

Psyche and Cosmos:

Holotropic States of Consciousness, Archetypal Psychology, and Transit Astrology.

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Psychedelic substances, in general, and LSD, in particular, can profoundly influence the functioning of the human psyche. Depending on the personality of the individual who takes them and on the set and setting, their effect can be profoundly beneficial or deleterious. For this reason, since the beginning of psychedelic experimentation, researchers have attempted to find ways of predicting what impact these substances would have on the person who takes them.

The effort to discover a method for predicting the reaction to psychedelics and the therapeutic outcome was one of the objectives of a large clinical study that our research team conducted at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center. We used for this purpose a battery of standard psychological tests, including the Minnesota Multidimensional Personality Inventory (MMPI), Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), Rorschach Inkblot Test, our own Psychedelic Experience Questionnaire (PEQ), and others. This research confirmed my earlier findings at the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and the conclusion from the study of professional literature that the results of the tests developed and commonly used by Western psychology were essentially useless in this regard.

Ironically, when after years of frustrating effort I finally found a tool that made such predictions possible, it was more controversial than psychedelics themselves. It was astrology, a discipline that, even after years of studying transpersonal phenomena, I myself tended to dismiss as a ridiculous pseudoscience. I also realized that astrology could be an invaluable tool in the work with other forms of holotropic states of consciousness, such as those induced by powerful experiential techniques of psychotherapy (primal therapy, rebirthing, and holotropic breathwork) or occurring spontaneously during psychospiritual crises.

The radical change in my attitude toward astrology has been the result of cooperation with psychologist and philosopher Richard Tarnas, my close friend and colleague of many years. Rick's major book on the history of the Western world view, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, is used as a textbook in many universities in the U.S. and abroad. Rick is also a brilliant astrological researcher who combines impeccable scholarship and deep familiarity with holotropic states of consciousness, the subject of his doctoral dissertation. Rick also brings to his work extraordinary breadth of knowledge concerning human history and culture.

We have been jointly exploring for many years the astrological correlates of mystical experiences, psychospiritual crises, psychotic episodes, psychedelic states, and holotropic

breathwork sessions. This work has shown that astrology, particularly the study of planetary transits, can predict both the archetypal content and the timing of holotropic states of consciousness. Our systematic study of the correlations between the nature and content of holotropic states and planetary transits convinced me that a combination of deep experiential therapy with archetypal psychology and transit astrology is the most promising strategy for psychiatry of the future.

I am aware that this is a very strong statement, particularly in view of the fact that many mainstream scientists consider astrology, as I did myself, to be in principle incompatible with the scientific world view. To make a good case for the use of astrology from a philosophical and scientific perspective would require much more space than this paper allows. I will refer the interested readers to the writings of Richard Tarnas, who is also much better equipped for this task than myself (Tarnas 1991, 1995, in press). In this context, I will present only a brief account of the changes of the status of astrology throughout history and explore the supportive evidence for this ancient discipline that has emerged from modern consciousness research.

Astrology is an ancient art and science that originated probably already in the third millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia and spread from there to India and Greece. It was based on the doctrine of universal sympathy. Its basic tenet, expressed in the phrase "as above so below," is the assumption that the microcosm of the human psyche reflects the macrocosm and that terrestrial events mirror celestial events. In Greece during the Hellenistic era, astrologers refined the astronomical computations and assigned specific mythic deities to individual planets, reflecting the mythological associations already established by the Babylonians. They then used this system for predictions of collective events, as well as those in the lives of individual persons.

The understanding of the meanings of the planets, their positions and geometrical aspects, and their specific influences on human affairs were first brought into unified synthesis in the astrology of Ptolemy, who was also the greatest systematizer of ancient astronomy. In subsequent centuries, generations of astrologers expanded, revised, and refined Ptolemy's system. In its fully developed Greek form, astrology influenced for almost 2,000 years the religion, philosophy, and science of pagan and later Christian Europe. Modern astrologers, using the astronomical advances made possible by the invention of the telescope, then added to the ancient system the three outer planets, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, which were not known to the ancients, and they studied and described their archetypal meaning.

Like many other esoteric systems, astrology was one of the victims of the rationalism and materialism of the Scientific Revolution. It was rejected not on the basis of scientific proof that its premises were false, but because of its incompatibility with the fundamental metaphysical assumptions of Western science dominated by monistic materialism. More specifically, there are several important reasons for the dismissal of astrology by materialistic scientists.

Western science portrays the universe as an impersonal and largely inanimate mechanical system, a supermachine that created itself and is governed by mechanical natural laws. In this context, life, consciousness, and intelligence are seen as more or less accidental products of matter. By contrast, the basic assumption of astrology is that the cosmos is a creation of superior intelligence, is based on an inconceivably intricate deeper order, and reflects a higher purpose.

The astrological perspective closely reflects the original meaning of the Greek word *Kosmos* that describes the world as an intelligibly ordered, patterned, and coherently interconnected system with humanity as an integral part of the whole. In this view, human life is not the result of random forces ruled by capricious chance, but follows an intelligible trajectory that is attuned to the movements of celestial bodies and can thus be at least partially intuited.

Astrological thinking presupposes the existence of *archetypes*, timeless primordial principles underlying, informing, and forming the fabric of the material world. The tendency to interpret the world in terms of archetypal principles first emerged in ancient Greece and was one of the most striking characteristics in Greek philosophy and culture. The archetypes can be seen from several different perspectives. In Homeric epics they took the form of personified mythological figures, as deities, such as Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Aphrodite, or Ares. In the philosophy of Plato, they were described as pure metaphysical principles, the transcendent Ideas or Forms. They possessed independent existence of their own in a realm not accessible to ordinary human senses. In modern times, C. G. Jung brought the concept of archetypes into modern psychology, describing them primarily as psychological principles (Jung 1959).

The existence of hidden invisible dimensions of reality is an idea that is alien to materialistic science, unless these are material in nature and can be made accessible through the use of devices that extend the range of our senses, such as microscopes, telescopes, or sensors detecting various bands of electromagnetic radiation. In addition, as we have discussed earlier, academic and clinical psychiatrists use a very narrow conceptual framework limited to postnatal biography and the Freudian individual unconscious. According to them, the experience of archetypal beings and realms is a pathological product of the brain that requires treatment by tranquilizing medication.

Another major obstacle for seriously considering astrology is the deterministic thinking in Western science. The universe is seen as a chain of causes and effects and the principle of causality is considered to be mandatory for all processes in the universe. One major disquieting exception to this rule, the origin of the universe and the question of the “cause of all causes,” is seldom mentioned in scientific discussions. Causality is thus the only type of influence the critics of astrology can usually imagine and take into consideration. And the idea of a direct material effect of the planets on the psyche and the world is, naturally, implausible and absurd.

Finally, the emphasis that astrology puts on the moment of birth does not make any sense for academic psychology and psychiatry that do not see biological birth as a psychologically relevant event and do not recognize the perinatal level of the unconscious. This is based on the highly questionable assumption that the brain of the newborn cannot register the traumatic impact of birth, because the process of myelination (formation of the fatty myelin sheaths covering the neurons) in his or her brain is not fully completed at the time of birth.

Several decades of systematic research of holotropic states have generated vast amounts of data that undermine these basic assumptions of materialistic science and bring supportive evidence for astrology. These observations reveal:

1. the existence of transpersonal experiences that point to an ensouled cosmos permeated with consciousness and creative cosmic intelligence;
2. the possibility of direct experience of spiritual realities, including archetypal figures, motifs, and realms, and empirical validation of the authenticity of these experiences;
3. the existence of synchronicities that represent an important and viable alternative to the principle of causality;
4. the critical psychodynamic importance of the birth experience for the psychological development and life of the individual;
5. the extraordinary predictive potential of astrological transits for the nature, timing, and content of holotropic states of consciousness.

1. Evidence for an ensouled cosmos. The study of holotropic states of consciousness has brought strong evidence that transpersonal experiences cannot be dismissed as irrelevant psychotic products. The fact they provide access to accurate new information about various aspects of existence leaves no doubt that they are phenomena *sui generis* challenging the most fundamental assumptions of materialistic science. They reveal that the universe is a unified web of events in consciousness permeated by superior intelligence and reflecting a higher order.

In addition, these experiences bring empirical evidence that the individual human psyche has no boundaries and is essentially commensurate with all of existence. They thus confirm the basic tenet of many esoteric systems, including astrology, that the microcosm mirrors the macrocosm. This notion that appeared completely absurd from the perspective of mechanistic science and Aristotelian logic has in recent decades received unexpected support from yet another field. The development of lasers and optical holography has shown radically new possibilities concerning the relationship between the part and the whole (Talbot 1991).

2. Empirical support for the existence of archetypes. Holotropic states provide direct experiential access to the spiritual (numinous) dimensions of existence, including the archetypes. This is important, because the concept of archetypes is essential for astrology. In the twentieth century, C. G. Jung resurrected the ancient idea of archetypes and introduced them into modern

depth psychology in the form of psychological principles, primordial organizing patterns of the psyche (Jung 1959).

He and his followers explored and described in great detail the important role that archetypes play in the life of individuals, nations, and nature. Many professional articles and books, as well as popular literature written by authors with Jungian orientation, suggest that our personal characteristics and behavior reflect the dynamics of powerful archetypal principles (Shinoda Bolen 1984,1989) and that we enact typical archetypal themes in our everyday life (Campbell 1972).

An important characteristic of the archetypes is that they are not confined to the human brain, but operate from transcendental realms and exert synchronistic influence on both the individual psyches and events in the physical world. The marriage between scientific astrology and archetypal psychology based on the work of C. G. Jung represents an extraordinary advance in both fields. It brings the mathematical precision of astronomy into the creative and imaginative world of depth psychology, enriching enormously the possibilities of theoretical speculations as well as clinical predictions.

Academic psychologists and psychiatrists have so far considered Jung's idea of the archetypes to be unfounded and speculative and have refused to take it seriously. However, modern consciousness research has confirmed the existence of archetypes beyond any reasonable doubt by showing that in holotropic states of consciousness, they can actually be directly experienced. I have published in other contexts case histories illustrating how transpersonal experiences involving archetypes can provide new information about mythological realities of cultures unknown to the experient and open new therapeutic possibilities (Grof 1985, 1988, 1992).

3. The discovery of synchronicity. The tendency to think in causal terms is one of the major reasons why astrology has been so violently rejected. I remember one of my discussions with Carl Sagan about transpersonal psychology, during which he heatedly told me among others: "Astrology is total hogwash; as I am standing here, I have more influence on you than Pluto." He clearly thought about this subject in terms of masses, distances, gravitational forces, and other physical terms. This is an approach that completely misses the point. Critics of astrology like Carl Sagan do not understand that astrologers are using a sophisticated paradigm that assumes a synchronistic relation between the planets, the human psyche, and the external events. To understand astrology, we must think in synchronistic terms.

Richard Tarnas and I have jointly presented our findings concerning the relationship between the psyche and the cosmos in numerous graduate level academic courses at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), as well as in transpersonal training workshops and public seminars. The first thing we have always tried to make clear before any discussion of this

material is that in talking about correlations of experiences and events with planetary movements and aspects, we do not in any way imply causal influence of celestial bodies on human psyches or occurrences in the material world.

The way one has to think in relation to astrology can be illustrated by a simple example. When I look at my watch that has the correct time and it shows that it is seven o'clock, I can infer that all the watches and clocks in the same time zone that show the correct time will also show it is seven o'clock. I can further assume with reasonable certainty that, if I turn on the TV, I will be able to see the seven o'clock news or that my arrival will be expected at the restaurant where I had made a seven o'clock reservation.

This naturally does not mean that my watch has a direct influence on other watches and clocks in the environment, that it causes TV news, or interacts with the consciousness of the restaurant personnel. All these events are simply synchronized in relation to astronomical time, a hidden dimension that is operating "behind the scenes" and cannot be directly perceived.

In the same way, the thinking underlying astrology suggests that in the universal scheme of things the movements of the planets and the geometrical aspects they are making are correlated with the hidden archetypal dynamics that shape the events in the phenomenal world. Since the planets are visible, they can be used to infer what is happening in the world of the archetypes, or using the above example, what "time" it is in the archetypal world. Their angular relation to the positions of the planets in our natal chart (*transits*) then indicates how this situation might manifest in our personal life.

The *principle of synchronicity* as a significant alternative to linear causality was first comprehensively described by Carl Gustav Jung. According to him, synchronicity is an acausal connecting principle that refers to meaningful coincidences of events separated in time and/or space (Jung 1960). While Jung had a general interest in peculiar coincidences in life, he was primarily interested in those in which various external events were meaningfully connected with inner experiences, for example dreams, fantasies, and visions.

This was the variety of extraordinary coincidences that he referred to as *synchronicity*. He defined synchronicity of this kind as a "simultaneous occurrence of a psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state" (Jung 1960). Synchronicity can take many different forms; some of them connect individuals and events in separate locations, others across time.

Because of the deeply ingrained modern belief in causality as a central law of nature, Jung hesitated for many years to publish his observations of events that refused to fit into this mold. He postponed publication of his work on this subject until he and others had collected literally hundreds of convincing examples of synchronicity, making him absolutely sure that he had something valid to report. It was also important for him that he received support for his

concept of synchronicities from two pioneers of modern physics, Albert Einstein and Wolfgang Pauli. From the perspective of our discussion, it is interesting that Jung in his ground-breaking essay *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (Jung 1960) specifically discusses astrology.

In the work with holotropic states, the occurrence of striking synchronicity is so common that it leaves no doubt about the fact that it represents an important alternative to causality as a connecting principle. In meditative practice, psychedelic therapy, holotropic breathwork, and spontaneous psychospiritual crises ('spiritual emergencies'), the contents emerging from the unconscious often enter into complexly creative interplay with various aspects of consensus reality. This challenges our most fundamental assumptions about reality and completely dissolves the sharp distinction we usually make between the inner and the outer world.

A typical example is the incidence of extraordinary synchronicities in the lives of people who are involved in reliving and conscious integration of the memory of biological birth. When the process of inner exploration takes them close to the experience of ego death, but does not reach completion, these individuals often encounter in their everyday lives a striking accumulation of dangerous situations, injuries, and accidents. It is important to emphasize that I am referring here to events that are caused by other people or external circumstances and are not results of self - destructive tendencies of the subjects themselves.

When these people experience in their inner process the ego death and psychospiritual rebirth, such situations tend to clear up as magically as they developed. It seems that at this stage of personal transformation the individual has to deal with the theme of destruction and loss, but has the option to experience it as an inner process or as a real life event. This is exactly what astrologers observe in regard to the effect of difficult planetary transits.

Equally remarkable synchronicities are also associated with various forms of transpersonal experiences. Synchronistic events frequently accompany reliving of past life experiences and they are also very frequent at the time of inner confrontation with archetypal figures and motifs. For example, when people involved in intense inner process deal with the themes of Animus, Anima, Wise Old Man, and the Great or the Devouring Mother, appropriate human representatives of these figures often manifest in their everyday life.

Similarly, when a person has a powerful shamanic experience that involves an animal spirit guide, this animal can suddenly appear in various ways in this person's life with a frequency that is beyond any reasonable probability. It has also been the experience of many people that when they become involved unselfishly in a project that has been inspired from the transpersonal realms of the psyche, extraordinary synchronicities tend to occur and make their work surprisingly easy.

4. Psychological significance of birth. The work with holotropic states has corrected the astonishing misconception of academic psychiatry that the only way that biological delivery can have any consequence for the individual's mental condition, emotional life, and behavior is if it has caused irreversible damage of brain cells. I have observed on numerous occasions that this challenging experience leaves a powerful imprint of emotions and physical feelings that, in interaction with postnatal events, are instrumental in the development of various emotional and psychosomatic disorders. In addition, the overall pattern of our birth also tends to be reflected in the way we handle vicissitudes in our life and approach demanding tasks and projects. There exists also impressive evidence that perinatal matrices in the psyche of individual people can play an important role in engaging these individuals in collective sociopolitical events and cultural movements (de Mause 1982, Grof 1998).

These observations bring important support for astrology, which has long attributed major significance to the moment of birth as the symbolic precursor of one's overall life pattern. They are also related to another basic tenet of astrology that precisely defines the relationship between large scale events and happenings in individual lives. It suggests that major movements and occurrences in human history are correlated with planetary positions and their mutual interrelations. The degree and nature of participation of individuals in these collective events and the specific incidents in their lives then reflect their personal planetary transits. These, in turn, represent the relationship between the world transits and personal natal charts. We will return to this topic later in the discussion of the basic principles of astrology.

5. Correlations between holotropic states and planetary transits. While all the above observations point to a world view and personality theory that are in basic consonance with astrology, the research with holotropic states has also amassed extraordinary evidence that quite specifically supports important basic assumptions of astrology. It has revealed the existence of systematic correlations between the nature and content of holotropic states of consciousness and planetary transits of the individuals involved.

The first indication that there might be some extraordinary connection between astrology and my research of holotropic states was Richard Tarnas' realization that my description of the phenomenology of the four basic perinatal matrices (BPMs), experiential patterns associated with the stages of biological birth, showed astonishing similarity to the four archetypes that astrologers have empirically correlated with the four outer planets of the solar system. My description of the BPMs was based on clinical observations made quite independently many years before I knew anything about astrology,

The positive aspect of the first perinatal matrix (BPM I) - the reliving of episodes of undisturbed intrauterine existence, as well as the concomittant experiences of dissolution of boundaries, oceanic ecstasy, cosmic feelings of unity, transcendence of time and space, and

awareness of the mystical dimensions of reality - is unmistakably reflective of the archetype that astrologers link to Neptune. The same is true for the negative aspect of BPM I, associated with regressive experiences of prenatal disturbances. Here the dissolution of boundaries is not mystical but psychotic in nature; it leads to confusion, delusion, a sense of chemical poisoning, and paranoid perceptions of reality. This matrix also has a psychodynamic connection with alcoholic or narcotic intoxication and addiction. All these are qualities that astrologers describe as the shadow side of the Neptune archetype.

Prominent features of BPM II – related to the “no exit” stage of birth, during which the uterus contracts and the cervix is still closed - are preoccupation with aging and death, difficult ordeal and hard labor, depression, oppression, constriction, and starvation. This matrix also brings feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and guilt. It is associated with skepticism and a profoundly pessimistic view of existence, a shattering crisis of meaning, inability to enjoy anything, and loss of any connection with the divine dimension of reality. In astrology, all these qualities are attributes of the negative side of the Saturn archetype.

The precise astrological correspondence with the experiential aspects of BPM III is particularly extraordinary and surprising, since this matrix represents an unusual combination of elements characteristic of the final stage of biological birth. Here belong unrelenting thrust of an elemental driving force, clash of titanic energies, Dionysian ecstasy, birth, sex, death/rebirth, elimination, and scatology. We can further mention the experiences of life and death relevance and the motifs of volcanic eruptions, purifying fire, and of the underworld – urban, criminal, psychological, sexual, and mythological. Astrologically, all these are attributes of the archetype of Pluto.

And finally, the phenomenology of BPM IV – the experience of emerging from the birth canal - is closely related to the archetype of Uranus. As I will discuss later, this is the only planet the archetypal meaning of which considerably deviates from the nature of its mythological namesake. The archetype associated with Uranus actually exactly reflects the basic characteristics of the Greek mythological hero Prometheus (Tarnas 1995). It is characterized by such features as unexpected resolution of a difficult situation, breaking and transcending boundaries, brilliantly illuminating insights, Promethean epiphany, sudden rising to a new level of awareness and consciousness, liberation, and freedom from previous constrictions.

Even more astonishing than these striking parallels between the phenomenology of the perinatal matrices and planetary archetypes was Tarnas’s discovery that in holotropic states the experiential confrontation with these matrices regularly occurs at the time the individuals involved have important transits of the corresponding planets. Over the years, we have now been able to confirm this fact by thousands of specific observations. These extraordinary correlations will be explored later in this paper and illustrated by case histories.

Natal and transit astrology has also provided a deeper understanding of another important concept that has emerged from my psychedelic research. I noticed very early in this work that emotionally relevant memories of my clients were not stored in the unconscious as a mosaic of isolated imprints, but in the form of complex dynamic constellations. I coined for these memory aggregates the name *COEX systems*, which is short for “systems of condensed experience.” As I described earlier, COEX system consists of emotionally charged memories from different periods of our life that resemble each other in the quality of emotion or physical sensation that they share.

Each COEX has a basic theme that permeates all its layers and represents their common denominator. The individual layers then contain variations on this basic theme that occurred at different periods of the person’s life. All COEX constellations seem to be superimposed over and anchored in the trauma of birth and are dynamically related to one of the perinatal matrices, or a specific aspect thereof. However, a typical COEX system reaches even further and its deepest roots consist of various forms of transpersonal phenomena, such as past-life experiences, Jungian archetypes, conscious identification with various animals, and others.

The most recent refinement of my understanding of the COEX dynamics was the surprising discovery that the nature and content of important COEX systems in the psyche of an individual tends to show striking correlations with major planetary aspects of his or her natal astrological chart. In addition, the timing of the biographical layers of COEX systems seems to coincide with the periods when these natal aspects were activated by significant planetary transits. These findings thus throw new light on the dynamic liaisons between the biographical, perinatal, and transpersonal constituents of COEX systems that I have repeatedly observed in my clinical work.

Because of these surprisingly precise correlations astrology, particularly transit astrology, turned out to be the long-sought Rosetta stone of consciousness research, providing a key for understanding the nature and content of present, past, and future holotropic states, both spontaneous and induced. While the correlations concerning past experiences are primarily of theoretical interest, examining current transits can be extremely useful in the work with individuals undergoing ‘spiritual emergencies,’ and the possibility of making remarkably accurate predictions based on future transits is an invaluable tool in the planning of psychedelic and holotropic sessions.

After this general introduction, I will explore more specifically astrology as a referential system for the work with holotropic states. A full and inclusive discussion of the importance of astrology for consciousness research, psychiatry, and psychology is beyond the scope of this paper. However, this topic is of such seminal importance for the work with holotropic states that I will give at least a brief sketch of the basic principles of astrology and its application to this

field. This will hopefully generate interest in those readers who are not familiar with this discipline to seek more information in the rich astrological literature. A convincing validation of this extraordinary tool requires personal exposure to astrology in the role of a client of an experienced and grounded astrologer or, even better, learning enough about astrology to be able to make one's own observations.

In the following brief outline of basic astrological concepts, I will follow closely an unpublished paper by Richard Tarnas that he gives his clients to prepare them for astrological readings (Tarnas 19). Those who are interested in seriously pursuing this subject will find detailed information in the books written by experts in the field, particularly by Robert Hand and Richard Tarnas. Robert Hand has written a widely used textbook for understanding planetary transits (Hand 1976). Richard Tarnas' masterpiece *The Passion of the Western Mind* (Tarnas 1991) on the development of European thought from the pre-Socratic philosophers to postmodern times has an extremely rigorously documented sequel, entitled *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*, that provides the astrological correlates to this work (Tarnas, in press). Tarnas' short book *Prometheus the Awakener* (Tarnas 1995), exploring the archetypal meaning of the planet Uranus, is a very good example of his approach to archetypal psychology and astrology.

The basic referential system used in astrological work involves mutual angular relations (*aspects*) among the Sun, Moon, and eight planets in the natal horoscope. Transit astrology studies the angular relations between the natal positions of the same ten bodies and their positions at any particular time (*transits*). In addition, the relationships of the planets to a system of coordinates that involves the ascendant/descendant axis and the zenith/nadir axis plays an important role in astrology.

We are thus talking about a conceptual framework and referential system of considerable complexity. It is not possible to do justice to this fascinating theme and expound it in a comprehensive way in the context of a short paper. In addition, I assume that many readers have only a cursory knowledge of astrology and others none at all. This task will thus have to be reserved for a future publication dedicated specifically to this topic, which I hope to write some time in the future jointly with Richard Tarnas.

The natal chart, or *horoscope*, is a two-dimensional image of the situation in the sky at the time when a person is born. It is a circle divided by a horizontal and vertical axis into four quadrants. The circumference of this circle is subdivided into 360 degrees with twelve 30-degree segments, each of them assigned to one of the twelve *zodiacal signs*. This is the general background against which the horoscope shows the positions of the planets at birth and the angular relations between them.

The planets represent the basic archetypal principles or forces and their angular relations, or *aspects*, reflect the interaction between these archetypes. In astrology there are ten “*planets*”, since this term is used also for the Sun and the Moon. This is consistent with the original meaning of the Greek word *planetes*, which means “wanderer”: i.e., a celestial body that has its autonomous trajectory and does not follow the overall movement of the skies. Like the planets, the astrological signs are connected with specific archetypal energy.

The four points where the coordinates connect with the circumference of the circle have a special significance. They are called the *ascendant*, *descendant*, *midheaven* or *zenith*, and *nadir*. The planet that is rising above the horizon at the time of birth would appear on the chart near the ascendant, one that is right above the head is positioned at the midheaven, and the one that is setting would be marked on the descendant. The planet placed at the bottom of the chart would stand below the feet, in the invisible part of the sky. If at an individual’s birth a planet is located within a narrow orb from these four places, the corresponding archetype tends to have a particularly strong influence in this person's life.

I will briefly review the qualities of the archetypes associated with the individual planets and their specific energies, beginning with the two luminaries, the Sun and the Moon. The **Sun** represents the central principle of vital energy and personal identity, the core of the personality, or the conscious self. It also rules one's personal will and tendency to express oneself as an autonomous individual. The archetypal energy of the Sun is masculine, or yang, in nature and the Sun tends to reflect significant male figures in one's life. The archetypes of any planets that form significant aspects with the Sun will have a particularly strong influence in the person's life and character.

By contrast, the **Moon** reflects the parts of oneself which are hidden to the conscious ego and the psychosomatic self. It is closely related to the emotionally and instinctively reactive aspects of the personality and with aspects of the psyche that we are unconscious of. This archetype shows association with the feminine principle, or yin, with the early mother-child relationship and childhood, with important female figures in one's life, with one’s home and ancestral heritage. The archetypes of the planets that form important aspects with the Moon tend to be especially significant in the person's life; they will manifest in the parts of one's life that are governed by the Moon.

The archetype of **Mercury** represents intellect, reason, or Logos. It governs mental activities, the capacity to perceive and learn, to conceptualize and articulate ideas, and to use words and language. It is also associated with the ability to move around, to transport, to make contact with other people, connect with them, and communicate ideas. Major aspects between Mercury and other planets reflect the way one receives and transmits information, the nature of

one's intellectual functioning, and the focus of one's education. The mythological expression of this archetype is the Greek god Hermes (the Roman Mercurius), the messenger of the gods.

The archetype of **Venus** is above all associated with the principle of love or Eros. It finds its expression in the yin aspect of sensuality and sexuality, in the desire for romance, partnership, and social relations and in the process of attracting and being attracted by others. Venus also governs the aesthetic sensibility and its expression in artistic activities, as well as search for harmony. Major aspects connecting Venus with other planets show significant correlations with the capacity to give and receive affection and love, with the nature of our social interactions and particularly romantic involvements, and with artistic interests, talents, impulses, and expressive abilities. This archetype finds its mythological expression in the Greek figure of Aphrodite, the Roman Venus, the goddess of love and beauty.

The **Mars** archetype represents the principle of dynamic energy, of the initiating and driving impulse. In the material realm, it is associated with the forces of nature and technology, wars and other powerful and violent events, vitality and athletic prowess, as well as with the yang aspect of sexuality. In the psyche, it governs ambition, assertiveness, competitiveness, courage, anger, and violence. Important aspects or transits involving Mars tend to coincide with assertive and aggressive behavior, conflicts, and confrontations, as well as disposition toward impulsivity and injury. In mythology Mars, the Roman Ares, is the god of war.

Jupiter is the archetype associated with growth, expansion, success, happiness, and good fortune. It governs the tendency to optimism, experience of abundance, pursuit of what is better or higher, generosity, and magnanimity. In addition, it is connected with open-mindedness, far-reaching perspectives, high moral standards and philosophical ideals, intellectual richness, and cultural breadth. Because of these characteristics, Jupiter is often referred to as the Great Benefic. Its shadow side is overindulgence, inflated self-image, eccentricism, extravaganzas and excesses of all kinds. Jupiter (Greek Zeus) is the highest deity of the Roman pantheon and king of the Olympian gods.

The planetary archetype of **Saturn** is in many ways the polar opposite of Jupiter. Often called the Great Malefic, Saturn in its negative aspect represents restriction, limitation, scarcity, deficit, starvation, oppression, repression, inferiority, guilt, and depression. Mythologically, Saturn is a Roman deity often identified with the Greek god Kronos; he is thus associated with impermanence, aging, death, ending of things, Father Time, and the Grim Reaper.

However, the Saturn archetype also has an important positive function as a principle that is essential for grounding our everyday existence, since it governs structure, material reality of things, order, and linear sequence of events. In relation to the biological birth process (and psychospiritual death-rebirth process), it represents the stage when the uterine contractions

periodically compress the baby, but the cervix is still closed and there does not seem to be a way out (no exit).

In personal life, Saturn stands for reliability, endurance, maturity, responsibility, and fidelity. It is also the principle that confronts us with the consequences of our actions in this life, as well as in previous incarnations, and represents the element of superego, moral law, conscience, and judgment. Major Saturn aspects suggest critical challenges we will encounter in life, but also define the work we have to do in the world, and offer important growth opportunities. Transits involving Saturn typically mark critical developmental periods in life and times of 'hard labor.' They bring difficult personal trials and tribulations, but also forge enduring structures, and lead to important completions.

Compared with other planets from Mars up through Saturn, the archetype associated with the planet **Uranus** does not show a strong correspondence with the Greek god Uranus (Heaven), who hated his children and was at the request of Gaia castrated by Chronus. As Richard Tarnas (1995) has convincingly demonstrated, the properties of the planetary archetype Uranus can best be understood in terms of the mythic figure of Prometheus, the Titan who stole the fire from the heavens to give humanity greater freedom.

Uranus represents the principle of sudden surprise, rebellion against the status quo, revolutionary activity, liberation, spiritual awakening, and emotional and intellectual breakthrough. In addition, it governs sudden collapse of established structures, individualism and originality, revolutionary insight, creative genius, invention and technology. In relation to the biological birth process, Uranus most closely connects with the final stage of delivery where the discomfort and pressures culminate and are resolved in an explosive liberation.

The shadow side of the Uranus (Prometheus) archetype finds its expression in anarchy, unfruitful eccentricity, and indiscriminate acting out against limitations and laws of any kind. In people with lack of psychological and spiritual insight who try to resist its archetypal impact, it can also be associated with disruptive changes in life where one is a passive and helpless victim, rather than an enthusiastic agent of change. When Uranus is in major aspect to another planet, it tends to liberate its planetary archetype unto full expression, often in ways that are sudden, unexpected, unusual, surprising, and exciting.

The archetype of **Neptune** is related to the dissolution of boundaries -- between the self and the others, self and nature, self and the universe, between the material world and other realities, between self and God. It is the archetype of mystical union, of cosmic consciousness, of the imaginal and spiritual realms. However, dissolution of boundaries does not necessarily mean transcendence. The shadow side of Neptune connects it to loss of grounding, flight from everyday reality to fantasy, self-deception, illusion, delusion, psychotic distortion of reality, and confusion of the alcoholic and the drug addict.

Neptune finds its expression in the transcendental bliss of the mystic, but also in the divine play of *maya* that keeps us trapped in the samsaric world. It can manifest in supreme clarity of the mystical experience, as well as in the confusion of psychosis. It underlies the selflessness of the saint and the yogi, but can lead to loss of individuality with resulting disorientation and helplessness.

Neptune is the archetype of idealistic dreams and aspirations, physical and psychological healing, spiritual longing, heightened intuition, extrasensory perception, and creative imagination. When a planet is in a major aspect to Neptune, its archetype tends to be weakened, idealized, or spiritualized. As suggested by the mythological nature of the Roman god of the ocean, Neptune (the Greek Poseidon), this archetype is closely related to water, whether it is the amniotic environment of the womb, the body fluids, or the rivers, lakes and oceans.

Pluto is the archetype of primordial energy -- the dynamic principle behind cosmic creation, the universal life force that propels evolution in nature and human society (Kundalini Shakti), as well as the energy of destruction (Devouring Mother Goddess Kali). It rules the fundamental biological processes of birth, sex, and death, the transformative process of psychospiritual death and rebirth, and the instinctual forces in the body and psyche (the Freudian Id). Pluto reflects the chthonic elements, the underworld, whether in the literal physical sense (underground, infrastructure of the metropolis), in the metaphorical sense (red light districts, organized crime), psychological sense (unconscious), or archetypal/ mythological sense.

In relation to the biological birth process and its psychospiritual counterpart, the death-rebirth process, Pluto corresponds to the stage in which the baby is being forcefully expelled from the mother's body and experiences a life and death struggle in the birth canal. At this time, powerful physical energies and intense instinctual energies (libidinal and aggressive) are being unleashed. Mythologically, Pluto (the Greek Hades) is the Greek god of the underworld. When Pluto is aspecting another planet, it tends to intensify and empower the archetype of this planet to such an extent that it becomes an important influence or even a compulsive force in one's life. This can lead to various power struggles and conflicts, but also to profound transformation.

Besides the specific individual characteristics of the archetypes associated with the ten planets, astrologers are also interested in the *aspects*, the angular relationships of the planets in the natal chart, and *transits*, the angular relationships that form during one's lifetime between the planets' ongoing positions and their position at birth. Depending on the nature of the angular relations of the planets involved, the aspects and transits reflect either harmonious or challenging interaction between the corresponding archetypes.

The natal chart shows the overall archetypal configuration governing our personality and our life as a whole. It indicates where we might expect tensions and frictions between the archetypal principles involved or, conversely, harmonious cooperation between them. However,

the natal horoscope remains the same throughout the entire lifetime and does not give us, in and of itself, any information about the changes we undergo in various stages and periods of our life. As we know, there are far-reaching differences in the quality of our life experience from year to year, month to month, or even day to day. Astrology suggests that the changes in the archetypal fields governing our life in the course of time are correlated with the movements of the planets and can thus be predicted. These correlations are the subject of a branch of astrology called transit astrology.

Transit astrology proposes that the specific unfolding of the potentials embedded in the natal chart is governed by *planetary transits*, that is by the relation between the present positions of the planets at any particular time and their positions in the natal horoscope. The complexity and dynamic nature of the resulting relationships is quite remarkable and can be used as a clearly defined referential system. Unlike some of the conventional approaches -- such as traditional psychological tests -- it certainly matches the mercurial nature of our everyday experience, as well as the richness and variability of the content of holotropic states of consciousness.

The duration of the transits depends on the orbits and the speed of the planets involved. Predictions of archetypal influences in human affairs based on transits can thus be given for periods that range from hours (Moon) and days (Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars) to many months or even years (outer planets). It is the transits from the outer planets -- Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto -- that are of the greatest significance as influences shaping our life and particularly the dynamics of our psychospiritual development and consciousness evolution.

The quality of mutual interaction between two or more planetary archetypes is described by their angular relationships (measured in degrees of celestial longitude along the ecliptic). Generally, the more exact this relationship, the more pronounced will be the archetypal interaction. The character of these relationships is based on the principles formulated by Pythagoras in his theory of numbers and music. The most important aspects are obtained by dividing the 360° circle by the whole numbers 1,2,3,4, and 6, respectively. The quality of the aspects is then defined in terms of the Pythagorean meaning of the corresponding numbers.

The *conjunction* (approximately 0°) is characterized by a powerful merging of the two planetary archetypes involved, including their positive, as well as negative potentials. The *opposition* and *square* (180° and 90°) represent a challenging and often conflicting ('hard') interaction, while the *trine* and *sextile* are conducive to a harmonious and flowing ('soft') interaction. Another important situation that brings together archetypal influences is the *midpoint*; this is a term used when a planet is positioned exactly halfway between two others.

There are many other variables used in the practice of astrology, such as positioning of the planets in the signs of the zodiac and the 'houses', which divide the chart into twelve thirty degree segments with specific meaning. It is also possible to use various additional predictive

techniques -- progressions, solar arc directions, solar and lunar returns, harmonics, astrocartography, and others. However, the system that I have briefly outlined above can alone provide extraordinarily accurate and specific predictions about many different aspects of existence. Like the Jungian archetypes, it can be used for a deeper understanding of individuals - - their personalities, behavior patterns and the unfolding of their lives -- as well as cultural movements and historical developments involving large numbers of people.

It is important to understand that astrology can be used only for making archetypal predictions, not predictions of specific concrete situations. It can describe which archetypal qualities or universal principles will operate at a particular time, indicate the nature of their interaction, and specify their relationship to the natal chart of the individual. As remarkable as such predictions can be, their general range will leave enough space for cosmic creativity to express this archetypal potential in the form of specific concrete events and behaviors. Even the best astrologer will not be able to read from the chart with certainty that on a certain day we get hired for a specific job, lose money in the stockmarket, meet our soulmate, win in a lottery, or get arrested.

When we use astrology in the work with holotropic states, the complexity of the interpretations increases with the number of planetary transits happening at the same time and with the number of planets involved in them. In many instances, two or more important transits can operate simultaneously and their energies can be in conflict with each other. A comprehensive interpretation requires an experienced astrologer evaluating a specific situation and looking at the natal chart and the transits as a unified field and an integral gestalt.

After this general introduction, I would like to illustrate the remarkable correlations between the nature and content of holotropic states and planetary transits by two condensed case histories. The first example is an unusually powerful episode from a high-dose LSD session, the second one a spontaneous psychospiritual crisis ("spiritual emergency").

FLORA.

While working at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, I was invited to a staff conference at the Spring Grove State Hospital. One of the psychiatrists was presenting the case of Flora, a 28-year-old single patient who had been hospitalized by then for more than eight months in a locked ward. All available therapy, including tranquilizers, antidepressants, psychotherapy, and occupational therapy, had been tried but failed, and she was facing transfer to the chronic ward.

Flora had one of the most complicated and difficult combinations of symptoms and problems I have ever encountered in my psychiatric practice. When she was sixteen years old, she was a member of a gang that conducted an armed robbery and killed a night watchman. As driver of the get-away car, Flora spent four years in prison and was then placed on parole for the rest of her sentence. During the stormy years that followed, she became a multiple drug addict. She was an alcoholic and a heroin

addict, and frequently used high doses of psychostimulants and barbiturates. Her severe depressions were associated with violent suicidal tendencies; she frequently had impulses to drive her car over a cliff or collide with another automobile.

She also suffered from hysterical vomiting which occurred easily in situations where she became emotionally excited. Probably the most agonizing of her complaints was a painful facial cramp, "tic doloieux," for which a Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon had suggested a brain operation consisting in severing the nerves involved. Flora was a lesbian and had severe conflicts and guilt about it; she had never had heterosexual intercourse in her life. To further complicate the situation, she was court committed because she had severely wounded her girlfriend and room-mate while trying to clean a gun under the influence of heroin.

At the end of the Spring Grove case conference, the attending psychiatrist asked Dr. Charles Savage and me if we would be willing to consider Flora for LSD psychotherapy. We found this an extremely difficult decision, especially because this was at the time of the national hysteria concerning LSD. Flora had a criminal record already, she had access to weapons, and had severe suicidal tendencies. We were well aware that the atmosphere was such that if we gave her an LSD session, whatever happened after that point would automatically be blamed on the drug and our treatment, without regard to her past history. On the other hand, everything else had been tried without success and Flora was facing a lifetime in a chronic ward. After some deliberation, we decided to take the chance and accept her into the LSD program, feeling that her desperate situation justified the risk.

Flora's first two high-dose LSD sessions were not much different from many others I had run in the past. She had to confront a number of situations from her stormy childhood and repeatedly relived sequences of the struggle in the birth canal. She was able to connect her violent suicidal tendencies and painful facial cramps to certain aspects of the birth trauma, and to discharge large amounts of intense emotion and physical tension. Despite this, the therapeutic gains seemed to be minimal. In her third LSD session, nothing extraordinary happened during the first two hours; her experiences were similar to those of the previous two sessions. Suddenly, she started complaining that the painful cramps in her face were becoming unbearable. Before our eyes, the facial spasms were grotesquely accentuated and her face froze into what can best be described as a mask of evil.

She started talking in a deep, male voice and everything about her was so different that I could not see any connection between her present appearance and her former self. Her eyes had an expression of indescribable malice and her hands were spastic and looked like claws. The energy that took control over her body and voice assumed a personified form and introduced itself as the devil. "He" turned directly to me, ordering me to stay away from Flora and give up any attempts to help her. She belonged to him and he would punish anybody who dared to invade his territory. What followed was explicit blackmail, a series of dismal descriptions of what would happen to me, my colleagues, and the program if I would not obey. It is difficult to describe the uncanny atmosphere which this scene evoked; one could almost feel the intangible presence of something alien in the room. The power of the blackmail

was further increased by the fact that it involved certain concrete information to which the patient in her everyday life could not have access.

Although I had seen similar manifestations in some LSD sessions, they were never so realistic or convincing. I found myself under considerable emotional stress which had metaphysical dimensions. It was difficult for me to control my fear and a tendency to enter into what I felt would be an active combat with the presence. I found myself thinking fast, trying to choose the best strategy for the situation. At one point, I caught myself seriously considering that we should have a crucifix in our therapeutic armamentarium. My rationalization for this idea was that this was obviously a Jungian archetype that was manifesting and that the cross could, under these circumstances, function as a specific archetypal remedy.

It soon became clear to me that my emotions, whether of fear or aggression, were making the entity more real. I could not help thinking of scenes from Star Trek, a popular American science fiction television program, involving an alien entity that fed on emotions. Finally, I realized that it was essential for me to remain calm and centered. I decided to put myself into a meditative mood, while I held Flora's cramped hand and tried to relate to her in the form in which I had known her before. At the same time, I tried to visualize a capsule of light enveloping us both, which intuitively seemed to be the best approach. The situation lasted over two hours of clock-time; in terms of a subjective time-sense these were the longest two hours I have ever experienced outside of my own psychedelic sessions.

After this time, Flora's hands relaxed and her face returned to its usual form; these changes were as abrupt as the onset of the peculiar condition. I soon discovered that she did not remember anything of the two hours preceding. Later, in her write-up, she described the first hours of the session and continued with the period following the "possession state." I seriously questioned if I should discuss the time covered by her amnesia with her and decided against it. There did not seem to be any reason to introduce such a macabre theme into her conscious mind.

To my great surprise, this session resulted in an astonishing therapeutic breakthrough. Flora lost her suicidal tendencies and developed new appreciation for life. She gave up alcohol, heroin, and barbiturates and started zealously attending the meetings of a small religious group in Catonsville. For most of the time she did not have any facial cramps; the energy underlying them seemed to have exhausted itself in the "mask of evil" that she had maintained for two hours. The occasional recurrence of the pain was of negligible intensity and did not even require medication.

Flora also started experimenting with heterosexual relations and eventually got married. Her sexual adjustment was not good, however; she was capable of intercourse, but found it painful and not very pleasant. The marriage ended three months later and Flora returned to lesbian relationships, this time, however, with much

less guilt. Her condition was so improved that she was accepted as a taxi driver. Although the following years had their ups and downs, she did not have to return to the psychiatric hospital that could have become her permanent home.

Even a superficial examination of Flora's natal chart and her transits at the time of her session without the exact time of her birth reveals a remarkable correspondence with the nature and content of this episode. The most conspicuous part of her natal chart is a stellium involving four planets within a range of eleven degrees (Neptune, Mercury, Sun, and Mars), with Neptune six and half degrees from the Sun.

While the Sun archetype represents a principle of personal identity and individuality, Neptune tends to weaken the egoic functions and dissolve psychological boundaries; it makes them permeable for the influx of elements from the transpersonal realms and the collective unconscious. Transiting Neptune exactly sextiling Flora's natal Neptune further intensifies this weakening of boundaries. Sun/Neptune aspects are characteristic for mystics and spiritual teachers (e.g. Meher Baba or C.G. Jung), but in more problematic cases, they can be found in people with weak ego structure and potential psychological vulnerability to the invasion of other identities and presences. The participation of Mars in Flora's natal stellium then gives this connection a distinctly aggressive quality, while Mercury brings in the element of mind and communication.

Flora's session took place in the late 1960s in coincidence with the triple conjunction of Pluto, Uranus, and Jupiter that manifested during this period in the sky for the whole world (the only time it happened in this century). This conjunction was transiting her natal stellium described above, with Pluto more tightly conjoining her Neptune and Mercury and with Jupiter exactly conjoining her Sun. This combination of Jupiter, Uranus, and Pluto is one of the most expansively powerful transformative and potentially liberating configurations possible. To have all three conjoining her natal Sun stellium, the most important part of her chart, was a once-in-a-lifetime transit of tremendous potential for psychological change and liberation.

Flora was thus experiencing as a powerful personal transit the conjunction of Pluto with Uranus that as a collective transit was correlated with the overall atmosphere of exciting cultural, social, sexual, and spiritual liberation of the 1960 and the Dionysian Zeitgeist of this period. Jupiter's conjunction with Uranus and Pluto in 1968 and 1969 coincided with widespread successful liberation of elemental emancipatory energies. Transiting Jupiter conjoining the Sun tends to bring some event or experience involving good fortune and expansion.

Neptune opposing Uranus is the configuration that coincides with unexpected spiritual revelation. This was the collective transit at the time of Jesus's ministry and the beginning of Christianity; this is very interesting in view of the fact that Flora's experience resulted in a religious conversion that brought her into the Catonsville Christian community.

The conjunction of Pluto transiting Flora's natal Neptune is a very powerful combination in and of itself. It coincides regularly with intense changes of consciousness, influx of unconscious material, significant mystical experiences, and spiritual emergencies that result in profound psychospiritual transformation. Pluto empowers the effects of any planetary archetype with which it forms a significant angular relationship with a potentially destructive and eventually transformative force. In Flora's case, this would mean amplification of the liberating impact of Uranus, as well as intensification of the influx of transpersonal energies into consciousness and of the permeability of personality boundaries associated with Neptune.

The liberation of the demonic and through the demonic, as well as the exciting liberation of the self could be attributed to the influence of the Uranus archetype in combination with Jupiter. Interest in satanic activities belonged to the shadow aspects of the 1960s, as exemplified by Charles Manson and the Sharon Tate murders. Full manifestation of the demonic aspect of the Pluto archetype (closely related to BPM III) could in Flora's case be explained by the vastly increased weakening of the individual self combined with the traumatic character of her biography.

In regard to the ability of the demonic entity to use for blackmail information that Flora herself did not possess, it is interesting to mention that the Neptune/Mercury conjunction is often found in individuals with unusual psychic gifts and the ability to access and channel clairvoyant information, such as Rudolf Steiner or the contemporary American psychic Anne Armstrong. It seems also relevant that the transit of Pluto to natal Mercury/Neptune conjunction is often associated with intensification of oral performance, verbal aggression, use of obscene language, dealing with secret information, and blackmail attempts.

At the time of her session, Flora was 28 years old and thus at the beginning of her Saturn return, which takes place between the ages 28 and 30 in all people. The Saturn return marks the end of an entire cycle of life, characterized by a sense of contraction and gravity, events and experiences of great maturational importance, and sometimes an encounter with death. This is followed by a completion, release, and transition to another cycle of life. In combination with the

powerful transits described above, the Saturn return would give the resulting changes greater structural depth and a more enduring character.

There are some additional aspects of Flora's chart and her transits at the time of her session that are meaningfully related to her life history, in general, and the content of her session, in particular. The Pluto/Venus conjunction is typically associated with taboo sexuality and the shame associated with it. It is also the archetype of the attraction to the dark, of the underworld lover, and, in the extremes, of the demonic lover. In mythology, this motif finds its expression in Hades's abduction of Persephone into the underworld ("she belongs to me"). Flora has a natal Sun/Pluto conjunction that explains among others her attraction to the criminal underworld.

Flora has another stellium in her natal chart, a triple conjunction involving Uranus, Jupiter, and Saturn. Uranus in combination with Jupiter is the archetype of the countercultural rebel. Uranus/Saturn conjunction is conducive to agitated depression, violent impulses that can lead to structural damage (tendency to cause a head-on collision or drive over the cliff), and proneness to accidents (shooting of the friend). Her natal Mars/Neptune conjunction is characteristic for invasive drug addiction and susceptibility to aggressive intrusions from her unconscious. There are other natal aspects and transits relevant to Flora's case, but this brief summary of the most significant ones can give good idea of the major correlations.

Examination of the following case history and its astrological correlates makes it possible to see the similarities and differences between the two cases. It also shows that the specific manifestations of the same archetypes and their combinations are not rigidly determined. The astrological archetypes can find various expressions, while remaining true to their essential nature. If we are open to the idea, expressed in the Indian term *lila*, that the universe is a play of the Universal Mind, the multivalence of the archetypes leaves space for a considerable degree of creative variation within the range of the archetypal fields.

KAREN.

Karen was a graceful young woman in her late twenties, blonde and lithe, who exuded a soft, dreamy beauty. Externally, she seemed rather shy and quiet, but she was very bright and physically active. She had a difficult childhood; her mother committed suicide when she was three, and she grew up with an alcoholic father and his second wife. Leaving home in her late teens, she lived through periods of depression and struggled periodically with compulsive eating.

She traveled, studied, and fell in love with jazz dancing, becoming an accomplished dancer and occasional teacher. She liked to sing and developed a professional competence as a skilled massage

practitioner. Karen settled in the country, where she met and began living with Peter, a gentle and caring man; although they remained unmarried, they had a daughter, Erin, to whom they are both very devoted.

Karen's story represents the most dramatic end of the continuum between a gradual, gentle spiritual emergence and the extreme crisis of spiritual emergency. Even so, many of the issues surrounding her experience apply to anyone undergoing a transformational process. Much of what we will describe we were able to observe firsthand.

Karen's crisis contained all the elements of a true spiritual emergency. It lasted three and a half weeks and completely interrupted her ordinary functioning, necessitating twenty-four-hour attention. After she had been in her spiritual emergency for a few days, some of her friends, who knew of our interest in this area, asked us to become involved in her care. We saw her almost every day during the last two and a half weeks of her episode.

As is the case with many spiritual emergencies, the onset of Karen's crisis was rapid and unexpected, and Karen became so absorbed in and overwhelmed by her experiences that she could not take care of herself or her three-year-old daughter, who stayed with her father. Her friends from the community where she lived decided that, instead of hospitalizing her, they would take turns caring for her twenty-four hours a day.

Karen was moved from her house to a room in the home of several of her friends. Her friends then set up a "sitters' service": two people at a time signed up for two- to three-hour shifts throughout each twenty-four hours. A notebook was kept just outside the door so that sitters could sign in and out and write down their impressions of Karen's condition, what she had said or done, what liquids or food she had consumed, and what kinds of behavior the next couple should expect.

On the first day of her episode, Karen noticed that her vision was suddenly clearer, not as "soft and fuzzy" as it usually was. She heard women's voices telling her that she was entering into a benign and important experience. For many days, tremendous heat radiated throughout Karen's body and she saw visions of fire and fields of red, at times feeling herself consumed by flames. To quench the extreme thirst she felt was brought about by the burning feelings, she drank great quantities of water.

She seemed to be carried through her episode by an enormous energy that poured through her, taking her to many levels of her unconscious and the memories, emotions, and other feelings and sensations contained there. Becoming very childlike, she relived biographical events such as her mother's suicide and subsequent physical abuse from her stepmother. Once, a childhood memory of being beaten with a belt suddenly shifted, and she felt herself to be a suffering black African, being whipped on a crowded slave ship.

She struggled through the physical and emotional pain of her own biological birth and repeatedly relived the delivery of her daughter. She experienced death many times and in many forms, and her preoccupation with dying caused her sitters to become concerned about the possibility of a suicide attempt. However, such an occurrence was unlikely because of the safety of her environment and the close scrutiny of the helpers. Everyone involved kept a particularly close watch on her, staying

with her constantly and encouraging her to keep the experiences internalized rather than acting them out.

Periodically, Karen felt that she was in connection with her dead mother, as well as with a friend who had died in an accident just a year before. She said she missed them and yearned to join them. At other times, she felt she was watching other people die or that she herself was dying.

Telling her that it was possible to experience death symbolically without actually dying physically, her sitters asked her to keep her eyes closed and encouraged her to fully experience these sequences of dying inwardly and to express the difficult emotions involved. She complied, and in a short time she moved past the intense confrontation with death to other experiences.

For a couple of days, Karen was swept by sequences involving elements of evil. At times she felt as though she was an ancient witch, participating in magic sacrificial rituals: at other times she sensed a terrible monster within her. As the diabolical beast expressed its demonic energies, she flooded the room with angry explicatives and rolled on the floor, making ferocious faces. Her sitters, realizing that the outpouring was not directed at them, protected her from self-injury and encouraged full safe expression of these impulses.

Sometimes her experience centered around sexuality. After reliving some traumatic memories from her own sexual history, she felt a strong source of energy in her pelvis. After having regarded sexuality as a lowly instinctual impulse, she had a profound spiritual experience in which she discovered the same insight that is offered by certain esoteric traditions, particularly Tantra: the sexual impulse is not simply a biological drive, but also a divine, spiritual force. She felt that she was the first woman to have been granted such an awareness, and she expressed a new reverence for her mystical role as a life-giving mother.

During another period, Karen felt united with the earth and its people, both of which she feared were about to be destroyed. She envisioned that the planet and its population were heading toward annihilation, putting forth clear and sophisticated insights about the world situation. She saw images of Soviet and American leaders with their fingers on "the button," and offered accurate and often humorous comments about international politics.

For several days, Karen tapped directly into a powerful stream of creativity, expressing many of her experiences in the form of songs. It was amazing to witness: after an inner theme would surface into awareness, she would either make up a song about it or recall one from memory, lustily singing herself through that phase of her process.

Karen was extremely psychic, highly sensitive, and acutely attuned to the world around her. She was able to "see through" everyone around her, often anticipating their comments and actions. One sitter had been discussing Karen before going in to see her. Upon entering the room, he was amazed by Karen's accurate re-creation of his conversation. Much to the discomfort of those involved, she commented very frankly about any interpersonal games that she saw being played and immediately confronted anyone who was too controlling or rigid, refusing to cooperate with them.

After about two weeks, some of the difficult, painful states started to subside and Karen received increasingly benevolent, light-filled experiences and felt more and more connected with a divine source. She saw within herself a sacred jewel, a radiant pearl that she felt symbolized her true center, and she spent a lot of time tenderly speaking to it and nurturing it. She received instructions from an inner source about how to love and care for herself, and she felt the emotional wounds that she had carried in her heart and body being healed. She said that she felt special, "newborn," having passed through a "second birth," remarking: "I am opening to life, to love, light, and self."

As Karen began to come through her experience, she became less and less absorbed by her inner world and more interested in her daughter and the other people around her. She began to eat and sleep more regularly and was increasingly able to care for some of her daily needs. She wanted to finish her experience and return to her home, and it became clear to her that the people around her were also ready for the episode to end. An agreement was reached among Karen and her helpers that she would try to resume the responsibilities of daily care for herself and her daughter.

We have had a chance to talk to Karen on several occasions since her episode and were very pleased to see that the positive changes have a lasting character. Her mood has improved and she continues to be more self-assured and outgoing. Her increased self-confidence has made it possible for her to perform as a singer in public events.

As in Flora's case, Karen's chart is dominated by a powerful stellium involving four planets (Venus, Pluto, Mercury, and Mars), all conjoined in a narrow range of 8 degrees, with Sun and Uranus also in close conjunction, and with all these six planets in Leo. Surprisingly, the enormous energy inherent in this chart was not especially visible and it was not until her chart was activated by important transits of the outer planets that its extraordinary potential was liberated. The dramatic and disruptive character of this liberation had to do with a major once-in-a-lifetime transit of Pluto squaring at this time her natal Uranus/Sun conjunction.

Karen's susceptibility to the massive influx of deep unconscious material characterizing her episode of spiritual emergency was partially related to the square between Neptune and Sun in her natal chart. Similar to Flora's Sun/Neptune conjunction, Karen's Sun/Neptune square was reflected in a very "porous" ego, vulnerable to invasion of material from the transpersonal realms. Again, as with Flora, transiting Pluto, squaring her Uranus/Sun conjunction, was activating this natal configuration. And, simultaneously, the transiting Uranus was releasing the combined archetypal energies of the quadruple conjunction of the stellium.

In October and November 1986, the Pluto transit of Uranus/Sun coincided with an unleashing of spectacular creativity. This manifested as unrelenting outpouring of energy manifesting in a fugue of ideas and logorrhea, with Karen creating witty neologisms, puns, play

on words, and entire new songs. She often accompanied her singing and verbal production with highly original gestures, grimaces, and dance.

Extraordinary aggressive charge of Pluto and Mars found its expression in experiences portraying various scenes of abuse in Karen's childhood, infancy, and past lives, as well as in verbal insults addressed to various people in her environment. Her sarcastic humor was brilliant and incisive, mercilessly attacking weaknesses and flaws that these individuals were trying to hide, or were not even aware of. Her communications abounded in four-letter words of scatological and sexual nature. All these manifestations are characteristic of the combination of Pluto, Mars, and Mercury. The Venus archetype found its expression in Karen's singing, dancing, and erotic impulses.

The Pluto archetype brings in elements of BPM III and accounts for such manifestations as the eruption of powerful volcanic energies, waves of heat, experiential identification with a wild animal, demonic sequences, and sexual impulses that cover a wide range from obscene gestures to awakening of Kundalini and Tantric experiences. The Pluto/Venus/Mars combination is the archetypal constellation characteristic for sexual aggression that Karen manifested on a number of occasions.

Another important astrological factor in Karen's situation is that, being 29 years old, she was at the time of her episode in the middle of her Saturn return (transiting Saturn was only one degree from her natal Saturn). As in Flora's case, this indicates the end of an entire life cycle and the beginning of a new. This often involves a summing up of the past and facing experiential material from the past. This transit is also conducive to enduring changes caused by this psychological transformation.

These are only two examples of the remarkable correlations between holotropic experiences and planetary transits that we have found in hundreds of individuals experiencing various forms of holotropic states of consciousness. I have no illusion that these illustrations taken out of the context of complex astrological charts, as well as abstracted and detached from live holotropic experiences, will convince those readers who are not already familiar with astrology. Modern Euro-American civilization is under such a strong influence of materialistic science that it usually takes years of research of holotropic states and extensive personal exposure to them before we are able to break its spell and accept the radical revisions that have

to be made in our understanding of the human psyche and the nature of reality to accommodate the new data.

It is not surprising that this process is so difficult and that it encounters so much resistance. The vast array of challenging observations from holotropic states and astrology cannot be handled by a little conceptual patchwork, occasional cosmetic adjustment using minor *ad hoc* hypotheses. It would require a drastic overhaul shattering and replacing the most fundamental metaphysical assumptions and beliefs of materialistic science. The specific implications for psychology and psychiatry go far beyond those we have already discussed earlier – the vastly expanded model of the psyche, the much more complex multilevel structure of emotional and psychosomatic disorders, the concept of the inner radar, the existence and therapeutic use of inner healing intelligence, and a few others.

Since the experiences of clients in ordinary, as well as holotropic states of consciousness, show deep correlations with the archetypal energies of the transiting planets at any particular time, they are subjected to constant changes. I mentioned earlier the frustration of theoreticians who are trying to establish a fixed classificatory system of psychiatric diagnoses. We are currently on the fourth revised version of the official American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) and clinicians keep expressing their frustration concerning the lack of correspondence between the description of the diagnostic categories and the actual clinical pictures they encounter in their patients. From an astrological point of view, this versatility of the clinical picture reflects the constantly shifting angular relations among the planets.

At various periods of history, two or more planets form important aspects in the skies; this is particularly significant and long-lasting if it involves the outer planets from Jupiter to Pluto. The combined archetypal field associated with these planets will give this period a certain experiential flavor, determine its *Zeitgeist*. For example, as I have already mentioned, the entire period of 1960-72 coincided with a conjunction involving Pluto and Uranus, the only such conjunction in the twentieth century. This certainly was a very appropriate archetypal combination for a period of sustained major psychospiritual revolution of a Dionysian kind, characterized by social upheaval, the civil rights movement, technological triumph, radical

innovations in music and arts, the sexual revolution, the feminist movement, student unrest, and widespread countercultural activity and creativity.

By contrast, the major archetypal influence throughout the 1990s was a Neptune/Uranus conjunction. This was a period of profound, but generally non-violent spiritual and social changes, ‘velvet revolutions,’ such as the unification of Germany, liberation of Eastern European countries, and peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union, a dangerous superpower. At this time, Jungian psychology gained increasing acceptance and a multitude of spiritually oriented books made the bestseller lists. Transpersonal themes made their way into the movies. Mythology, near-death experiences, UFO abduction phenomena, instrumental transcommunication (ITC), and virtual reality attracted great attention of professionals, as well as general public.

At the time of major planetary aspects for the whole world, these planetary combinations also become personalized for individuals as they form major transits to specific planets in their natal charts. These alignments will then be reflected in tendencies towards specific emotional and psychosomatic disorders. As a result, psychiatrists from different historical periods do not see the same phenomena as their colleagues from earlier or later times. This suggests a possible explanation for why the creation of a fixed, universally valid DSM-IV seems to be intrinsically problematic.

But that is not the whole story. In the annual courses that Richard Tarnas and I teach at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, we discuss the major schools of depth psychology and analyze the astrological charts of their founders. It soon becomes obvious that these pioneers were not able to study objectively the psyches of their clients and make general conclusions that would remain valid indefinitely. They saw the problems of their clients through their subjective perceptual stencils, or distorting lenses, inherent in the aspects in their own charts and their own transits at the time of the observations.

With the exception of organically determined disorders, psychiatry thus does not have a fixed set of phenomena to study. The result of any research of emotional and psychosomatic disorders that are not organic is thus determined by a complex interplay of a number of factors:

the astrological chart of the researcher and his or her transits at the time of observation; the planetary aspects for the entire world that define the *Zeitgeist* of a particular period; and the transits that color the experiences of the clients.

The image of psychiatry as a discipline that possesses concise descriptions of fixed and transtemporal pathological conditions and an armamentarium of specific remedies and interventions is an illusion. The only viable approach under these circumstances is to describe psychiatric disorders in terms of relationships and tools that can be used to analyze the situation at any particular time and characterize it in terms of the phenomenology of the experiences of the client and its relationship to the client's planetary transits. As a corrective, it is also necessary to take into consideration the global planetary aspects and the researcher's own chart and transits.

The connections revealed by astrology are so complex, intricate, creative, and highly imaginative that they leave no doubt of their divine origin. They provide convincing evidence for a deep meaningful order underlying creation and for a superior cosmic intelligence that engendered it. This raises a very interesting question: Is there a comprehensive world view that could accommodate astrology and assimilate its findings? Over the years, and not without struggle and tribulations, I have come to the conclusion that there is a world view that can absorb and explain my experiences and observations from consciousness research, as well as embrace astrology. However, it differs diametrically from the belief system that dominates the modern Western civilization.

I have described this world view in my book *The Cosmic Game: Explorations of the Frontiers of Human Consciousness* (Grof 1998) and presented it also in a condensed form in an earlier chapter of this book. This vision of reality is based on experiences and insights from holotropic states and portrays the universe not as a material system, but as an infinitely complex play of Absolute Consciousness. Ancient Hindu scriptures describe a similar view of the cosmos, referring to the events in the phenomenal worlds as *lila*, the divine play. I have tried to show in my previous publications that this way of seeing the universe is becoming increasingly compatible with various revolutionary advances in new paradigm science (Grof 1985, 1998).

If the cosmos is a creation of superior intelligence and not a supermachine that created itself, it then becomes more readily plausible that astrology could be one of many different orders built into the universal fabric. It could be seen as a useful complement to the field of science, rather than an irreconcilable rival of the scientific world view. Opening up conceptually to this possibility would make it possible to utilize the great potential that astrology holds as a clinical and research tool in psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy, as well as for a variety of other disciplines.

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) Now getting back to the correlations with the Grof material and the psychotherapeutic process: I mentioned to you that the more I examined the evidence, the more amazed I was by the complex precision of the correlations. But this wasn't the half of it. It's one thing to find that in a general way certain kinds of transits tend to coincide with positive psychological states and therapeutic sessions, and that other kinds of transits tend to coincide with difficult psychological states and sessions. Of course just knowing this fact is itself immensely valuable information. But as I continued to examine the evidence and as I got a deeper grasp of the archetypal principles involved in astrology, I found something rather astonishing. You will recall that, in examining the thousands of session reports, Grof had been able to distinguish four basic clusterings of experience: first, a state of undifferentiated unity and transcendence; second, a state of separation, alienation, hard labor, and constriction; third, a state of extremely intense arousal of elemental energies--erotic, aggressive, cathartic, transformative; and fourth, a state of sudden liberation, of awakening and rebirth. Grof had recognized the close match between these four experiential states and the four stages surrounding the birth process. But eventually, while doing research at some point in the late 1970s, it dawned on me that these four stages quite precisely correlated with the four outer planetary archetypes, exactly one to one:

Recall the four perinatal matrices as Stan Grof just described them:

The first category corresponds with the pre-natal intrauterine condition of undifferentiated unity with the mother, and see if this reminds you of Neptune: this matrix was associated with mystical experiences of all kinds, with spiritual transcendence, transcending the separative ego, and also the transcending of material reality and of the consensus world view; it was also associated with experiences of oceanic ecstasy and with the element of water, the amniotic womb, a dissolving of boundaries, a sense of unity with other beings, unity with nature, with the divine, the experience of other levels of reality, a sense of unbounded imagination, of paranormal psychic, telepathic, or intuitive abilities. The negative side of this category was a sense of unreality, delusion, psychosis, lack of lucid awareness in relation to the environment, narcissistic self-absorption, escapism, addiction, and so forth. As I think you can readily see, everything about this matrix have a character that is unmistakably linked to the astrological meaning of the planet Neptune.

The second perinatal matrix or category was rooted in the stage of birth contractions with the cervix still closed--and look for the tell-tale signs of Saturn here: This matrix was associated with the experience of constriction, of alienation, suffering, the encounter with death, the feeling of being condemned by fate to an unhappy destiny, the feeling of the existentialist "no exit" in

Sartre's sense, of depression and despair, a sense that life is a treadmill of unending labor with the constant pressure of time and death hanging over one, a perspective in which all that exists is a material reality that has no higher meaning, a sense of all-pervading judgment as in Kafka, of guilt and exile, sometimes an encounter with the punitive Old Testament Yahweh who condemns one to leave Paradise for one's sin. Again, all these phenomena had a clearly Saturnian character. The positive side of this stage of the perinatal process by the way was recognized not at the time it was experienced, but rather only in retrospect, as being that which was bringing about incarnation, spirit embodied in matter, as having constituted the structure of one's personal evolution, the limiting birth canal that eventually brings forth a new being.

The third category or perinatal matrix was rooted in the stage of the birth process bringing the propulsion of the baby through the birth canal, and here think in terms of the archetype of Pluto--this stage was associated with the experience of volcanic energy rushes, intense arousal of sexual libido and aggression, the Freudian Id, enormous discharge of pent-up energies, extremely dramatic experiences having a life-and-death intensity, a descent into the underworld, intense power struggles, danger, excitement, bloody biology, encounters with evil, degradation, defilement, obscenity, purgatorial fire, elemental transformation, powerful Kundalini experiences, encounters with Kali or Shiva, experiences of Dionysian agony and ecstasy, and more generally the experience of intense suffering in a process of powerful catharsis: again, all of these characteristics are clearly associated with the astrological meaning of the planet Pluto, including others which I haven't mentioned such as the whole scatological side of the third perinatal matrix.

Finally the fourth category that Stan distinguished was the perinatal matrix correlated with the actual moment of birth--and here consider the phenomena in terms of the astrological Uranus, and the Prometheus archetype: This fourth matrix was associated with an experience of sudden unexpected breakthrough, sudden enlightenment and freedom, the experience of intellectual and spiritual illumination, rebirth, liberation, release from constriction and imprisonment, freedom from death and despair, a sense of being suddenly awakened to a new and utterly surprising greater reality. Again, all these phenomena are clearly associated with the astrological Uranus. The negative side of this fourth category by the way takes the form of mania, inflation, hyperenergetic behavior, irresponsible assertions of personal freedom and the like, all related to incomplete experiences of rebirth.

Now these four archetypal states of consciousness can therefore be understood on the one hand as related to the stages of biological birth. And on the other hand these four stages or categories of experience also happen to correspond, both in terms of their meanings and in terms of empirical astronomical correlations, with the four outer planets--Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. That is, transits from each specific planet coincided with experiences that could be understood as grounded in the corresponding perinatal matrix; and also the specific character of a person's birth chart could be understood in a whole new way by seeing that where there was a marked emphasis on one of the four outer planets, that person's life and character could be understood in terms of the relative importance of that perinatal matrix in his or her psyche.

Now of course it is important to remember here that in one form or another we all have all four perinatal matrices inherent in our psyches just as we all have all four planets in our birth charts. Yet each of us has a different emphasis from others, a unique set of archetypal dynamics. And our own experience is constantly changing in the most complex ways according to the ongoing cycles of transits.

In terms of transits and psychotherapy, we found that the position of the outer four planets provided us with the most valuable predictive information about what individual therapeutic sessions would be like. Here I want to emphasize that astrology seems to be extremely accurate in its capacity to be archetypally predictive. It is not concretely predictive. That is, it can indicate extraordinarily well the overall archetypal character, the experiential flavor, of a given period of time, but it does not give the precise literal form which that experience might take. Also, there is always a plurality of important transits, so that it can be quite tricky judging the relative significance of one transit over another, or judging how apparently contradictory transits occurring at the same time will work out. But certain consistent tendencies were quite obvious. For example, we found that major Uranus transits (particularly when joined in some form by Jupiter), were likely to be present at the time of sessions that brought real breakthroughs, experiences of sudden liberating rebirth, unexpected expansion of consciousness and so forth. By contrast, we found that the same people undergoing certain transit configurations involving Saturn (especially when joined by one of the three outer planets) tended to have a strong proclivity at that time toward 2nd perinatal matrix issues in their lives and in their therapeutic work: experiences of depression, blockage, alienation, the sense that life is not worth it, an encounter with death in some form, and so forth.

When someone has a strong natal emphasis on one of these planets, such as Neptune or Pluto and so forth, it is as if they had a lifelong transit of that archetypal nature, involving a sustained working through of that particular perinatal matrix. For example, people who have an especially powerful Neptune aspect, such as Jung with his close Sun square Neptune, showed very strong emphasis throughout their lives on first perinatal matrix experiences--including, for example, not only the positive side of that matrix, such as mystical experiences, interest in spirituality and the esoteric, vivid dream life and imagination, and so forth, but also the problematic side of that matrix, as for example Jung himself described being psychologically overwhelmed at certain times by the influx of mythic archetypes into his consciousness, so much so that his hold on reality was fundamentally threatened, as was his very sense of selfhood (i.e., the Sun, in his Sun square Neptune).

Here I should point out that we found it was not just the general fact as to whether or not someone had an overall emphasis on one of these planets...the correlations were far more precise. For example, natal Pluto conjunct Moon was very different from Pluto conjunct the Sun or Mercury or Mars: Pluto-Moon seemed to bring the whole Plutonic third matrix into one's life particularly through those elements of life associated with the Moon, so that, for example the individual went through their most intense and cathartic, deeply transforming experiences in the context of the mother-child relationship, in childhood more generally, or in intimate emotional relationships of various kinds, in family life, through the women in his or her life--mother, sister, wife, female friends. In psychedelic or breathing sessions there was frequently major repeated encounters with Kali (who's one of the principal feminine personifications of the Pluto archetype). And this same person might have, say, Uranus in natal aspect to Mercury, or to Venus, so that the most suddenly liberating and innovative 4th-matrix kinds of experiences came in for that person through the realm of thinking and communication, or if Venus, through the aesthetic or romantic realms of life.

Now what does this all mean? Of course the fact that there exists any correlation at all between psychological states and planetary positions remains the most fundamentally extraordinary fact we face here. But what was truly inconceivable here was the fact that the four fundamental matrices of the birth process which Stan Grof had independently discovered in his

psychotherapeutic work, that these were perfectly correlated with both the meaning and the timing of the four outer planets. Just in terms of the conceptual match, this kind of precise correspondence obviously didn't have to happen. Those of you who know the archetypal meaning of the planets well, and who also know the four perinatal matrices well, will recognize that the fit between the two sets of categories is quite perfect. There is not even a trace of conceptual dissonance in their match. For me, as I took in the significance of this precise fit between the two sets of categories, the sheer metaphysical astonishment I felt was something like the experience of walking outside one fine day and suddenly noticing that all the clouds in the sky had spontaneously formed themselves into a perfect replication of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Or it was like listening outside your bedroom window one morning and hearing a flock of birds pass through your backyard singing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in perfectly arranged 6-part harmony.

 Now there are many implications of this evidence that would be worth discussing here--for example, the extraordinary light these correspondences shine on history, such as the powerful Uranus-Pluto conjunction of the 1960s--very much a combination of third and fourth matrix experiences manifesting throughout the world--rebellion and liberation, rebirth, illumination, but also extreme intensity, eroticism, power struggle, violence, profound transformation and so forth. Or the great Jupiter-Uranus-Neptune-Saturn alignment of this past year that coincided with the amazing historical transformations in Eastern Europe. And in terms of psychotherapy, in practical terms we could discuss the strategies for the timing of therapeutic sessions. In a sense what we have here is a map, provided by Grof's map of the psyche, and a compass, provided by the planetary correlations. Equally important are the theoretical issues involved here. For over two thousand years astrology has focused on the birth chart as being decisive for understanding the nature of a person's life and character, and the Grof evidence, which underscores the decisive influence of the birth event on the individual psyche, gives stunning independent corroboration of that basic astrological principle.

It appears that in some manner the archetypal dynamics signified by the planetary configurations at the moment of birth are fundamentally related to the individual perinatal dynamics which are imprinted in the process of birth. The natal chart thus seems to represent a kind of cosmic portrait of the person's basic lifelong archetypal dynamics, and the ongoing transits in the course of that person's life seem to coincide with the timing of the various activations of those natal tendencies.