

A Question of Fire: The Elements and Signs in Astrology

by Pat Geisler

Fire, earth, air, and water are the fundamental building blocks of the universe as seen through the astrologer's eyes. They are the same ones the material scientist calls plasma, solids, gas and liquids.

They have a role in the outer, actual stuff of reality as well as symbolic and non-material, inner reality of the human experience. Each of the zodiac signs is said to manifest one of these modes of being. Each mode of being or sign of the zodiac is a vast subject and these are merely thumbnail sketches of them.

- **Fire** is the active, physical part of human nature. It is the heart of mankind, with its bravery and its daring and its struggle to move ahead. It is self-involved and full of energy for work or play. Those born under fire have a dauntless nature and a mission to forge new ground, to find new loves and new understandings.
- **Earth** is primarily the practical, concrete manifestations of nature. It is that which we call solid or real and people born under one of the earth signs have those qualities as part of their fundamental nature. Their task in life will have something to do with building, or founding or shaping, or manipulating something important in life, whether it is an actual building or a business.
- **Air**, on the other, hand, is social and mental, given to the play of ideas and information and the exchanges between people that we call human relations. Those born under air have a mission to fulfill in terms of knowing and learning about the world and sharing that knowledge with others.
- **Water** expresses the sympathetic, emotional side of nature, with its instinct for compassion and nurture. Water weeps for the woes and rejoices in the glad things of the world and understands the feelings of others in a special way. It is empathetic and creative, tapping into the vast subconscious nature where human doubts and fears and desires lie.

Each of the 12 signs of the zodiac reflects one of the four ways of action as its primary manifestation. It is not, of course, all there is to a human being, who is far more complex than any sign, but it tells us something important about ourselves.

- Aries, Leo and Sagittarius are the fire signs.
- Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn are the earth signs.
- Gemini, Libra and Aquarius are the air signs.
- Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces are the three water signs.

The Fire Signs

Aries, first of the fire signs, is the sign of beginnings, the start of life, the first sperm to reach its goal and the first breath of the individual. It is sunrise and the hunt for a new day and new things. It is daring and hasty and strong as it reaches past what 'is' to what might

be. It sparks life, but the process of fulfilling that promise belongs elsewhere in the zodiac. Aries is the initiator, the “me” of the zodiac.

Leo, second of the fire signs, is the defender. It is the sign that rules the heart, which reaches out to other 'MEs' in the zodiac with love and seeks the warmth of commitment. It rules the ways in which we express ourselves creatively as well as our creative outlets. It also rules the children we have, who are our gifts to the world.

Sagittarius, the third fire sign, burns with the desire to see beyond the horizon and to seek the adventures of the mind and the spirit. Sagittarius takes knowledge and gives it meaning. It takes data and creates opinion. It takes words and makes stories. It goes beyond merely scooping up information into the realm of education and lifts a luminous lamp beside the door of becoming.

The Earth Signs

Taurus, first of the earth signs, deals with the form-giving ability of nature in its beginnings and the fertility of the soil and the creatures of the earth. It symbolizes the value we place on material possessions and objects and its quality is endurance. It deals with sound and substance, shape and construction, the senses and survival. It is things that last. It is the strength and beauty of the body.

Virgo, second of the earth signs, has discrimination as its quality. It applies order and efficiency to the world and rules the ability to function properly. It takes all small things and puts them where they belong, whether in the abstract, such as information, or in a concrete way, such as books. It is concerned with health, thus with herbs and foods that are needed for healing or keeping the body operating well.

Capricorn, third of the earth signs, rules fatherhood and is responsible for security and the stability of society in which the individual lives. It deals with the shared duties and obligations of the individual to society and society to the individual. It rules the concept of social order and the role the individual fulfills in that order as part of its description. It is the long legacy of mankind's efforts to become greater than before and to reach goals together. It is history and heritage, justice and judgment.

The Air Signs

Gemini is the sign that scoops up knowledge and information. It is the gatherer. Those with a sun, moon or rising sign in Gemini share in this drive to know and to share what they know with others. Gemini deals with the ability to speak, to write and to communicate, either in person, at a distance (telephone, radio and mail), or physically, via the road or the sidewalks. It deals with people one meets in one's immediate environment.

Libra takes what it knows and uses it to establish close relationships between people, particularly in partnership areas. It is the selective sign that deals with the need for

principles of behavior with others that are fair and equitable. It uses social and mental skills to accomplish those goals. It deals with people one a one-to-one basis and with those who are strangers.

Aquarius deals with the need to find common bonds with all others. It is the sign of the group, or one's peers, those whom we have independently chosen to invite into our world. It also tells us about relating to large groups of people and the sign takes the principles of human interaction and applies them to the broader society. It builds on what has gone before and is the sign of tomorrow and the inventions of new things.

The Water Signs

Cancer, the first of the water signs, is that of the mother, whose nurture, care and feeding provide the basis for our early and most lasting stability in life. It symbolizes the vast ocean of life from which we come. It is the sign of the family, and the need all humans have for roots and belonging and a place of their own. It deals with nutrition, whether the food is actual calories or the emotional or spiritual nourishment the individual craves.

Scorpio is the sign that tells us about the need to endure trauma in life in order to grow and mature as well as pass the torch on to the next generation. It is the sign of emotional depths and struggles as humans deal with such difficult issues as sex, reproduction, pain and death. It is also a sign that forces us to explore common resources and their link to our emotional lives. It is death and taxes and all inescapable experiences.

Pisces, third of the water signs, is about the world of the unseen. It deals with the inner successes and failures of life and the institutions that correct or repair the damages we have incurred along the way of becoming. It has to do with hospitals and secrets as well as the mystical and spiritual aspirations of the human soul. It is the sign of illusion and confusion and things that are not what they seem.

Earth and water are said to be the feminine or receptive signs. Fire and air are the active or masculine ones. They are organized in this way to show the principles of action and reaction. Neither can exist without the other. All are found in the horoscopes of every human born on the earth.

Our mission in life, if we choose to accept it, is to manifest in our own lives the qualities of all 12 signs. From A to Z, from Aries to Pisces, we enter life as an "I" and conclude with the reformation of Pisces. We may examine ourselves in the private quiet moments of old age to see how well we have done and discover it is never too late to change.