

Aspects to the Ascendant

ONE ADDITIONAL factor which participates in the Ascendant complex mentioned above* is any close aspect to the Ascendant. Traditionally, such aspects have been said to influence one's character and temperament, although very few books include guidelines for interpreting these aspects. In this brief section, I do not propose to give a systematic list of "interpretations" for such aspects. However, there are a few key points to keep in mind in order to recognize those Ascendant aspects which are most important in a particular chart.

As a general rule, the Ascendant aspects show how one most characteristically expresses himself or herself in the outer world, either easily and naturally (certain conjunctions, the sextiles, and—most of all—the trines) or with some degree of stress, tension, inhibition, or extraordinarily strong ambition (squares and oppositions). In other words, aspects to the Ascendant reveal whether various dimensions of oneself (symbolized by natal planets) are in harmony or discord with the mode of expression toward which the Ascendant's energies constantly urge us.

The **oppositions** with the Ascendant in some cases reveal an inner division in the individual, a state of being wherein the person endures an

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On the Edge

almost constant tension since there is a strong urge toward modes of activity which are in many ways completely opposite. This inner tension can generate great energy and manifest as a particularly complex type of consciousness. Oftentimes, such a person will alternate between the two life orientations over a number of years, at times giving conscious emphasis to one mode of self-expression and at other times focusing on the other orientation. It often seems that the progressed Moon or transiting Saturn and Jupiter periodically bring out one side or the other of the person's nature.

The **square** to the Ascendant is often symbolic of some quality in the person's early environment, usually having manifested either as a type of oppression or inhibition (especially when the planet involved is in the 4th house), or as an unusually strong pressure toward achievement or recognition (often when the planet involved is in the 10th house). In other words, there are basically two types of squares with the Ascendant, which may be

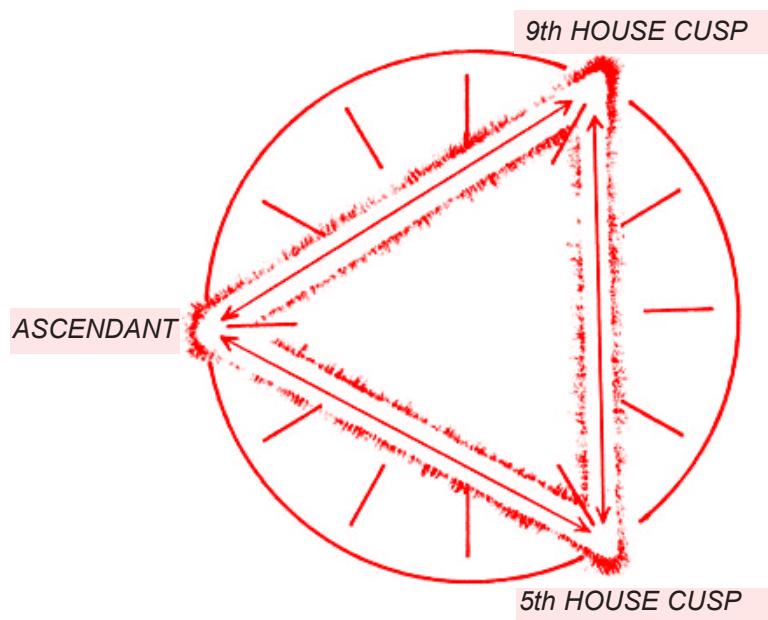
classified as follows: 1) the 4th house type of square often indicates emotional patterns that hold us back from reaching the spontaneity of expression shown by the Ascendant sign; and 2) the tenth house square often reveals forces within us that pull us onward toward some kind of achievement.

The **sextile** with the Ascendant generally shows that the energy of the planet involved may be put into operation quite smoothly once a period of learning has taken place. Some small adjustment may have to be made before that dimension of experience becomes fully integrated with the energy of the Ascendant, but the transition period is usually rapid and encouraging.

The **conjunctions** and **trines** with the Ascendant should be treated together due to their participation in an important, but rarely mentioned, astrological phenomenon. This phenomenon is the triangle formed by the "fire houses" (houses 1, 5, and 9). The triangle formed by the fire signs is of course mentioned in most basic textbooks of astrology, as are the triangles (or trinities) associated with the signs of the other elements. But the triangle of the fire houses has been mentioned in very few books. The reason for this apparent neglect is that this triangle represents a pattern of energy flow which in many cases verges on the transcendent.

I have already mentioned how the Ascendant can be seen as representing a mode of expression and energy release which is timeless, spontaneous, and so natural that it eludes our capturing its essence in words. And, in a general way, this quality applies also to the entire triangle of the fire houses; for the fire houses deal with pure being and becoming. The purity of self-expression represented by them can in some cases be accurately classified as spiritual (mainly in those cases where the person has ceased to identify his ego with the creative forces flowing through him and instead sees himself only as a channel for the manifestation of a greater power).

I stumbled on to the importance of the fire houses early in my astrological studies, years before



I had ever seen mention of this phenomenon in print. This realization occurred when I drew up and studied the charts of about a dozen spiritual masters. When I tried to discover common factors in all of their charts, it became apparent that the only thing that was regularly emphasized in the majority of those charts was the emphasis on the fire house placement of planets. After trying to understand this pattern, without much success, I had a vivid dream in which I was shown a flow of fiery energy circling around the triangle formed by the Ascendant and the 5th and 9th houses. The immediacy of realization that accompanied that dream is impossible to describe in words, but it was a direct and profound lesson about the energy flow represented by these houses. The diagram of the "Fiery Triangle" (above) is an attempt to convey that dream image.

The practical application of this idea is recognizing the potential shown in a chart where natal planets are located, in close trine to the Ascendant or in conjunction to it. This does not mean that such planetary placements always indicate great spirituality, for, in most cases, emphasis on these houses cannot accurately be labeled a "spiritual" orientation since most people are undeniably ego-centric. In general, however, there is a particularly dynamic flow of creative energy which can be expressed spontaneously and powerfully. Whatever dimension of experience is symbolized by a

planet closely trining or conjuncting the Ascendant may be put into active expression with a degree of naturalness, immediacy, and positive energy greater than that represented by most other astrological factors. For example, one who has Mars either conjunct the Ascendant or in trine to it from either the 5th or the 9th house areas may be a natural leader and be characterized by a marked degree of courage and maybe even a certain roughness of demeanor. Or one who has Saturn in a similar position may be characterized by a sense of practicality, a capacity for good timing, and the expression of wisdom far beyond his or her years.

Although each of the fire houses may be differentiated from the others and given its own set of meanings, we should be aware of the fact that any planet situated within this dynamic triangle will be likely to exert a powerful impression on the individual's orientation to life. In fact, one of the simplest ways of characterizing the fire houses as a group is to say that the signs on the 1st, 5th, and 9th house cusps, together with the planets located in those houses (especially those closely aspecting the Ascendant), signify dominant qualities in the individual's overall attitude toward life. Since our attitude toward life determines a great many of our experiences (for you attract what you express in life), one can easily see why these factors in any chart play such an important role in the person's overall life pattern.

The other point to be considered is that our attitude toward ourselves is inseparable from our attitude toward life in general. In fact, one might say that they are the same thing. It is obvious that our overall attitude toward life emanates directly from our attitude toward ourselves; and the opposite is also true, for we have all seen the transformation in self-confidence that an individual can experience when a positive life philosophy has been adopted. The fiery triangle thus symbolizes the essential quality of our innermost sense of self, as well as indicating our general approach to life itself.

The 1st house and its planets can indicate either a spontaneous flow of vital energy with such positive vibrations that the person is characterized by an almost radiant aura, or a high degree of self-centeredness and often excessive pride. Naturally, these two ways of being represent the extreme manifestations of such energies, but it is not uncommon to find people who clearly exemplify these extremes.

Any planet conjunct the Ascendant can indicate that we have considerable pride in that part of ourselves. For example, the Sun conjunct the Ascendant

frequently correlates with a child-like simplicity and generosity in some cases, or with a childish glee in showing off one's abilities through dramatic displays (and often both).

The Sun conjunct the Ascendant is similar to Leo rising in many ways,

although the arrogance and self-centeredness found so often in those with Sun conjunct Ascendant is usually much more blatant than in those who have a Leo Ascendant. Another example might be the person who has Mercury conjunct the Ascendant, where we often find a considerable pride in one's learning and intellectual abilities. In some cases with the Mercury conjunction, a tendency to try to figure out every little thing causes unnecessary problems and constant worrying. These people often have particularly sharp minds and the ability to verbalize ideas with an extraordinary sense of drama, although their opinions can be their worst enemy.

The 5th house and its planets reveal creative resources which can be tapped in abundance, as well as being key symbols of the person's level of self-confidence, or at least what he or she feels must be done in order to attain real self-confidence. Since the 5th house corresponds to the Sun's own sign, Leo, it is not surprising that I have gradually become inclined to consider this house as the strongest house in the chart after the 1st; for the 5th house emphasizes not only the individual's

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creative potentials but also vibrations that characterize the person's overt way of pouring forth his or her energies spontaneously. And, in actual practice, any planet in the 5th house (especially if in close trine to the Ascendant) may color a person's entire scope and method of self-projection just as strongly as a planet in the 1st house.

The 9th house and its planets signify creative, future-oriented beliefs and aspirations. The 9th house's connection with one's general attitude toward life may be more obvious than that of the 1st or 5th house, since the 9th house has traditionally connoted one's religious or philosophical orientation. As many books have stated, the 9th house and its planets are related intimately with the higher mind; and since our higher aspirations and beliefs are among the most dominant factors in forming our life attitudes, one can see how readily 9th house factors harmonize with the overall orientation of the fire house triangle.

Of these three, the 5th house has been most misunderstood, due to the common practice of emphasizing only its connection with children, gambling, love "affairs," and other pleasures. However, the 5th house has deeper connotations which are closely related to the transcendent meaning of the fire triangle we've been discussing. I must say that it is quite surprising to me that generations of astrologers can continue to place so little relative emphasis on the very house that corresponds to the Sun itself.

Although 5th house energies often manifest as speculation, love affairs, sensual pleasures, and childish self-centeredness, all of these activities are rooted in the urge to take some risks in order to let a greater power manifest through the individual personality. As has been stated, the 5th house shows either the power of love or the love of power. At best, it indicates one's capacity for letting God's love and light flow through you and a simple trust in the goodness of life itself. It is related to our ability to allow the creative forces of life to manifest through us, as shown by its connections with children of both mind and body (the desire to have something greater than our limited ego be born through us).

Both children and true creativity teach us the

lesson that we must do what we love to do in order to attain a joyous sense of vitality. This kind of joy is a gift or an act of divine grace, not a "pleasure" in a sensual way. By far the best presentation of this dimension of the 5th house appeared in Dennis Elwell's article on the subject in the *Journal of the British Astrological Association* in the summer of 1973. In this insightful piece of writing, he states:

The fifth house...represents a barometer of our confidence in life, and particularly in its incalculable elements; and of the extent to which life secures us in the sense of our own worth by little signs of approval which arrive like a gift, an unsought blessing.

Some of these "little signs" might be "falling in love," which is of course quite beyond our control, having a child or a creative work be born through us (which again we cannot control), or even winning at gambling. Elwell points out that love is perhaps blind, as is so often said, but he goes on to clarify the spiritual meaning of the 5th house and Sun principles that are symbolic of this kind of love:

Perhaps it is only when we are "in love" with someone that we see them as they should be seen!...When we fall in love our temperatures get reversed: now we regard ourselves coldly, and our shortcomings become all too obvious, while we feel warmth, admiration, and enthusiasm for someone else.

When in love, the sky is bluer, all life experiences are intensified, and everything looks better because we are then seeing things as they are; for the fire of love has burned away our ego! We might therefore say that the 5th house principle represents either the fire of ego, or the fire of love which burns up the ego. And, in a general way, the entire triangle of the fire houses comprises this essential significance. Planets in these houses therefore are almost always of great importance, and particularly those which closely aspect the Ascendant can be considered as indicators of extraordinary developmental power. □