

## **Being on Time: Basic Electional Astrology** by Bruce Scofield

One of the many branches of astrology that have come down to us since the times of the Greeks and Romans is the one called electional astrology. To elect to do something is to choose to do something. The word “election” is used in a general sense here, not in the political sense that we are more familiar with. Perhaps a better way to define this branch of astrology would be to call it the astrology of choice and timing. While this branch of astrology can be quite complex, utilizing all the sophisticated predictive techniques available to astrologers, there are some general principles that anyone can apply to their daily life. These ideas and techniques, presented in this short article, can help make a person's life run more smoothly and successfully.

There are two ways of looking at electional astrology. One is rooted in the old, and now very dangerous, Western notion that man can and must subdue the environment. From this perspective, electional astrology is the art of finding the moments when we can more easily get what we want or change things to our way of thinking. In other words, this perspective is life-manipulating. The other view is more ecological and concerned with tuning in to the cosmic environment around us. From this perspective, the positions of the planets are guides that show us where we are in the ongoing creation of the universe and just what kinds of actions are most appropriate at the time. It is from this perspective that electional astrology becomes a way of harmony and attunement, a use of astrology that is appropriate for the 21st century.

We all live on the earth and the earth is surrounded by moving objects in the sky. As life evolved, it no doubt found the rhythms of the Sun, Moon and planets convenient pegs to build on. That this is so is proven by the correspondences between the lunar cycle and mammalian fertility cycles, a woman's menstrual cycle being the most obvious connection. Other more subtle rhythms known as circadian cycles keep the body regulated and control development in many forms of life. The fact of the matter is that we are biologically attuned to the movements of the planets, they are within us. If this is so, then it stands to reason that there may be better times to do things and that these times will be shown by the planets.

Of primary importance for life on this planet is the cycle of the Sun and Moon. We use this cycle in counting time and we call it a month. In times past, our more rural ancestors kept track of the Sun/Moon cycle and timed their agricultural activities accordingly. They had learned that the dark of the new Moon was a good time for some things, while the light of the full Moon was better for others. The phases of the Moon, were considered of great importance and these were published in almanacs. Today, the phases of the Moon survive on many calendars, though most people have no idea of how to use them.

A few general rules about the Sun/Moon cycle that have come down to us from earlier times still have value. The New Moon, the beginning of the cycle, is a time of beginnings. This is the time to establish foundations, to plant your seeds, so to speak. The first quarter is a time of crisis and requires action and adjustments. At the full Moon the cycle comes to its climax and things are now ripe and ready to be separated from the stem. The fourth quarter, like the first, represents a time of crisis, though more one of choice and decision. Knowing where the lunar cycle falls in the calendar should be a fundamental key to planning events.

In using the lunar cycle, keep in mind that anything started right on the quarters is likely to suffer from incompatible elements. For example, a marriage set for a day on which the Moon is at first or third quarter, may prove to be troublesome. These points are times of crisis and adjustment, not times of stability and harmony that are more appropriate to such an event. Although marriage at the full Moon can be successful if both partners are able to understand and accept major compromises, it might be better to schedule a marriage for the time between the new Moon and the first quarter, or between the first quarter and the full Moon. These periods, that lie in the first

half of the lunar cycle, the waxing half, represent growth and uplift. Marriages that occur in the second, or waning, half are not necessarily bad, it's just that they occur in a period when growth energies have become matured. Marriages that take place during this half of the cycle are often more realistic, conscious marriages -- and this may be more appropriate for second marriages or marriages between persons who are prepared to make heavy compromises. In other words, with the exception of the quarters, a marriage anywhere in the lunar cycle can be good, but the distinction between the first and second half should be considered depending on who is getting married. This idea can be applied to more than just marriages, of course.

The lunar cycle, then, is a guide for life attunement. We should strive to start things near the new Moon and harvest at the full. Very often the full Moon is the best time for reaching agreements and compromises. Just look at the news around the time of a full Moon and notice how many decisions are being made. Businesses, or other activities where bargaining and choosing are essential, seem to do well when they open or begin existence around the time of the full Moon. I often suggest to my business clients that they schedule important meetings around the full Moon as it symbolizes a time of insight and understanding. Perhaps this is so because the full Moon is illuminating, and early life forms used this light to reach out and contact others, as in mating, at this point in the cycle. For whatever reason, the full Moon still seems to influence us and under its influence we move toward contact and merging.

Another important cycle we should all watch has to do with the planet Mercury. Three times a year this planet slows down and comes to a stop. It then begins to move in a backwards direction for about three weeks, stops again and returns to forward motion. About two weeks later it passes the point that it began this strange movement. Of course, Mercury does not really move backwards in the zodiac, this is only how it appears from the Earth's perspective. But this motion certainly does affect all of us to some extent. This motion is called retrograde motion, and although all the planets (though not the Sun and Moon) do it at times, Mercury's retrograde periods are far more frequent and very potent.

When Mercury moves retrograde we enter a time when communications enter a critical period. It's as if the transfer of information becomes too great and we begin to function less efficiently. Very frequently, plane crashes, usually the result of some communication glitch, occur when Mercury stops and begins to retrograde, or when it stops again and begins to move forward. Also, it is not unusual to find news of great winds or wind storms in the news. These points when Mercury is motionless, called its stations, are times when communications should be handled very carefully. Announcements made during this time often fail to reach their goals, almost as if the receivers are so flooded that they can't process any extra information.

If the above is true, then we should attune ourselves to this planetary rhythm and not push for major communication breakthroughs while Mercury is retrograde. If we need to say something, both in small and large ways, that we may have not said before, it may be wisest to postpone such announcements until Mercury gets going again. Perhaps the best time for brand new messages is right at the point where Mercury passes its first station, this being about two weeks after it begins to move forward or direct. What we should do while Mercury is retrograde is finish things. We should go over what we have said, or written, or created, and look for ways to improve the quality of our communication. Mercury retrograde is a time for re-writing, re-doing, reviewing checking and proofreading. It is a time for thinking about the way we reach out and connect with our world -- but not a time for making drastic new changes in this regard.

In an ideal sense, we should follow the Mercury retrograde pattern in the following way. About a week before Mercury stations and begins to retrograde, we should cease to put out new information. For most this means no new announcements, commitments to travel plans, car purchases, etc. As Mercury begins to retrograde we should get out our unfinished business,

particularly as it relates to things ruled by Mercury, including cars, bicycles, phones, typewriters, computers, paperwork, electronic gadgets, watches, etc. Call old friends, re-read an old book, clean out the car or walk down an old path -- these are activities that are appropriate at this point, and they can help deepen our often superficial relationships to the world around us. As Mercury stations again and begins to move forward, we should complete our unfinished work and get ready to move into some new life patterns. As Mercury passes its first station, we should make decisions and announcements, finalize plans for travel or car purchases and generally return to normal.

Although Mercury retrogrades three times a year, it does so in different signs. If it happens to retrograde in your Sun signs or Ascendant sign, its effects will be quite powerful. In general, its motion will be felt strongest by the signs Gemini and Virgo, the signs ruled by Mercury. If you have the Sun or Ascendant in one or both of these signs, you will always experience Mercury retrograde powerfully. Where these signs are located in your birth chart, that is the houses that they rule, will show you where you are likely to be most affected by this retrograde.

A third kind of cycle that affects all of us are the diurnal cycles of the planets. We are all familiar with the diurnal cycle of the Sun because this cycle defines the day. At dawn the Sun rises, crossing the horizon. It climbs in the sky to its highest point, called its upper culmination, descends and sets in the west and, finally, reaches its lower culmination beneath the Earth before it rises again. What most people don't know is that each planet has its own diurnal cycle. Every day, Mars does just what the Sun does, but because its light is so faint, we don't see it except at night. But it still has an effect on us and knowledge of it's, as well as the other planets, diurnal cycle can be a tool in personal attunement to the cosmic world around us.

During each day, the planets all go through their cycle around us. When Mars rises, things often get very active or a bit stressed for a period of about 15 or 20 minutes. If one were to open a business at such a time, it could either be a very active business or it could be plagued with conflicts. Experience seems to show that when a business that deals with Mars things, such as an athletic store, an army surplus store, or a karate school, opens up when Mars is rising (or at the other three points), it tends to be successful. The nature of the activity fits the nature of the planet. A wedding under this planet's influence would be inappropriate. In general, Jupiter is such a positive influence that anything started under tends to thrive. I have noticed that people actually become more generous as Jupiter rises, culminates, sets and reaches lower culmination. Saturn at one of these points suggests conservatism and delays -- but this may be appropriate to an event that needs a long time to mature. It's all in how well you understand the nature of what you want to do.

We can use knowledge of the diurnal cycles when we must select a specific time to begin a project. Suppose, for example, we must select a time for a wedding. Having first considered the lunar cycle as outlined above, we would then look for a time when the planet Venus or the planet Jupiter, both appropriate for weddings, are either rising or setting or at upper or lower culmination. How do we do this? One way is to simply determine the sign that either of these planets will be in on the day of the wedding and make sure that sign is rising at the time of the ceremony. You could do this using a table of rising signs or one of many computer programs available from Astrolabe. Another way to find this information is by using an annual publication called *Valliere's Natural Cycles Almanac*.\*

The *Natural Cycles Almanac*, which has been around since the early 1970s, contains graphs that will allow you to determine the key points of any planet's diurnal cycle very easily. There is a graph for each month, the days being listed vertically and the hours horizontally. The planets' rising, setting, upper and lower culmination positions are shown as lines. Periods of time that Jim Valliere, the author of the almanac, deems positive are shaded in gray. For most people, simply

locating an event's beginning within the shaded time would be sufficient. There are a number of ways to use the almanac and some of these are explained in the text that accompanies it.

The three techniques outlined above will certainly help anyone who takes the time to improve the general timing of their lives. In acknowledging the rhythms of the cosmic environment, and attuning ourselves to them, we become like farmers who improve nature through careful and thoughtful cultivation. This is the essence of electional astrology -- it is a way that works with nature, not against it.

For those who wish to learn more about electional astrology, my book *The Timing of Events: Electional Astrology* is available from Astrolabe. It is quite technical, however, and is recommended for serious astrologers.

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\**Valliere's Natural Cycles Almanac* can be ordered directly from Astrolabe.