

The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

News From The Astropoetic School January 2022

Greetings from [The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery](#) in the Missouri Ozarks, where the cold fire of winter gnaws at the bones of even the hardest of souls.

An Invitation to Learn Astrology From the Inside Out

For the past thirty years, my focus as an astrologer has been teaching others the language of astrology – not so they could hang out their shingle and start doing readings for others, but so that they could find their way to genuine self-knowledge. While knowledge of the world is necessary to be able to navigate it successfully, knowledge of the self is what makes the difference between a life that actually fits and one that is adopted by default. We are all conditioned to believe that certain things are true about the world, and about our relationship to it, but the process of individuation demands that we question these beliefs, and reach for a deeper sense of authenticity. In this quest, astrology can be an immensely valuable set of tools.

An Excerpt from my Correspondence Course

from [Lesson Fourteen: The Moon](#)

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In general, the Moon is everything the Sun is not. It is a counterbalance to the solar agenda that drives you toward a fulfillment of your life purpose, and that gives your life its overall shape, direction and momentum. At times, the Moon complements the solar agenda by drawing forth unconscious contents for creative integration, compelling you to go farther into the unknown, more deeply into the heart of things, and more broadly into a sense of wholeness that transcends your conscious sense of self. At other times, the Moon counters the solar agenda by forcing a reckoning with core issues in need of healing and strange dimensions of being in need of integration before forward progress can be made. Unlike the solar agenda, which is rooted in your individuality, the lunar agenda is rooted in your humanity, your participation in the larger web of life, and your connection to a vast underground reservoir of feelings, psychological issues, archetypal complexes, compelling fantasies, mythological stories, and transcendent mysteries.

If the Sun represents the central protagonist – the “I” in your life story – the Moon represents the antagonist, as it is experienced within and without, that is to say, everything that appears to challenge the self in its passage through life, its ascent up

all ladders mundane and spiritual, and its return to the Source of All Being. While Sun is identified with the spark of Spirit within your soul, the Moon is more fully aligned with soul itself. It is an aspect of Self less easily defined than your solar identity – who or what you tell yourself and others that you are – but at the same time often closer to the whole truth of your being. The Sun may drive you forward through your life toward a definable goal, but the Moon draws your attention to that which you can see only at the periphery of your vision, or by closing your eyes.

As Thomas Moore reminds us (*Care of the Soul*, pp xvi-xvii):

Care of the soul speaks to the longings we feel and the symptoms that drive us crazy, but it is not a path away from shadow or death. A soulful personality is complicated, multifaceted, and shaped by both pain and pleasure, success and failure. Life lived soulfully is not without its moments of darkness and periods of foolishness.

While the Sun maps and illuminates the path, the Moon gives rise to every nonsensical longing toward the shadows off the path, waits in ambush with a seductive power beyond the Sun's control, and compels a larger, deeper, more complicated life than the Sun can imagine in its wildest dreams. The Sun demands clarity of purpose and linear resolve. The Moon demands healing, wholeness, and self-transcendence. The Moon is the unconscious self – representing everything about yourself you don't already know – and the world you encounter as you engage the unconscious and navigate through it on a journey of soul. Although the Moon takes many forms within the world, as well as within the psyche, its essence is the *anima mundi* – or soul of the world – as it exists in nature, in culture, and in you.

Within the natural world, the Moon governs all organic life processes – from the planting of the seed to the flowering of a tree in full bloom; from the mating dances of the spring to the hibernations of winter; from the cellular mitosis that divides a cell in two to the complex interrelationships that enable the human body to function as a whole organism. Within the human body, the Moon governs all anabolic processes, especially those by which food is taken in, broken down into useful nutrients, digested and assimilated. The Moon also regulates endocrine function, hormonal balances, and the female reproductive system – especially including the physiological processes associated with menstruation, ovulation, conception, pregnancy, lactation, and menopause.

Along with the Sun, the Moon is considered a primary general indicator of health. Whereas the Sun governs constitutional strength, however, the Moon governs the body's essential vulnerability and susceptibility to disease. When the body is stressed, this stress registers primarily with Moon, which in turn, triggers unconscious, habitual, and automatic coping mechanisms on both the behavioral and the cellular level. Often within the lunar realm, the symptoms of disease are a call to soul and to the specific healing needed by soul in order to reach toward a deeper level of wholeness. The Moon is often associated with the psychosomatic dimensions of health issues as well as physical symptoms.

As a quintessential water planet, the Moon governs the movement of all feelings, moods, and internal weather patterns, and the way in which unconscious processes influence external behaviors. Watery emotions at the teary-eyed end of the spectrum such as sorrow, anguish and grief, and heart-centered emotions such as love, caring, compassion, forgiveness, serenity and happiness are the special

province of the Moon. Because the Moon is the planetary body closest to the Earth, it tells a story that is intimately personal, highly subjective, and primarily internal. Because it is the fastest moving of all the planetary bodies, completing its revolution around the Earth in approximately 28 days, it reveals a pattern of rapidly shifting intricacy and subtlety, so close to each of us as to often be inscrutable without the conscious intention to examine it more closely.

On a psychological level, the Moon governs the function of memory, and forms the cumulative repository for all the emotional residues of life experience. Each time you have an emotional response to a life experience, a memory is created which then ties that experience to every other experience in which a similar feeling is evoked. This is particularly true when the feelings evoked are difficult or painful, for the Moon's function in this regard to create a buffer against additional pain by developing an elaborate system of cues. When these cues are experienced, they trigger an unconscious response designed to mitigate anticipated undesirable outcomes. Over time, as these patterns of response become habitual, they evolve into psychological complexes protecting you from the vulnerability at the heart of your core issues. When the Moon gets triggered, these core issues nonetheless are likely to come to the fore and demand your attention, for ultimately the path to the healing and release of unresolved feelings from the past is a major part of the Moon's agenda.

The Moon's association with memory can be extended to the entire evolutionary path that you have traveled as a soul to arrive at this place in this current incarnation, as well as the history of personal karma that must be resolved before you are free of the limiting patterns in your life. Karma simply means whatever unresolved feelings and unhealed wounds are left from other times and places along the evolutionary chain, either earlier in this life, or in some past life, that must be addressed in the present moment. The mystery of reincarnation, death and rebirth – whether taken literally or as a metaphor for the cyclical nature of all life, and the evolutionary process – belongs to the Moon, and is symbolized through the rhythm of her monthly phase shifts from New Moon to Full Moon and back again.

You need not believe in reincarnation, however, in order to understand this function of the Moon, since the same patterns that might be attributed to past lives often show up in childhood, where old wounds are opened again for another round of healing in present time. However you choose to understand the cyclical nature of time encompassed by the mystery of the Moon, whatever was not addressed in your past, will inevitably follow you into the future, and through the agency of the Moon, draw to you people, circumstances, and/or experiences designed to reawaken your unresolved feelings. Once they are felt again and released, and you can come to a sense of peace, forgiveness, and gratitude in relation to them, memory begins to fade, and the Moon's job in that particular area of your life is done.

For men and women both, the Moon will reflect the quality and nature of your relationship to your mother. I have found that it can also occasionally refer to your father, if your father was perceived as the more nurturing parent, played a primary caretaking role instead of being a more traditional absentee breadwinner, or was your single parent throughout your formative years. If your mother was *not* nurturing, this will be reflected in the placement of the Moon and/or its aspects to other planets. If the father was not nurturing, this is more likely to be reflected in the placement of Sun and/or Saturn than the Moon. It is important to note that all these reflections – as indicated by the placement of your Moon in the birthchart – are highly subjective. They do not describe your mother (or caretaking parent) in any

objective sense, but rather your experience of being cared for or not, which can and often will be quite different than that of any of your siblings.

For men and women both, your mother is your first teacher, and your earliest role model for all subsequent relationships – to others, to the larger culture in which you live, and to the natural world. From gestation in the womb onward into adulthood, your mother's influence will reverberate on unconscious levels, and many of her characteristic feelings, moods, attitudes, beliefs, dreams, and fantasies will color and influence your own. Often the path of soul marked by the Moon will involve learning to separate these unconscious influences from the new information arising from your own experiences.

For a woman, the Moon is related to the Feminine mysteries of menstruation, childbirth, and menopause; to the trifold manifestation of the feminine nature – maiden, mother, and crone; and to the psychological rites of passage associated with these physiological changes. If a woman has a difficult relationship with her mother, her passages through these phases, and her relationship to the Feminine in general, may be clouded or compromised by these issues. Whatever a woman's relationship to her mother, and at times her female ancestors, there will tend to be a transmission of patterning in relationship to the Feminine that gets passed on from generation to generation, all of which is also symbolized by the Moon in a woman's chart.

For a man, the Moon embodies that portion of the archetype of the *anima* that is modeled after his mother, and is now internalized as his mother's emotional and psychological impact on his psyche. Another part of the *anima* is encompassed by Venus, and we will talk more about this in a future lesson. To have a satisfying relationship with a real woman, a man must work through whatever issues remain from his mothering; and to the extent that he has not, they will likely be projected into his relationships with an intimate partner, and be symbolized astrologically by pattern involving the Moon. A man's Moon will also, in general, challenge him to more fully integrate his Feminine side, including his emotions, his capacity for self-nurturing, his relationship skills, and his allegiances to family, community, and ultimately, the entire web of life.

For both men and women, the Moon is our capacity for caring, nurturing, empathy, receptivity, feeling, intuition, and other so-called Feminine skills and attributes. For creative men, who have established a relationship with their own Feminine side, the Moon begins to assume a higher function as an inner guide to the realm of the soul. For creative women, who have established a relationship with their Feminine side, the Moon is a guide into the realm of the high priestess, sorceress, fertility goddess, or some other archetypal embodiment of Feminine, Earth-based wisdom.

Mentally, the Moon governs the poetic imagination, intuitive experiences that have their basis in memory, and the opening of the heart that leads to a deeper, more complete understanding than the mind alone can achieve. The ancients believed the Moon to be connected to all experiences of intoxication, ecstasy, dreams, hallucination, altered states of consciousness, and madness (or lunacy), suggesting the fine line between creative inspiration and psychotic states. The ancients also understood that Moon in its waxing state was very different than the Moon in its waning state, and that through the cyclical nature of the Moon's passage were revealed the unfathomable mysteries that connect life so intimately to death, light to darkness, and female to male.

In the sociological realm, the Moon describes an orientation to life based on caring, nurturing, and reverence for all of life, and all natural processes (including death). Within a culture oriented around the Moon (that is to say, a matriarchal culture), the cultivation of healing arts (especially those involving the use of herbs, healing touch, and a supportive relationship between healer and the one in need of healing), domestic arts (including weaving, quilting, pottery, gardening, cooking, baking bread, etc.), and divinatory arts (including astrology, tarot, dream interpretation, etc.) would be emphasized. Daily life would focalize and strengthen the close-knit bonds formed through everyday tasks and seasonal ceremonial rituals and celebrations that tie family and community together. A lunar culture would also be based upon a deep sense of place, and a close connection to the rhythms of life on planet Earth as they express themselves within that place.

Spiritually, the Moon governs our relationship to Gaia, or planet Earth considered as a living, breathing community of life in which we all participate. While the Sun celebrates the actualization of a distinct self with clear boundaries, individual identity, and a unique purpose; the Moon celebrates the interconnectedness of all things, along with the fact that you are part of a larger, ultimately unfathomable web of life, through which the limited identity recognized by the Sun is expanded and deepened beyond measure. In a similar way, while the Sun reflects your efforts to establish an independent, separate ego in a world of independent, separate egos, the Moon reminds you of your essential humanity, that which ties us all together as a species, and which requires us to cooperate toward a common sense of safety, wellbeing, and abundance. While these two perspectives can often be at odds with each other, it is the task of every soul born onto this planet to cultivate a workable integration of solar and lunar paths. Each of us must actualize a unique, separate self, and each of us must also participate in a larger reality that transcends and fulfills the separate identity we have cultivated.

The Moon governs that aspect of your spiritual path that evolves out of the quality of your everyday experience. While contemporary society rewards you for relentlessly pursue a solar agenda, the ancients understood the importance of taking time to pay attention to the small details that together comprise the environment in which you pursue that agenda – the colors, plants, and animals with which you surround yourself, the food you eat, the music you listen to, the movies you watch, the people you hang out with, the books you read, the furniture and possessions that you use to define your space. From the Moon's perspective, it is important to create an environment and a daily life that has the power to evoke a memory of soul, for it is this memory that puts everything else you are attempting to accomplish in this life, your solar agenda included, into a much more comprehensive perspective.

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If you have always wanted to learn astrology, but have either been intimidated by the complexity of the language, or conversely put off by its seeming superficiality, this course may be for you. I tread a middle path, teaching you slowly and carefully how to feel your way into your own chart, one step at a time. Each step, however, is rich with multi-layered information that becomes intimately personal as you are encouraged to map what you are learning to what you already know about yourself, your experiences and the unfolding story-line of your life. In this way, the astrology that you learn is not some abstract intellectual exercise in pop psychology, but rather an exploration into the depths of yourself, aided by a language designed to

illuminate those depths.

I currently have openings for three new students. To find out more, and sign up for the Basic Course, go [here](#).

Sneak Preview

An Excerpt from my New Book

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Astropoetics

Astrology as a Way of Knowing, Being and Participating in a Living Cosmos

from **Chapter Eleven: Opening the Archetypal Eye**

How do we know anything astrological? Typically, we learn astrology by reading what those who have come before us have written, or by attending classes, or conferences, and then eventually by applying what we absorb to the reading of charts, familiar and then unfamiliar. But where does what those who write about and teach astrology know come from? Presumably from their teachers, marinated in their own experiences, back and back and back to the beginning – when the early Hellenistic astrologers passed on what they had somehow absorbed from Nechepso and Petrosiris, and before that, from Hermes Trismegistus, and before that into a mystical fog where the true source of astrology, rooted in a more direct way of knowing, was a practice, perhaps from our contemporary point of view, a lost art.

So, what might that art look like, resurrected in the only way possible, as a postmodern undertaking, suitable to any contemporary astrologer who wants to get his information, not second-hand, but through his own efforts to know?

Asking this question does not preclude the idea that we are a community and what we learn from each other is important. It is to suggest that before we join with others, and develop the necessary skills to separate the wheat from the chaff, in deciding what within the vast smorgasbord of astrological offerings is worth adding to our own repertoire, there is some more fundamental process that allows us to approach any question from an astrological perspective. In this chapter, let us take a look at what that might be.

Astrology as an Innate Archetypal Language

To begin, I think it is helpful to consider astrology as a language with which it is possible to have a conversation with the Self, as we discussed it in Chapter Ten. We might alternately understand this Self as Cosmos or Spirit or Mystery, which are all ways of alluding to the depth of conversation that is possible, one that takes place on the threshold between the known and the much greater Unknown, perhaps to evoke

the spirit of Xenophon, a conversation that dares to lean into the Unknowable. This a conversation that, in a postmodern world, is recognized to never complete itself, but one that if courageously pursued, can at the very least, be deeply meaningful. It is a conversation that has been going on, at least since the very beginning of the history outlined in Part One of this book, and one that will be going on, long after you and I are gone, as long as there is a cosmos to contemplate and someone to contemplate it.

Ultimately, I like to think that the ability to do this is innate. Going back to the very origins of language, as discussed in Chapter One, we might postulate, as Terrence McKenna did, that language co-evolved with visual acuity and imagination, as a consequence of the rapid development of the human brain, some 100,000 years ago – whether facilitated by the ingestion of psilocybin or not – among a people who had an intimate relationship with the nighttime sky. If so, and if the theory of cognitive recapitulation embraced by Freud, Jung and modern anthropological linguists bears any credibility, then we all contain within us an innate capacity to engage the Cosmos in conversation, using the same visual, trans-linguistic language that allowed our ancestors to do so, eons ago.

We will explore this possibility more directly a little later in this book. Meanwhile, it is also not unlikely to assume that given our collective conditioning through the millennia, by a culture that has elevated the rational, linear, pragmatic, dogmatic, and scientific over the imaginal, cyclical, mystical, multi-dimensional, and yes, astrological ways of knowing, that most of us have largely forgotten how. The capacity is there, but we have to first prime the pump of our ancient memories.

We can start, it seems to me, by assuming that this language we are trying to remember is archetypal, which in fact, is another, more contemporary way of saying that it is innate. According to Jung, and actually, to Plato before him, archetypes are pre-existent patterns encoded in the human psyche itself (*Two Essays* 69):

I have often been asked where the archetypes or primordial images come from. It seems to me that their origin can be explained by assuming them to be deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity. One of the commonest and at the same time most impressive experiences is the apparent movement of the sun every day. We certainly cannot discover anything of the kind in the unconscious, so far as the known physical process is concerned. What we do find, on the other hand, is the myth of the sun hero in all of its countless variations. It is this myth, and not the physical process, that forms the sun archetype. The same can be said of the phases of the moon. The archetype is a kind of readiness to produce over and over again the same or similar mythical ideas.

Here, of course, Jung alludes to a more implicit understanding of an archetypal underpinning to astrology, without actually calling it that. Might we, nonetheless, take his suggestion to heart, and begin our quest for this deeper relationship to the Cosmos by assuming that all of the planets, asteroids, centaurs, and other celestial bodies that are now part of the astrological lexicon, have this same archetypal underpinning. I'm guessing that most postmodern psychological astrologers, weaned not only on Jung, but also on Rudhyar, Tarnas and other seminal thinkers moving in this direction since the dawn of the Era of Uncertainty, will not find this idea very much of a stretch.

If so, then we might further postulate that astrology is a language that describes the archetypal dimension of the cosmos. Within this language, all celestial bodies – the Sun and Moon, the planets, visible and invisible, the asteroids, centaurs and Kuiper Belt Objects – are the basic words of the astrological vocabulary, each representing a certain archetypal domain. Postponing a more elaborate explanation until a bit later in this book, in addition, I will boldly suggest that the rest of astrology – house and sign placements, aspects and harmonics, planetary patterns, transits and progressions, as well as most of the more esoteric techniques used by various segments of the astrological community – are essentially an elaborate system of astrological grammar, through which rules of syntax and semantics potentially render a birthchart understandable as an archetypal field.

Exploring Astrological Archetypes

If you, dear reader, can indulge me for a while longer as I postpone this larger discussion, then our next important question becomes, “How do we explore the meaning of an archetype?” This is by far the most important question we can ask, because if we know how to do this, then our memory of the innate ability to engage the cosmos in conversation will be rekindled, and whatever grammar we might subsequently use to frame the conversation – and yes, there can possibly be more than one – will be secondary.

To explore the meaning of an archetype, or more specifically, a “word” within the astrological language, we will want to cultivate what James Hillman has called the archetypal eye, described by Richard Tarnas (*Cosmos* 70) as:

that form of imaginative intelligence, implicit and potential in all of us, that is capable and discriminating the rich multiplicity of archetypal patterns in the intimate microcosm of one's own life as well as in the great events of history and culture.

While I think there is value in this definition, it is a bit too conceptual to be of much use for our purposes here, for what Hillman is really talking about is developing the ability to see what cannot be seen. This is a paradox, a Zen koan, a pathway more deeply into uncertainty, potentially a recipe for getting lost. It is also an invitation to a very intimate conversation with the cosmos that only you can have, because you are who you are, having lived the life you've lived, followed the path you've followed and come to this moment in time that has prepared you to see what otherwise could not be seen. What comes out of this conversation is not something you can or will ever read in an astrology book; it is an astrological experience that you can only have if you dare to take your imaginative intelligence into the unknown.

In *The Soul's Code*, Hillman introduces the possibility of this kind of experience with a Swedish folktale about the Huldra, an enchanting siren who would appear to woodcutters in the deep forest and lure them more deeply into the woods. At a certain point, the Huldra would smile, turn her back and disappear, leaving the poor woodsman miles from nowhere, with no direction home, unable to find his way back, and likely to die.

This is perhaps a gruesome way to introduce a journey that is not for the faint of heart, and a cautionary tale to all but the most intrepid among us. For those who

can get past this warning, and still feel the siren call, is also a demonstration of where to begin. For the journey invariably follows a mythic trail, a story filled with enchanting images that speak to our imaginative intelligence, that in fact, evoke it. At a deeper level, the story is also an invitation into the deep woods, where we will be alone, and become lost, and likely undergo a death of some kind – or a transformation, if you prefer a euphemism no less cathartic for its vagueness – if only of what we thought we once knew.

Is it any wonder that humans have gravitated toward the rational, and clung to the illusion of certainty that science promises with its enforced rigor, designed to definitively separate what is true from what is not? Is it any wonder that astrologers, following in their footsteps, while fighting for our own identity, have promised our own brand of certainty, based on the idea that a birthchart could be interpreted, and provide a reliable predictive map to the journey of the soul? Both promises have been Huldres, for when we get to this supposed certainty, what lies behind it is always the Unknown, the deep woods, mysteries that don't resolve neatly into infallible truths, but rather smile, turn their back, and leave us stranded in unfamiliar territory.

To use the post-structuralist Jacques Lacan's language, whatever interpretation we might give a birthchart is at best a "floating signifier," a temporary pause in the conversation, part of a larger sentence waiting for a completion that may never come (Hillman, *The Soul's Code* 93):

Behind each and every interpretation of the tale is the tale. The tale provides the invisible backdrop against which all analyses parade their brilliance. Myth lies behind every account we give of it, and it gives no account of itself. Myths fall back on invisibility. They show an enchanting face, but their backing disappears under scrutiny. Nothing's there. We are lost in the woods.

And yet, developing an archetypal eye that has any chance at all of seeing into the mysterious depths of an astrological word must begin with the willingness to entertain the stories behind it, and to somehow enter into them, get inside of them, let them inside of us, and then, see what happens. Maybe, instead of being entirely lost, we will remember something important, and access innate faculties that allow us to see more deeply into the darkness than we could before. Personally, I think it is a risk worth taking, if all we stand to lose are the illusions that stand between us and the Unknown, for these illusions are what separate us from a more intimate conversation with the Cosmos.

Mad Mercury Mini Retrograde Sale **through February 4, 2022**

Just because it is Mercury retrograde, and I have cabin fever, and in general I'm a generous soul who, in this this moment of madness, happens to care more that I get my work out into the world, than I do getting rich from my creative output (not that that would ever happen in this lifetime), I am offering you, my mythical reader, this special offer. I suggest you take advantage of it before I regain my senses.

The next three people that request one, can have a free copy of any of my previous books, all postage paid. Just email me at jlandwehr@astropoetics.com to tell me which book you want, and where you want it sent.

If you are not one of the lucky three, you can still have any book you want (one per customer please) shipped to you at my expense (just use the Code FREESHIPPING at check-out).

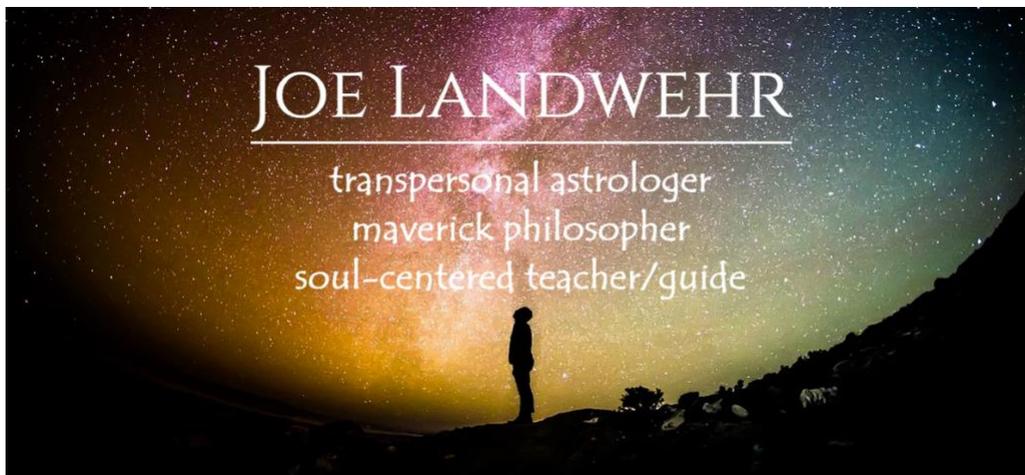
You can read more about each book listed below [here](#):

The Seven Gates of Soul: traces a fascinating 6000-year history of ideas about the soul. Using the ancient Mesopotamian myth of goddess Innana's passage through seven gates as a metaphor, I explore the barriers to a true understanding of soul erected by religion, philosophy, science, and psychology.

Tracking the Soul with an Astrology of Consciousness: a comprehensive system of spiritual psychology integrating astrology and the chakra system, with case studies for each chakra, anecdotes from the author's personal experiences as a yoga student and suggestions for working with the system in an open-ended way.

Astrology and the Archetypal Power of Astrology, Part One: using *The Theology of Arithmetic* by Imablichus as a point of departure, the book aims to give a visceral sense of number in a qualitative sense, weaving together a collage of ideas from mythology, cutting-edge science, history, politics, and personal experience.

Astrology and the Archetypal Power of Astrology, Part Two: building on the work of Part One, in this second volume, I examine how number underlies the construction of the birthchart – both in general and specifically within a particular chart – so that we can better understand how Spirit, or the gods and goddesses of the mythopoetic worldview, enter into our experience.



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