

The Astrology of Spiritual Awakening

by Eric Meyers

Astrology is most commonly viewed through the lens of our mind. Equipped with reason and the ability to analyze, we are able to understand the broader cosmos and bring its messages into our everyday lives. But there's a catch. Although the mind is a phenomenal gift, it tends to see things in dualistic (either/or) terms: masculine/feminine, left/right, good/bad. Dividing everything into pairings (however understandable) makes it difficult to see the underlying unity in life.

In this article, I am putting forth the idea that we can also view astrology through the *lens of soul*. Whereas the mind *observes* Nature, the soul is our energetic connection with Nature and the world. Analogous to using a different lens on a microscope, our understanding of the astrological system can expand substantially when seen through this lens. Instead of reducing astrology down to its component parts for easier comprehension, the lens of soul illuminates how the various parts of the astrology system can work together for spiritual growth. We will explore astrology's central players, the Sun and Moon, from this perspective. From the *relative* lens of mind, they symbolize the great polarity of masculine and feminine. However, through the *transpersonal* lens of soul, they can shed light on the process of spiritual awakening – a movement from identifying with separateness (Moon) to experiencing oneness (Sun). Through the spiritual lens, we are able to perceive the world as it really is, a *universe*.

Two Views in Astronomy

The relative and the transpersonal levels of the Sun and Moon can be seen astronomically. The geocentric perspective is egocentric and correlates with the relative view, from which the luminaries appear to be the same size and therefore equal. The relative perspective is where we tend to see things as pairings (yin/yang, male/female, good/bad).

The Sun is the light of the day, and the Moon, the night. Both darkness and light have usefulness; they complement each other and invite us to have moments of activity and rest. The relative view is immediate to our senses. We notice that the Moon gives forth light, and we call it moonlight. (Astrologically, the Moon is categorized as a "luminary.")

We can also view the solar system from outside the geocentric perspective. Since the transpersonal is "beyond the personal," there is no fixed point of reference using the lens of soul. It is difficult to fathom how Spirit would see itself, since it pervades everything! In the same way, the lens of soul incorporates all possible perspectives. It sees Nature just as it is, without any bias or particular vantage point.

From the transpersonal view, we discover how unequal the Sun and Moon really are. For instance, we *wouldn't* classify the Moon as a luminary; we *would* notice how it reflects the light of the Sun. Through the lens of mind, darkness and light are seen as complementary, just like the colors black and white. One is not "better" than the other

– both are fundamental colors on Nature’s palette. However, the lens of soul sees in terms of spiritual growth. Light is paired with awareness, while dark goes with unconsciousness. Light promotes growth and is essential to sustain life.

From its relative position on Earth, the lens of mind sees the Sun and Moon as equal in size. Through the lens of soul, however, we comprehend that the Sun actually occupies roughly as much space as 64 million Moons. It is the massive gravitational center of our entire solar system, and its energy makes all life possible. The Moon, a tiny rock circling our small planet, obviously has no such role. From this perspective, the Sun is analogous to Spirit, while the Moon reflects the realities of our human situation as “separate selves.”

The Moon depends on the Sun to hold it and the Earth in place through gravity, but the Sun doesn’t need the Moon. The light of Spirit does not need individual human consciousness for its existence; rather, individuals are enveloped in the broader spiritual sustenance of the Sun. Sri Ramana Maharshi says, “The body cannot exist without the Self [his term for Spirit], whereas the Self can exist without the body.”[1] For the purposes of evolutionary growth, the luminaries function as partners, integrating awareness and presence (Sun) into the physical, separate self (Moon).

Although the astrological Sun is classified as a “planet,” we know that it is actually a *star*, a designation that connects it to the wider cosmos. Stars join together in clusters, systems, and galaxies. The Moon, like everything else within our solar system, does not have that kind of reach. With the Sun, we can extend into the transpersonal, evolving from our “small” ego self to our “bigger” Self, which is unbounded by time and space.

Seeing the Sun through the transpersonal lens assists us in understanding the lunar cycle as well. At the New Moon, the luminaries are together – the individualized consciousness (Moon) merging with Spirit (Sun) at the beginning of a journey. The Moon moves away to gather experience and eventually returns, just as individuals separate, incarnate, and then return to the oneness of Spirit.

It is a potent truth at the relative level that pairings such as yin/yang and male/female represent complementary and equal energies, with neither member of the pair being superior to the other. However, keeping consciousness solely identified at this level inhibits our realization of the transpersonal realm, where the soul is our primary identity and our human experience is understood to be exactly what we need for our spiritual growth. The effect of this view on our everyday life is significant; “good” and “bad” lose their meaning, and resistance is replaced with a profound openness to everyone and everything that arises in the present moment. We release our attachment to personal preferences and become aware of the evolutionary opportunities available within every experience.

What Is Spiritual Awakening?

Spiritual awakening is part of the process of moving beyond dualities and egoic preferences. A few contemporary spiritual teachers define it as follows. In *The End of*

Your World, Adyashanti states that “one awakens from the dream of separation created by the egoic mind.” Once awake, we are then able to “witness the self pretending to be a separate person.”[2] In *The Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle writes that to be awakened is a “natural state of felt oneness with Being ... a state of connectedness with something immeasurable and indestructible, something that, almost paradoxically, is essentially you and yet is much greater than you. The inability to feel this connectedness gives rise to the illusion of separation.”[3] Byron Katie calls the separate self a “story” that “falls away in the light of awareness, and only the awareness of what really is remains.” Regarding the separate self, she teaches, “When the ‘I’ arises, welcome to the movie of who you think you are.” In contrast: “When mind has nothing to identify as, you experience everything in its beauty as yourself.”[4]

Luna: The Dreamer

In order to place astrology within the context of spiritual awakening, we turn first to Luna. In astrological literature and discourse, the Moon is primarily associated with the feminine. It is often seen specifically associated with the mother and, more generally, as nurturing and bonding. The Moon is also associated with unconsciousness and its well of feelings, urges, and memories. Operating below the threshold of conscious awareness, the Moon is extremely subjective, changeable, reactive, and instinctual – innately *human* in its imperfection. It is in this well of unconsciousness that our dreams are formed, while the Moon outside traverses the sky as we sleep.

Another, perhaps more interesting, angle on the connection of the Moon with the unconscious and dreaming is how the Moon operates when we are not physically asleep. In fact, its instinctual, unconscious subjectivity and emotional attachments continue to play out in our waking lives. We all have this underlying lunar foundation that supports us and sees to our survival, but this foundation also acts as a filter that dramatically colors our experience. So, is it far-fetched to conclude that how we receive, process, and engage with life is inherently dreamlike? What we normally perceive as the reality of the world may, in fact, turn out to be only our projections. Byron Katie calls the external world a “pool of me.”[5] Many years ago, Alan Watts said, “Reality is only a Rorschach ink-blot, you know.”[6]

It is the Moon that unconsciously creates the *ego dream*, which we then project upon the world. The separation we perceive between self and other, and self and world, gives us the illusion that we’re dealing with things outside ourselves, and most of us never see, let alone take responsibility for, our role as the architect. Some of the stimulation we encounter from outside is desired and welcome, while some is perceived as threatening and is avoided. This common approach to life tends to perpetuate suffering. We place value judgments on everyone and everything around us, continually evaluating our experience, resisting it, and strategizing to improve it. This is the natural way ego moves through life, as it tries to survive and pursue happiness. Although this is completely normal and understandable, it also reinforces our limited

preferences. We tend to choose and identify with one side of any polarity, which makes the possibility of attaining wholeness quite difficult.

It's interesting to note the symbolism of the astrology glyphs. The Moon is depicted as a crescent, a state of partial illumination. The Full Moon lasts but a moment before gradually receding to darkness. In contrast, the Sun's radiance is undying. The Sun glyph is a dot enclosed by a circle, indicative of membership in the eternal wholeness that surrounds us.

Helios: Waking Up

As with the Moon, the astrological Sun is primarily discussed in terms of gender – in this case, the masculine. Secondly, we find the Sun associated with the development of conscious awareness. In *The Luminaries*, Liz Greene subtitles her section on Helios, "The Sun and the Development of Consciousness," which is discussed as a universal process, regardless of gender. Robert Hand puts it succinctly in *Horoscope Symbols*: "The Sun represents light, consciousness, and day." [7]

It's very common to connect the Sun with light and with bringing things into awareness. We've all seen depictions of the proverbial lightbulb above the head, signifying the "Aha!" moment. Discussions often involve bringing issues "to light." We may call someone "bright" or "radiant" when they demonstrate characteristics of conscious engagement with life, while "enlightened" often refers to people who are maximally aware. When we sharpen our attention or alertness, we proclaim that we're "wide awake," able to be responsive.

As the Sun rises in the morning, we awake from sleep, but how much are we actually aware of? How present are we to the full spectrum of life that surrounds us? The bandwidth of the average person's awareness in our busy and noisy society is narrow to begin with; furthermore, it's thoroughly colored by the ego dream, or movie, originating in the well of our unconscious. This well is very close to us and is easily activated. George Washington. Lobster tails. Braided hair. Bowling. The brutal murder of a baby. These are but a few items stored in the unconscious mind of many of us. As an experiment, try to compare the totality of what is stored inside you with the tiny bit that you are consciously aware of right now.

Mentioning the baby in the list above may have sparked something in you, while the other items are more forgettable. The things we find objectionable tend to have greater impact and stay with us far longer. Whatever troubles us does so with great intensity, causing us to contract and stay caught in the past. On the other hand, if there's no emotional charge attached to something, we let it pass through us. Learning to allow *everything* to pass through us often entails a long process of cultivating understanding and compassion.

Ultimately, the ability to allow life to be as it is without forming attachments is one of the hallmarks of awakening. When we form attachments, we hold on, solidifying our grip. The Moon, being a rock, points to what has been hardened in our soul's experience, what we are holding on to. In contrast, the Sun is the broader field of

energetic potential and spiritual awareness, the endless creativity of the present. This broad field of transpersonal awareness is the generous life source of our evolution and constantly sustains the much more contracted individual in physical form.

The Evolution of Consciousness

Through the lens of soul, the luminaries are seen as the central players in the evolution of consciousness, as we move from isolation in the physical, separate self (Moon) toward the integration of, and awakening into, the expansive energy of Spirit (Sun). As we become more conscious, we are better able to understand, embrace, and approach life from this broader perspective. Just as we develop from infant to adolescent to adult, there is a similar evolutionary trajectory through which a soul advances in its process of self-realization. When we are young, we are entranced by the unconsciousness of the Moon. As we grow, we gradually increase our awareness, like a seed (Moon) maturing into a flower (Sun).

Our individual Suns may potentially shine brighter as our ability to be aware and present expands. Like a light connected to a dimmer switch, we have the capacity to increase our wattage. What prevents us from maximal illumination is the contraction in the separate self. Our egoic attachments (Moon) influence and even govern the present life force (Sun), pulling us into the past. The Sun's awareness becomes infiltrated by the ego's deeply ingrained patterns. Without the development of awareness, the Sun's role is reduced to being a filter through which the ego projects itself onto the world.

For those who have loosened the grip of ego attachments by processing the remnants of prior emotional experiences, the Sun is liberated and takes on a spiritual role. We resolve and release the residue from the past by moving the energy through us, using tools like emotional catharsis, breath work, exercise, or any other means to free what has been pent up. When we empty the proverbial cup, we naturally open to the dynamism and possibilities of the present. Instead of having our behavior controlled by the dictates of ego, we are informed by the solar field of sustenance and creativity that surrounds us. Intuition is heightened – those who have awakened describe the experience of serving as channels or vessels for Spirit; energetic impulses emerge *through* these people.

Transpersonal awareness is usually threatening to the ego and its tight hold on its version of reality. This awareness shifts our identity, a process that can feel like death to the ego. Liberation from the ego dream allows us to recognize the Self in everything. We become conscious of what we always were – Spirit.

In the quest for transcendence, some people may think that the ego needs to be destroyed, but action along these lines is itself generated by, and further fuels, the ego. Instead, we can release our identification as the ego and choose not to be seduced by its beliefs. Since we will still be embodied and continue to have a particular biography, our task is to bridge the transpersonal to the personal, to simultaneously inhabit both levels of reality. In no way is the ego, or the body, or anything about the separate self innately

“negative”; the point is to clearly see that an overidentification with our separateness excludes further expansion.

The Ego and Astrology

It's important to note that there is some debate about where the ego is located in a birth chart. Some astrologers see the Sun as the indicator of ego, because it acts as a central manager of the other planetary energies. Some point to the Moon, since the ego focuses on survival and operates in a reactive manner. It is my view, however, that both luminaries are connected to the ego and its transcendence.

In order to fully understand the Sun, we must ask, “Who is *really* in charge of our lives?” The process of awakening illustrates an evolutionary motion in which we consciously reconnect the personal life energy (Sun) with the broader field of energy (Spirit) that holds and animates us. To restate Tolle, we have a “state of connectedness with something immeasurable and indestructible, something that, almost paradoxically, is essentially you and yet is much greater than you.”

In contrast to this spiritual view, a secularist or materialist would claim that the individual, rather than Spirit, is in charge of the life force. However, considering that astrology portrays that we are enveloped within an intelligent system, we must acknowledge that our energy is ultimately part of something larger than what we experience as the egoic self. There is no doubt that the development of this autonomous self has been a crucial phase in our evolution toward conscious awareness, but its dark side has become increasingly evident. In our zeal for safety and control, we have asserted sovereignty over Nature and its resources in a power grab that is threatening our continued survival. It is my opinion that our tendency to equate the Sun in a chart solely with ego may reflect a complete unconscious takeover by the separate self (Moon) – further evidence of our collective narcissism and insecurity.

Chart Example

Though everything represented in a chart is significant, I will explore the process of spiritual awakening with a chart example that is limited to a discussion of the Sun and Moon as the central players in the evolutionary process. The Moon indicates what a soul has *absorbed* in its evolutionary journey, the nature of the “ego dream.” In our understanding of the Moon, the nodes of the Moon are exceptionally informative. From the deep lunar well of experience, particular evolutionary work (or spiritual learning) is taken on in the present life. The lunar nodes are literally the points where the Moon crosses the ecliptic (the Earth's path of travel around the Sun). I believe that these points describe what karma or lessons from the past are intersecting with the energy of the present (Sun). Whereas the Moon is an inner feeling, the nodal axis gives us a window into how prior lives may have been navigated amidst the heavy influence of the soul's unfinished state.

The development of greater awareness and presence (Sun) allows us to understand these habits and empowers us to make more conscious decisions within the current life circumstances. Through its illumination, the Sun assists us in reconciling the soul's unconscious habits, while also promoting greater spiritual awakening.

Evan (a pseudonym) is a client with whom I've worked closely. He has given me permission to use his chart as an example of how I perceive the Sun, Moon, and lunar nodes in a natal chart. (See **Chart below**) Evan has a Scorpio Moon conjunct Jupiter in the 1st house. From the spiritual perspective, a Scorpio Moon indicates a deep well of unresolved intensity and pain – a marked frustration and need for passion. The conjunction with Jupiter suggests that this emotion is related to the issue of living with purpose. There is a need to do something big (Jupiter) that has remained unsatisfied and lingers in Evan's soul to be acknowledged and resolved. The 1st-house placement reflects the reality that Evan is upset with himself for being unable to act in bold and empowered ways. He says, "I have a lot of energy around people not living authentic lives." This would fit as a projection of his personal ego dream.

The Capricorn South Node is conjunct Venus on the 4th-house cusp. Evan comes from an aristocratic family in Asia and grew up in the United States. He describes the tone of family life as proper, with a sense of decorum and little emotional expression. His father was a musician and conductor, but couldn't support the family doing his work in the world. Evan says he grew up in the shadow of his father's failure, which is consistent with the fears engendered by his own South Node in Capricorn. He says that, as a child, he was ambitious at an early age (Jupiter-Moon) in order to fulfill his parents' "unrequited dreams" – his father's musical ambition and his mother's longing to preserve an aristocratic lifestyle, which ended when they came to America.

With the North Node in Cancer on the cusp of the 10th house, Evan's current spiritual work is to forge a career on his own terms (10th house), but one that is connected to his heart (Cancer). However, this is unfamiliar territory for his soul. Evan is afraid to look foolish by putting himself out there prematurely. He feels that it is extremely important to be polished (Venus) and responsible (Capricorn) in whatever he does, and this stance prevents him from throwing caution to the wind and confidently living from his heart.

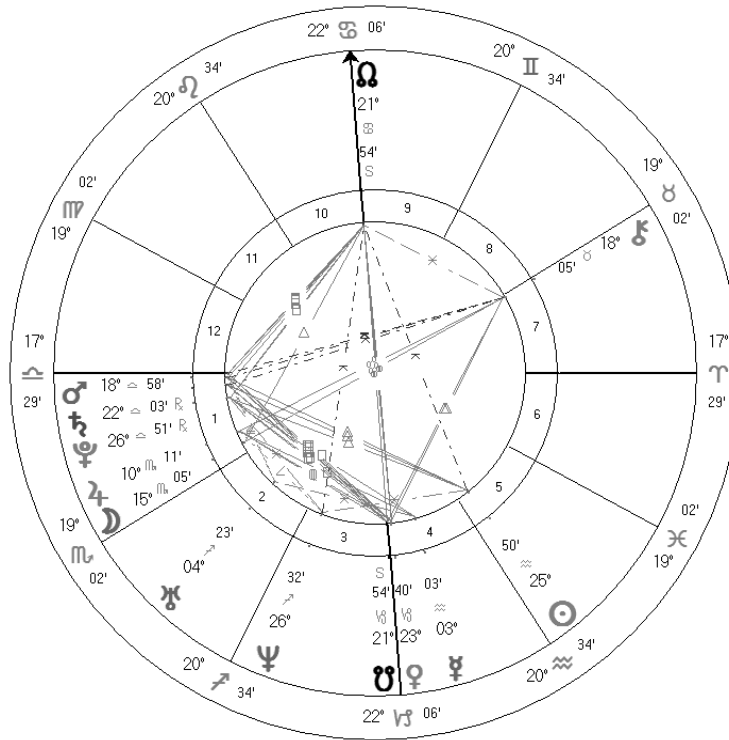
Evan recently completed the required training to work as a therapist (10th-house Cancer North Node), and his focus is on how to manage painful emotions (Moon in Scorpio). He is most interested in somatic therapies, grief work, and the moving of emotion using ritual, performance, and others kinds of creative expression. He agrees that his desire to assist others with self-revelation is the reflection of a lesson he himself needs to integrate.

Evan has a soul pattern of emotional repression, perfectionism, and a family background with an emphasis on status. A possible "remedy" for this pattern is to cultivate a more carefree approach, one that is truer to his authentic self. For this incarnation, Evan's life force is represented by an Aquarius Sun in the 5th house. The intention of this Sun placement is to awaken into uninhibited expression and

spontaneity. Since everything revolves around the Sun, when Evan is able to claim his freedom (Aquarius), all the planets will function brighter and stronger.

Evan’s love of performance and theater reflects the 5th-house Sun; he relishes creativity and self-expression and is aware of their therapeutic value. He says he lightens up when he’s able to be more authentic in his sharing. When asked if he feels a restless energy to individuate (Aquarius), he exclaims “Hell, yes!” The Sun’s principal aspect is a trine to his 1st-house stellium (Pluto, Saturn, Mars). This connects the solar intention for greater freedom with the development of more empowered behavior – the root of his soul lesson.

In this lifetime, Evan’s lunar well of unresolved passion can now blossom more fully into the world, but the ability to manage it skillfully is something that grows over time. Currently, Evan is concerned that his line of work won’t be received as “legitimate.” He fears that he may not be able to support a family doing something unconventional – the very pattern he is learning to resolve. Nevertheless, he is very excited about the further awakening of his 5th-house Sun in Aquarius and the ongoing process of aligning with his deeper truth.



Summary and Conclusion

Astrology focuses our attention on the heavens and the wondrous possibilities of an ensouled cosmos. However, it is often used to cater to our ego preferences and may prolong our stay in the dream of separation. In our dualistic world, almost everything is divided into categories of positive or negative, male or female, and these comprehensive divisions are understandable. We must develop our egos and learn to

survive and thrive before we can awaken to a larger dimension of experience. No one would argue that dealing with duality is an important facet of human experience, as we learn much about ourselves, particularly in relationship to others. The Moon is Earth's closest neighbor and encircles it, a vivid portrayal of the separate self as our initial orientation.

Through the relative lens of mind, we tend to see ourselves as humans having a spiritual experience, but through the spiritual lens, we are *souls having human experiences*. What if spiritual evolution is primary, and the movement from unconsciousness to greater awareness is what we incarnate to experience? In that case, our adornment in a male or female body suit for our Earth school adventure — as well as all aspects of our human identity — would be of secondary importance. Therefore, the view that the luminaries relate primarily to gender and only secondarily to consciousness would need to be reversed.

With Uranus and Jupiter approaching the sign of Aries, we are now at the dawn of a new (Aries) philosophical understanding (Jupiter) of astrology (Uranus). Of course, when something new is proposed in any field of knowledge, there is a process of review and debate, and I encourage and welcome this discussion wholeheartedly. As astrologers, we are in a favorable and important position, because our cherished discipline is capable of lighting the way forward. There are very few methodologies that can symbolize and illuminate the largely unconscious ego and point the way beyond it. It is my sincere hope that the way we practice astrology can be renewed with this goal in mind.

In addition to the astrological debate I'm proposing in this article, there is now a more pressing need to shift our primary focus to a transpersonal connection with Spirit. Our collective dream of separation has brought humanity perilously close to annihilation. We have been plaguing the planet and its people with materialism, environmental degradation, greed, corruption, and endless suffering. Our strategies are no longer sustainable, and we are rapidly depleting many natural resources. Perhaps this is part of the shift of consciousness associated with 2012 and the attention surrounding the Mayan Calendar. The good news? It may not be that difficult to become aware of the ego. This awareness is, after all, simply the natural course of maturation for our species.

The process of spiritual awakening requires us to dive into our watery foundation (Moon) and come to terms with what we're holding on to — our core beliefs, stories, and driving needs. Then, we can rise from this familiar egoic trance into the blazing clarity of awareness emblematic of the Sun. Spiritual awakening is the process of connecting our beautiful, imperfect humanness (Moon) to the endless creativity and sustenance of our spiritual source (Sun).

Chart Data and Source

"Evan," February 14, 1982; 9:52 p.m. CET; Vienna, Austria (48°N13^, 16°E20^); AA: birth certificate in hand.

References and Notes

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CHART CAPTION:

“Evan”

Porphyry houses, True Node