

## Above And Below: Correspondence In Astrology

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“ That which is above is like that which is below, and that which is below is like that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of one thing. ”

**Hermes Trismegistus**

### Above and Below

By virtue of the Hermetic principle ‘As above, so below,’ all things in the sub-lunary realm *correspond*, as we say, with the celestial order of the heavens. This is the first article of astrology. But this is not a conclusive and self-sufficient correspondence, for the simple reason that the celestial order is itself, like the things of the sub-lunary realm, *created* and is not, therefore, either a cause or an end of terrestrial manifestation. Whether the ‘above’ of the stars acts as a *secondary* cause to events on earth ‘below’ is another matter, chiefly of concern to practitioners of the lower forms of the astrological arts, but, more importantly, all things whatsoever, whether terrestrial or celestial, have their cause and end beyond themselves in the Uncreated, and the axiom refers to this as much as to any causal connection between Earth and Sky. The celestial order, that is to say, consists of contingencies as much as the sub-lunary order, so that the correspondence between the two orders does not have its beginning in either of them and any notion that the stars “influence” events on earth can only be part of the story. Although the Hermetic axiom frames a cosmology—Hermeticism taking the historical form of a cosmology able to naturalize itself in several traditional orders, pagan, Christian and Muslim—there is an *above* that is beyond both Earth and Sky and to which both Earth *and* Sky are therefore *below*. Beyond the cosmological correspondence between Earth and Sky the axiom refers to a metaphysical truth, namely the correspondence between the Uncreated Principle and all its manifestations, or between the Divine and the mortal, the Uncreate and the created, the Unmanifest and the manifest. The Divine is the *above* and the created—including the celestial order—is the *below*. It is this correspondence that generates the others. Simply put, God’s creations reveal God, and it is only for that reason that one contingent order, by way of participation with God’s relationship to His creations, can *correspond* to another, bearing in mind, of course, that, from the “higher” point of view, God’s creations are not God Himself and that God is in no way changed or effected by His manifestations which are only, as Plato put it, the *best possible likenesses* of Him. This is to say that, while an effect has a necessary relation of correspondence to its Cause, it cannot itself be its Cause. The correspondence between the celestial and the sub-lunary realms, therefore, only comes about because the two realms share a common order, and this is because they share a common Source, a single Creator Who transcends them both. The symbol of this relation in man’s visible universe is the relation between the darkness beyond the stars and all visible things. The darkness beyond is above vis a vis the entire visible realm *below*. The darkness, in this case, represents the Unmanifest and the visible the manifest. This is a simple way of explaining how it is that modern astrologers have forgotten the

metaphysical basis of their science; they only see the stars and have no regard for the eternal ground of darkness against which the stars appear. It is in relation to that eternal darkness that the ancient Greek cosmologists said that Hades—the *underworld*—“extends from the milky way downwards,” since what is *under* is obviously relative to what one takes as being *over*. There is, in any case like this, a principle of *ratio* and *proportion* involved, and to lose sight of it is to fall into metaphysical confusion and to start supposing that the stars have, in themselves, some miraculous power over the mundane realm. The same comments must be made concerning man when taken as a microcosm. The Hermetic doctrine is applicable in that instance too, although the more exact metaphor to be employed in that case is ‘As without, so within’. Man encapsulates the universe as microcosm to macrocosm, but this can only be so because there is a common point beyond both realms at which that duality is resolved. One *corresponds* to the other because they have the same Cause, the same Creator, Who is *above* His creation *below*.

### **The Whole and its Parts**

Another important point that needs to be clarified in regards to this is the relationship between the whole and its parts. It is precisely because God is unaffected by His creations, and by the act of creating them, and so is therefore eternally unmoved and undiminished, that He reveals Himself in both the totality of His manifestations and in every particular manifestation, in the whole and in the least of its parts. This is why, as Blake put it, there is a world to be seen in a wildflower and a heaven in a grain of sand. The particularities of the cosmos are only particulars from the human, which is to say the contingent, point of view. From the *transcendent* view-point the distinction between universal and particular disappears just as do such distinctions as subject and object. God is One, and if the universe appears to be *many*, it is not so when considered from the perspective of God’s Unity, which is indivisible. God is fully Immanent in His creation and the whole of His Being infuses the least part of it. This is in no way a “pantheistic” doctrine, because its obverse is equally true, namely that God is utterly remote from His creation and cannot be found in either the cosmos as a whole or in any of its parts; rather, it is simply to state that God is Omnipresent, which is an entirely orthodox teaching, the heresy of pantheism, as is the nature of heresies, affording this teaching an exclusive truth without proper regard for the paradoxes that are inherent in the human point of view. To conceive of God as Immanent without, at the same time, conceiving of Him as Transcendent is, in fact, to fail to recognize the human viewpoint for what it is and thus rob God of His total Otherness and Incomparability.

### **Likenesses and Identification**

To speak of correspondences is nevertheless not only to speak of likenesses but also, at some level, identification. As God is *above*, so is His creation *below*. Plato expressed this by describing the two in terms of divine paradigm and mortal copy, idea and artifact.<sup>1</sup> But for God in His Unmanifest aspect, of course, there is no “above” and “below”; no relativisms whatsoever. The only Reality the cosmos can enjoy is His. This is the sense in which the whole created realm is *maya*, illusion, for it is Nothing in relation to God’s All; yet, to restate the same paradox as before in another way, it is also the sense in which the whole created realm is ‘Every-thing’ in relation to God’s ‘No-thing,’ since the fact that we cannot see God, or touch God, and that He is not obvious to us, but an invisible, incorporeal Being—the fact over which the atheist stumbles—is a necessary quality of God’s Creation too. The consequence of this for the doctrine of correspondences is that, finally, all things correspond to all other things, all is in sympathy, just as all the points on the circumference of a circle are, while distinct from one another from one point of view, finally interchangeable with each other because each is nothing more than a “projection” of the one point at the center. In

theory, then, all particular manifestations are interchangeable with all others, all points of Multiplicity are identical to all other points, and in this way they resolve themselves into Unity. We can only say *once more* into Unity, metaphorically. It is only for convenience's sake—because we must speak as creatures—that we speak of sequential events, cause and effect, when speaking of the Divine and it is only for convenience's sake—a purely human convenience—that we differentiate various modes of God's Being, Manifest and Unmanifest, Immanent and Transcendent.

### **The Nature of Correspondence**

Given that astrology is a wisdom that addresses a cosmic order of symbolism that is especially adequate as a manifest revelation of the Uncreated—although in theory, following from what has just been said, it is, strictly speaking, no more or less adequate than any other in itself, the adequacy referring only to the human predicament—the astrologer must be constantly aware of these doctrines and their implications. In particular, inasmuch as the astrological art involves discerning correspondences, the very nature of *correspondence* and its metaphysical basis must be kept in mind lest correspondences are only half-discerned, as it were, which is the road by which a sacred science such as astrology readily degenerates into a superstition and a sham.<sup>2</sup> To half discern correspondences is like noticing that two points on the circumference of a circle are akin as points, without also noticing that this is true of *all* such points and without paying any regard to the point at the center of the circle by virtue of which all circumference points are akin, or, to extend the illustration, it is like noticing that two radii of a circle point in a similar direction without also noticing that this is true of all radii and that the similarity exists only by virtue of the fact that all radii converge in a common center where similarity becomes identity. To use a simple example, it is one thing to note a correspondence between the Sun in the celestial order and a particular manifestation in the sub-lunary order such as, say, a sunflower, but it is another to realize what it is that these two things *ultimately* have in common and, as well, to realize that, theoretically at least, *all* manifestations in the sublunary order have a correspondence with the Sun, as with all the other planets. It is never finally enough to ask of what planetary nature is such and such a thing, as if the things of the world could be neatly compartmentalized into seven planetary boxes; *similarity points to identity*; the real *correspondence* between the Sun and a sunflower lies in the Being of God and not in the things, qua *things*; as *things*, rather, they manifest only *difference*, which is the difference inherent in manifestation—Multiplicity—*itself*. This fact explains the experience of all astrologers at a particular point in their development; there comes a time when similarities appear, often in lightning-fast sequences of associations, everywhere, and the astrologer is overwhelmed by a profusion of correspondences that are so broadly interconnected and widely interchangeable that nothing intelligent can be said of them at all; all is confusion. The astrologer may note, for example, that while the correspondence between the Sun and a sunflower is immediately obvious, on further consideration the sunflower, as seen in its yellow petals, its upright 'dignity' and so on, partakes of the nature and has the qualities of the planet Jupiter. While these qualities appear to be distinct, he may then note certain things about the flower that could justify describing it as Mercurial, and then as Saturnine or Martial or Venusian or even Lunar. Referring to the sphere of the fixed stars and the twelve zodiacal signs is no better, for sufficient contemplation will eventually reveal that the sunflower "belongs" to and has the qualities of them all.<sup>3</sup> This experience is only to be expected. After observing astrological correspondences for some time, the astrologer suddenly comes under the sway, as it were, of a centrifugal attraction towards Unity and Identity. Suddenly, all he sees are similarities that together lead into an interconnectedness that is very quickly beyond being encompassed with the ordinary operations of the mind. This is not an unusual or a profound experience in most

cases; rather, it presents itself as a maze in which the mind may become well and truly lost, a period of confusion in which, since everything corresponds with everything else, there is no point in observing correspondences at all. Since the things of Multiplicity are indefinite in number—the cosmic indefinitude being an “image” (to continue with Platonic terminology) of the Infinity of God—this is the experience out of which arises various syncretic ‘occultisms’ that are characterized by a hopelessly confused interconnectedness. On the other hand, it is out of this experience, which is at once a dissolution and a crystallization of possibilities—the *solve et coagula* of the alchemists—that there arises the opportunity for a true synthesis, which is none other than the experience of the One. It becomes all-important, in fact, to pursue all correspondences to Unity, because it is only by knowledge of the One that the reality of a correspondence can be judged.

### **The Unitive Experience**

This brings us to the Unitive experience that is, properly considered, the ultimate aim of the contemplation of the symbolism of astrology and the experience that confers upon astrology its sacred status. In a world in which all things finally correspond to each other, without reference to *that through which they correspond* it is impossible to establish any criterion of truth; on its own and to the everyday consciousness of man the world is an abyss of relativisms that have a semblance of an order that is ungraspable. Einstein was right when he quipped that “the universe is not only queerer than we think, but queerer than we can think” provided we understand by his words that it is merely *human* thought for which this is the case.<sup>4</sup> The Unitive experience—when the *sameness* that gives correspondences their verisimilitude is realized not in particular cases but in *itself*, when the world is seen in a wildflower and heaven seen in a grain of sand- necessarily employs a supra-human ‘faculty,’ an *intuition*. The ratiocinative mind cannot grasp the One since the created cannot encompass its Almighty Creator. Only God (Immanent) can know God (Transcendent). Intuition, on the other hand, is defined as the uncreated faculty that perceives the Uncreate. It is the intuition that perceives the Immanent ‘now’ and ‘here’ in (and simultaneously ‘beyond’) the realm of time and space. The more fully developed this intuition, the more able is the astrologer to discern true correspondences.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the sunflower, to continue with that example, it is the ratiocinative mind that is finally led to the conclusion that the flower’s qualities are indicative of all astrological symbols interchangeably. It is the intuition—“intuition” because it involves a sudden leap out of the confines of time and space -that is capable of synthesizing this profusion of interconnectedness into Unity, revealing the true uniqueness of the flower, which is its *image* of the “Uniqueness of the Unique.” Being uncreated itself, however, it should be stressed that it may be misleading to describe this intuition as a “faculty”; it does not involve in any way any exertion of the human will; rather it is entirely *receptive* and in order to “develop” it one must submit oneself to the Divine Will and place oneself as a mirror, so to speak, under the rays of Divine Illumination. It is, that is to say, an *inspiration*, and it is finally inspiration upon which astrology depends, even in the art’s baser prognostic forms.

### **Axial Symbolism**

The Hermetic axiom quoted at the outset, it will be noticed, explains itself in terms of a vertical symbolism. This, in view of the above comments, deserves some final consideration. If we were to extend it to a symbolism with two coordinates instead of only one, that is, the symbolism of the cross, every ‘below’ is then a horizontal set at right angles to the vertical axis and which the vertical axis intersects. If the ‘above’ is the Creator and the ‘below’ the spatio-temporal cosmos, the horizontal axis of the cross symbolizes the indefinite extension of the cosmos. Considered without any reference to the vertical axis that actually defines it,

this ‘horizontal world’ is an endless labyrinth. Man’s spiritual realization depends not upon fumbling around in this labyrinth, but in transcending it, which entails movement upon the vertical axis *up*. In terms of the horizontal, the point at which the two axes intersect is a *center*, and developing the intuitive faculty is, considered in terms of this type of representation, a return to that center where, *simultaneously*, the Holy Spirit descends and the soul of man soars heavenward. It is at that central point, which is, of course, immanent to every point in space and every moment in time, that the full implications of ‘As above, so below’ will be revealed. This type of axial representation is, furthermore, part of the formal symbolism of astrology since these two axes are what the horizon and the meridian represent respectively in the geocentric universe.<sup>6</sup> An astrologer “reads” a chart of the heavens in these axial terms.<sup>7</sup> The final truth revealed in any chart of the heavens, such charts encapsulating as they do a *here* and a *now* (or then), is not to be discovered, however, in either axis but rather in the point at which they meet. Just as the darkness beyond the stars is finally the most profound of the celestial symbols, so the most profound of astrology’s formal symbols is the point at the center of a chart of the sky. There, in natal astrology, is the true mystery of Personhood to be contemplated. It is the Uniqueness of the Unique and Uncreated point at the center of the chart, and not the other configurations of symbols *that merely point to it*, that the true astrologer “divines.” Standing contemplating the open heavens rather than a chart, this point is within the astrologer himself and to “divine” it in that case is to “Know thyself!” which, as the ancient mysteries taught, is finally to say to God, acknowledging the ultimate paradox of the human state, “Thou art!”

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Plato’s *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus*, by the way, is the true fountainhead of integral Western astrological thought. The world-view of the Locrian described in this work is profoundly astrological. In the Middle Ages this constituted a sacred cosmology; the *Timaeus* of Plato was the *physica*, the *Book of Genesis* the *littera*.

<sup>2</sup> This is clearly the condition of this sacred science in our own time; its modern practice is devoid of solid metaphysical foundations. Jungian psychology and the theory of “synchronicity” have played a conspicuous role in deflecting more serious students of astrology from traditional sources and the metaphysical truth to which their “language” of astrological symbols refers.

<sup>3</sup> Zodiacal and planetary correspondences are inherently interchangeable according to the astrological formulae:  $3 \times 4 = 12$  and  $3 + 4 = 7$ .

<sup>4</sup> These days it is necessary to add here that this view of the limitations of the human has nothing in common with so-called “Trans-humanism,” a recent cult of science that regards it to be man’s duty and destiny to transcend his biology by the means of machines. They would seek to transcend human intelligence with “machine intelligence,” specifically breaching the man-machine “barrier.” This newly-emerging creed of high-tech scientism is, in fact, the antithesis—a Promethean parody—of the doctrine being outlined here. “Machine intelligence” can only ever amount to the disproportionate exaggeration of some feature or features of human intelligence; it is quite impossible to “transcend” the human condition by such derivative means. Transcendence, rather, lies in participating in a supra-human intelligence from which we are derivative. The distinction is a simple one. Trans-humanism, especially when it boasts that “we can now transcend the human condition as the religions of the world have always dreamed” and such like, engages in systematically violating this distinction.

5 In terms of Plato's cosmology this amounts to the art of discerning the Similar and the Different.

6 The modern manner of drawing a chart of the heavens is symbolically incorrect. The modern chart is round; the traditional chart was square, emphasizing this rectilinear symbolism. The square, that is, expresses the geocentric viewpoint. The round chart implies a heavenly, not geocentric, perspective.

7 The modern manner of reading a chart of the heavens in these axial terms is at odds with that known to the ancients. Modern Western astrology—largely the reinvention of Theosophists of the nineteenth century—places an undue emphasis on the horizon, the Ascendant/Descendant axis. In ancient astrology it was the “Midheaven” axis that was regarded as most significant and the key to interpretation. The Ascendant, to give a brief account of the traditional symbolism represents the external aspects of the native, the Midheaven the inner. The modern astrologers are baffled by this high regard for the Midheaven in ancient sources since, to their mind, it only represents the “career” of the native. In fact, this is a profanation of the traditional notion of “vocation.” The Midheaven signifies vocation which is, in a traditional order, synonymous with “spiritual path.” The so-called “Equal House System” of drawing a chart—by far the most common method used in modern times—expressly violates the axial symbolism described here. The widespread adoption of the “Equal House System”—in which the cusp of the tenth House may or may not coincide with the Midheaven—is, with the exception of the introduction of the extra-Saturnian bodies, responsible for eroding even a residual understanding of astrology's most basic symbols among its modern practitioners. Ancient methods, in contrast, were all so-called “Quadrant” systems that begin with the cross of horizon/meridian.

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