The Seven Traditional Planets - Do They Correspond to Mathematical Principles?

by Ray Grasse

If the planets are truly "archetypes," or universal principles, it's natural to wonder whether they might relate to fundamental principles found in other symbolic systems.

For example, over the years I've wondered whether the seven traditional planets could be equated with certain basic mathematical functions.

Consider the essential meanings associated with the planets and the following elements of math and see if you don't find the correspondences intriguing:

Venus = *addition*
Jupiter = *multiplication*
Mars = *division*
Saturn = *subtraction*
Sun = *power*
Moon = *square root*

What about Mercury? One possibility is that it doesn't relate as much to any specific function as it does to the *essence of mathematics itself,* which—like thinking—is founded on the principle of relationship, on the "ratio" between two or more quantities. (Note, too, how the word "ratio" is at the root of *rationality*.)

Let's take a closer look at these correspondences for what they might suggest.

Recall how in traditional astrology Venus is referred to as the "Lesser Benefic," while Jupiter is considered to be the "Greater Benefic." This presents an interesting analog to the mathematical functions of addition and multiplication and the ways each of these "expand" on something.

For instance, if you *add* the numbers 3 and 7, you simply get 10. But if you *multiply* those two, you get 21—a considerably greater amount. As such, multiplication represents a "greater" form of expansion, whereas addition represents a "lesser" form of expansion. (Notice, too, how Venus is associated with love, which is generally thought of as the *adding* of two beings together; while Jupiter could be equated with the expansion of that couple via procreation into other living beings—as in "go forth and *multiply*....").

Likewise, one of the astrological qualities commonly associated with Mars is *divisiveness*, and the tendency to "cut into." That's a feature that equates well with the mathematical principle of division, whereby one quantity "cuts into" another—as if with a knife—thus splitting that original quantity into two or more quantities beyond that initial one.

But whereas Mars represents the ability to "cut into," Saturn is more often known as the ability to *cut out,* or *cut away*. Fittingly, a common association of Saturn is that of "loss" (sometimes symbolized as the Grim Reaper bearing his scythe), which obviously implies something being *subtracted* from one's life.

But what about the Sun and the mathematical function of "power" (an association I first heard from the Kriya Yoga teacher Shelly Trimmer)? Unlike multiplication, which involves one quantity amplifying another, the mathematical principle of power relates to the amplifying of any quantity *by itself*—such as 4 to the 8th power, 10 to the 20th power, or 80 to the 3rd power. In a similar way, the Sun symbolizes the principle of self- awareness, the Leonine egoic ability to *expand upon and amplify one's own identity*. (Also, note how astronomers explain the way suns are born out of gaseous clouds in space that have become compressed back upon themselves to such a degree that the latent energy in them breaks loose and sets off a chain reaction, with light being released as a by-product.)

In contrast, the Moon represents more of an internal awareness or emotional reflectivity—and is sometimes even described, symbolically, in terms of "roots." So its association with the function of the square root is clear, since that, too, deals with the core root-essence of any quantity.

The outer planets

Where do the outer three planets Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto fit into this scheme, if at all? Interestingly, they correspond surprisingly well to the mathematical associations we saw with Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars—their allied rulers of Aquarius, Pisces, and Scorpio, of course.

Consider the relation of Mars to the principle of division and the process of "cutting into." In the case of a planetary aspect like the Mercury-Mars square, for instance, we often see a propensity for "cutting" or "divisive" speech. But much the same thing occurs with Mercury-Pluto squares, albeit expressed in more covert or subtle ways, as with sarcasm or veiled criticism.

And Neptune is expansive in a way similar to Jupiter, but with a subtle difference. For example, someone born during a Sun-Jupiter square may exhibit an exaggerated or expansive sense of identity or goal-setting; by contrast, someone born with the Sun square Neptune will also exhibit an expansive sense of identity and goals, but in a way that might be considered more diffused or sometimes even "spacey."

And while Uranus might seem to be very different from Saturn, it is actually very similar in certain respects. For example, whereas someone born with a Sun-Neptune square will tend to have a comparatively expansive or diffused sense of self, perhaps to the point of lacking clear boundaries, someone born with a Sun-Uranus square will tend to be *extremely* individualistic, with strongly defined boundaries. This Uranian concern with differentiating oneself from the crowd is a far more eliminative, Saturnine process of "subtracting" one's identity from those of others, quite unlike the blurring of boundaries seen with Neptune or Jupiter.

Final thoughts

As far as what usefulness we might draw from this symbolic cross-pollination, here are a few points to consider. For one, it could serve as a teaching tool for beginners in helping to convey the essential meanings of the planets to novice astrologers. (After all, who isn't familiar with the basic principles of math?)

On a more philosophical level, this correspondence between systems suggests that archetypal principles—wherever we find them—are, at root, simply *qualities of relationship.* In a sense, neither the archetypes nor the planets are so much "things" as *patterns of behavior,* or *ways of becoming.*

Then there's this to ponder. As I believe we've demonstrated here, there's a striking correspondence between the meanings of the planets and certain fundamental mathematical principles; but what about other solar systems, with their own sets of planets and moons? Would we discover that those systems have their own versions of "Jupiter," "Saturn," "Venus," and so on, that there is a certain archetypal commonality among all solar systems (based, perhaps, on harmonic principles á la Bode's Law)? Or would we learn that our solar system is completely unique in the way it embodies these fundamental principles?

Definitely food for Pythagorean thought!