearts, for the heart offers the most vivid experience of the centering Sun. Try this right now. Simply tune into your beating heart. Stay with the sensation for a few minutes. Feel the life force pulsing through you. Notice how your attention makes the heart grow warmer. After awhile you may feel a pleasant glow. Now shift your thoughts to those activities or people who energize and inspire you. Notice how enthusiasm fires up your radiance. When you come from your heart, you light up. Others are energized by your presence. Just as the Sun is the source of all creative events on Earth, so your creativity can inspire others to express their light—like a flame that is not diminished but builds each time it's passed along. This will be true whatever your Sun sign—Leo, Scorpio, or anything in between.

### **Returning to Sun Worship**

In the center of the Aztec calendar is the Sun god Tonatiuh, "He Who Goes Forth Shining." The Aztecs understood that all good things come from the Sun, but Tonatiuh was no Santa Claus. He had a long and menacing tongue ready to lap up the human blood he required in exchange for his life-granting gifts. Aztec priests routinely sacrificed human hearts to keep the Sun god strong, thus ensuring the survival of their people. Without their blood sacrifice, Aztecs feared the Sun would stop in its tracks and time would stand still. The world would either plunge into perpetual darkness or burn to a cinder.

Of course we know the Sun doesn't revolve around us. Sunrises and sunsets appear as Earth rotates on its axis. Earth circles the Sun and that defines our year. The laws of physics will keep the whole show going, until a few billion years from now when the Sun goes supernova. In the meantime, technology has freed us from worrying about Sun gods. For heat and light we've got electricity, light bulbs, and central heating—that's our immediate experience, that's what our children learn. If it's too cold, turn up the heat. If it's too dark, turn on a light.

So in a way, the Sun *has* disappeared from our lives, which is exactly what the Aztecs feared. And what's happened? Our sense of time has gone haywire. Life has sped up. Exhausted people with too much to do and not enough time are everywhere. Along with bi-polar disorder, ADD, autism, insomnia and penile dysfunction, two great maladies of our culture are depression and burn-out. Depression is a sign we've lost our fire, our inner Sun no longer rising with the day. Burn-out means there's too much fire, a constant inner Sun frying our circuits. Even though the sky above is hunkey dorey, physically, psychologically, and spiritually, we below are not. Is it because we no longer worship the Sun? Might Tonatiuh be angry? If so, how can we come back to center? Maybe we should propitiate the solar god again.

Blood sacrifice just won't do. Among the Aztecs, blood was the proper currency of exchange between gods and men. Gods gave their blood to create the world and humans were honored to return the favor. Human sacrifice wasn't barbaric; it was a gesture of divine reciprocity. In our culture a more appropriate currency might be light. Light is a metaphor for consciousness. The Sun lights our world and we can return the favor by bringing our consciousness back to the Sun. We can hold the Sun in reverent awareness. Happily, astrology gives us two exquisite means for doing just that.

Get out a copy of your birth chart. More than personality and purpose, the Sun indicates time, and this is embedded in your chart's design. That outer circle with all twelve signs? It represents a year, the time it takes for Earth to make a complete revolution around the Sun, or for the Sun to rise through all twelve constellations. The transiting Sun takes one year to circuit all twelve houses of your chart, metaphorically lighting up each one for about a month. Now look at the cross in the center of your horoscope, indicating the four angles of the chart. These angles were originally devised by the Egyptians, who like the Aztecs, worshipped the Sun. They patterned the angles after the Sun's daily round.

The Ascendant carries the feel and meaning of sunrise; planets transiting this point bring new beginnings. The Midheaven evokes the Sun at noon, high in the sky at maximum glory; the MC indicates where people likewise shine in public strength. The Descendent evokes the setting sun, when the day's work is done; marking the house of partnership, it indicates where we surrender ourselves to another. The IC is the midnight point, when we are deep in sleep and the Sun is also resting from our world. It represents the private foundations of our life—our family, our home, our essential self.

Through houses and angles, birth charts offer a personalized imprint of the Sun's dual signatures, the year and the day. Though rarely discussed as such by astrologers, these two horoscope templates suggest a simple yet elegant way to carry the Sun's centering influence into our lives.

### **Your Personal Year**

In the first, and one of the best astrology readings I ever had, the astrologer did a remarkable job predicting my monthly focus over the

course of a year. I've never forgotten that reading. How did she know exactly what I'd be doing and what would matter to me each month? My interests and activities unfolded just as she predicted. Many years later when I became an astrologer, I dug out her tape hoping to uncover her brilliant technique. Did she do it with transits? Secondary progressions? Was she progressing the solar return?

Listening to her tape I was stunned. She'd done nothing more than describe the transiting Sun. "In January," she'd said, "it's time to get goal-oriented, take steps to improve your professional future. A creative project may be particularly important." She was exactly right. My primary focus that January was filling out an extensive fellowship application for a novel I hoped to write. But all she'd looked at was the Sun in Capricorn going through my 5<sup>th</sup> house. No Saturn, no Pluto, no midpoints. It was so basic, I wanted my money back! Even so, her simple forecast had an uncanny accuracy. Throughout that year, I followed her guidance to the letter and always felt energetically on-target. During one month I got a significant career break which influenced my life direction for years to come. When I later looked at the transits, the only relevant predictor was the Sun transiting my 10<sup>th</sup> house of career.

Astrologers like complexity. Go to any conference and you'll see us lined up to learn countless nifty techniques. When I prepare for client sessions, I'm swimming in charts—transits, progressions, solar arc directions, solar, sometimes lunar returns. But after years of studying the ephemeris, there's just one technique I consistently use for myself. I follow the Sun through my chart. In fact, I've made the Sun a central feature of my monthly workshops-by-mail, because despite its simplicity, I've seen how relevant and healing this approach can be for my clients. Collectively, of course, the Sun's influence via the seasons is undeniable, but individually, we also have this unique annual rhythm that's worth acknowledging.

Most people live this rhythm instinctively. When I quiz people about their favorite time of year, when they feel most optimistic and energized, they usually answer with the month when the Sun crosses into their 1<sup>st</sup> house. The prior month, when the Sun is in their 12<sup>th</sup>, is often a time of low energy, depression, falling apart or spiritual retreat. Career highs often coincide with the Sun in the 10<sup>th</sup>. It's generally unwise to schedule vacations this month. Plan your getaways for when the Sun is in the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 8<sup>th</sup>, depending on how you like to renew yourself. But don't take my word for it. Follow the Sun for a year (or take my workshop) and discover the benefits yourself!

### **Your Ideal Day**

Sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight are traditionally restorative times, when we eat, rest, and renew ourselves. The corresponding angles of the chart are likewise signposts for energetic renewal. They provide a template for the optimum way to keep going throughout the day.

I started looking at this when my own work day lost its rhythm. After sixteen years of corporate employment, I began working for myself full time. Instead of feeling free, I was miserable, adrift without my routine. Each day was a lonely uphill climb. When after a year my depression only increased, I needed help. So I looked to the angles of my chart for guidance on how to improve on the start, middle and end my work days. The results were amazing.

I have Gemini on my Midheaven. Corporate life meant my mid-day was blessed with lots of social activity—meetings, amused people watching, lunch and coffee pot gossip. None of that was available at home alone. So I Tivo'd *Oprah* and *Dr. Phil* and took my lunch break with them. The whole day turned around from there.



I tested my theory with clients. What I discovered was that people really do run different days, and their charts reflect these preferences. What could be more intimate than the daily rise and fall of one's energy? Yet rarely do we analyze this flow. The benefits are considerable. Everyone I worked with became more assured of their personal rhythm; all reported increased energy and efficiency. But before we start creating astrology formulas for ideal days, it's important to approach this work correctly. You must proceed as good intuitives do, by listening first. I asked my clients lots of questions—in particular to recall times when their days went well and times when they didn't. From that we put together a picture the chart could validate.

Annie is a part-time actress with Gemini rising. Air signs are energized by mental and social activities. Annie confessed that if she had just fifteen minutes between waking up and getting out the door, instead of taking a shower, she'd jump on the computer, check emails and read her favorite online newspaper. She likes starting her days by plugging into the world. When I mentioned this to a Leo rising friend, she was horrified. Fire signs like to be creating. Mornings for her are very productive, inspirational, and devotional, the highpoint of her day, when as a writer, she does her best work and wants no intrusions from the outer world.

Annie has nebulous water sign Pisces on her Midheaven. During the middle of her day she often feels lost. Especially when working office jobs, she loses energy and focus. When working at home, she likes to take baths at noon (connecting with water); this renews her for the rest of the day. According to her horoscope's template, mid-day renewal means doing Pisces things—imagining, drifting intuitively—not culturally sanctioned activities. But what one person call "time-wasting" could be a direct route to another's productivity. One client, with early degrees of Aquarius on her Midheaven, likes to nap just before noon. That's when the overhead Sun is in the Pisces part of her template (the 11<sup>th</sup> house). When noon arrives, she feels like she's gotten a brand new start on the

day (Aquarius on the MC). Another woman with a hard-working Virgo Midheaven loves working full throttle mid-day. She feels awful, like her whole day is wasted, if she's not.

At the end of her work day, Annie feels reflective and philosophical, appropriate for Sagittarius on her Descendent. She loves talking with her partner and getting a meaningful perspective on her day. Mornings she has lots of chatty bouncy energy, but at dusk she's more settled and thoughtful—the difference between Gemini and Sagittarius.

Annie has Virgo on the IC. Understandably, the sleep-time angle is difficult to discuss with people. I start by talking about the bedroom and how it's set up. I ask what happens in one's sleep or dream life. Annie does lots of teeth grinding in her sleep and has gone through four mouth guards. This fits the Virgo tendency to digest and chew on things. Annie's most common recurring dream is of giving birth to herself. Pluto (emblem for rebirth) is on her IC. When I suggested that Pluto is also a magician and she could try working with magical energies in her sleep, she remembered that a psychic once advised her to write her desires on a piece of paper and fold it under her pillow at night. She tried this just once: she wanted a French wardrobe and had very little money. The next day she discovered her hair dresser had one sitting in her garage, which she sold to Annie for next to nothing.

Sandra was in crisis with her day. She felt she wasted too much time watching TV. Minor emergencies distracted her. She never got anything done. Yet when we analyzed her birth chart's template, we found it wasn't as bad as she thought. Her expectations were the problem. Mornings she expected to leap out of bed and get right to work. But with Cancer rising, it was more natural for her to move slowly, being attentive to her moods, nurturing herself and doing what made her feel secure. "In the mornings," she said, "I feel like I have no power with other people." When I suggested she should let herself flow like water, going to what was

easy, then start her day at noon with her Midheaven in Aries, she laughed, because that's what she usually did. But now she had permission.

Water wants to lay back and relax. It flows around obstacles and can do its best work while seeming to do nothing at all. Patty, with water-sign Scorpio rising, also likes to take it slow in the morning. Whereas Sandra thinks of mornings as womb-time, Patty thinks of herself in a cave. True to the Scorpio template, she is renewing her power in solitude. Abby also has Scorpio rising. Morning workouts make her feel empowered—but she doesn't want anyone approaching her in the gym. This is a solitary time. And when she can't work out in the morning, she broods.

The Descendant describes one's sunset pattern. Those who suffer burn-out often have a problem here, forgetting to turn off their work day. It's important to consciously shift the rhythm. Cynthia with communal Aquarius on the Descendant loves having friends over for dinner; Rebecca, also with Aquarius here, loves to go out to meetings and network. Again, air signs like mental or social stimulation. With Pisces on her Descendent, Marissa who has a pretty stressful, high intensity work day, likes to completely unplug, entering what she calls a vegetative state, just piddling in the kitchen, expecting absolutely nothing from herself.

Sandra has business-oriented Capricorn on her Descendent. Earth signs like being busy. Sandra feels most capable in the early evening, preferring to make her business calls then. She starts at twilight and works well into the evening. Another two women with earthy Taurus on their Descendents like productive evenings too. One works the swing shift, starting at dusk. "It's so easy," she said, "it feels like not having a work day at all."

Sandra and Jane both have aesthetic Libra on their IC. Having a beautiful bed is important. Jane had a fine quilt that was two inches too small; this irked her nightly until she finally sewed on a border and could sleep well at last. Libra is the “princess and the pea” sign. It’s deeply sensitive. Sandra’s apartment shared a bedroom wall with her neighbor; this made her most uncomfortable. We talked about moving her bed and creating a wall hanging border to give her more privacy. Patty has the sign of the Awakener (Aquarius) on the IC. She often wakes up in the middle of the night. She meditates or reads, until the early morning, when she gets her deeper sleep. Robert has Leo on the IC, a fire sign. He wakes up and writes; this is his most creative time.

But enough examples. Take a look at your own chart. What’s the best day for you?