

Returning to Solar Returns— Sidereal Prognostications

TRANSITS ARE PROBABLY the most popular astrological method of timing events and trends. Most astrologers, amateur and professional alike, follow the movement of the planets in an ephemeris and compare these positions to the natal ones. Many, however, do not use (or even know of) a specialized form of transit timing called *solunar returns*. I would urge all astrologers to experiment with and objectively research solunar/sidereal prognostication, as the author, like many other students of esoteric astrology, have found it inherently clear-cut, useful and insightful.

The word *solunar* is a compound of the words *solar* (relating to the sun) and *lunar* (relating to the moon). In twelve months the sun travels some 375 million miles through space along its path, the ecliptic. This does not mean, astronomically speaking, that the sun, with its caravan of planets, returns to the same *place* each year; rather, it is a re-alignment of the earth-sun space, a recurring relationship, that concerns us. The earth's orbit, then, is more like a corkscrew than a circle, spiraling as it does toward a point in space a bit North of the Milky Way. The apparent transit of the sun to its natal position is thus a solar return: our true annual or solar birthday.

How one goes about setting up the chart for this moment is the key issue. The first question concerns *domification*, or houses. There are at least four popular house systems in current use, all or most of which seem to have logical merit. Usually,

the degree discrepancy between house systems is not considerable. Ultimately, the astrologer will have to decide for himself which system works best. When setting up returns the author prefers using Campanus houses. The question of domification is critical in solunar astrology because a planet's strength is significantly determined by its house placement (background, middleground or foreground). Planets within (or within orb of) a cardinal house cusp are considered foreground, where they have a maximum opportunity to help or hurt; middleground house positions (the second, fifth, eighth and eleventh) are next in importance, and the background houses (the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth) are least important, as they suppress or minimize planetary expression.

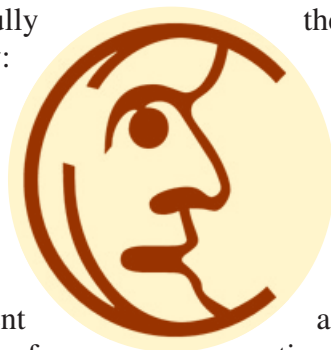
An obvious problem with the timing of transits is the issue of precession. The Moon and the planets exert a gravitational pull on the Earth's rotational cycle. The result has been a 25° misalignment between the signs of the zodiac and the constellations of the same name. Thus, the vernal equinox has not remained stationary with respect to the fixed stars but has preceded (moved backward) through them at the rate of about 50.25 seconds annually. By the time one is 72 years old, the difference between the two positions significantly amounts to one degree. This shift almost immediately begins to affect return charts, so that by the age of 36, one's "popular" tropical solar return differs from the sidereal solar return by 12 hours, completely altering the positions of planets in the houses.



The author feels that while the tropical zodiac of convention is valid and preferable for natal astrology, for transits the sidereal or adjusted zodiac gives more useful interpretive results. The sidereal zodiac is the one of ancient choice, but some modern astrologers prefer to adjust the tropical zodiac instead. That is to say, one can treat the tropical zodiac (in wide use today) as if it were moving. This means treating natal positions of the planets like fixed stars. Since the vernal equinox (Aries 0°) moves backward, the positions of the fixed stars move forward in the tropical zodiac. There is a simple rule to calculate a precession correction value: take the individual's age in years at the time of the transit and multiply by 5, then divide by 6 and round off to the nearest minute. The result should then be added to all natal positions or subtracted from all transiting positions.

A difference in solunar readings concerns the quality of aspects. Only the five major aspects (conjunction, sextile, square, trine, opposition) are used. The conjunction is most powerful and the sextile is weakest. But note carefully this difference from natal astrology: The question as to what constitutes a good or bad aspect solely concerns the nature of the planets involved. The Sun, Moon and Mercury are neutral, Venus, Jupiter and to a lesser extent Uranus are positive, and Mars, Saturn, Neptune and to a lesser extent Pluto are negative or challenging. So, for instance, a sextile between Jupiter and Saturn bodes difficulties, and a square between the Sun and Venus is decidedly good. Although this rule may seem strange at first, a little experience will definitively bear it out.

Of course, there is a slight qualitative difference in the way two different aspects play out. The conjunction is more forceful and inclusive than the square, which is more immediate and intense than the opposition. The comparison of solunar positions to natal ones (provided the nativity is sidereal) can also be revealing. The question often arises, "What influence does the sign of the zodiac have on a plan-



et's influence in solunar astrology?" The answer may surprise some: While the zodiacal backdrop does color the expression of an aspect, it is secondary to the question of house placement. So, a solar return moon in the 12th house in Taurus is trivial in importance because the background position stifles its expression, showing only passing concerns with 12th house matters. It would also weaken vitality (although not as much as a 6th house placement would). The only exception would be a partile (exact) aspect. Aspects exact within one degree are very powerful and always find expression.

The Sun is by far the most important body in a solar return, just as the moon is in a monthly lunar return. Please note, however, that it is important to specify the geographic location the person occupies when the return takes place. If the person moves, the chart should be adjusted, too (relocation chart), although the original chart will still contain much valuable information; in fact, the "move" itself should be indicated therein. The Sun shows a person's individuality, the heart. Its house position shows with what circumstances and people the native will choose to surround himself during the twelve months (or month, if a lunar return). The monthly lunar return will further clarify which particular aspect of the solar return the native will be expressing that month. The solar aspects will show whether those conditions will be positive or challenging. The Moon, on the other hand, indicates the principal events and conditions which will surround the native quite independent of his/her wishes in the matter. The Moon is the timer of events (especially in a lunar chart) and reveals how one reacts to the circumstances of life.

The author trusts this will be a starting point for those seekers of Truth who wish to better attune themselves to Nature's daily operations and thus live more harmoniously. Investigate for yourself and see whether new light is shed on the seeming inequities of fate and life. □

—Rick Manoff