

A QUESTION ABOUT ASPECTS

April 22, 2011

By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

I would like to discuss something with my fellow astrologers, so those of you not into looking at yourself from the perspective of astrology better skip over this post. I wear several hats here.

My topic is a dear one to all astrologers: aspects between planetary pairs. When you consider we have eight planets plus The Lights (Sun and Moon) and each body has an aspect with every other body, we soon have a lot of aspects to consider when looking at an astrological chart. Perhaps that is why over the centuries astrologers have tried to reduce the number of factors they have to consider to just the exact aspects, and each astrologer has their own idea of aspect orbs, so we won't go there in this brief presentation.

Like most of you I grew up with aspect orbs and aspect grids, painstaking filling out the grids and marking the aspects I felt were in close enough orb for me to consider them. And of course when computers came along all of this was done somewhere inside the computer and all I got was the finished aspect list. Those aspects that were not within the orbs I set were ignored and I was happy about that for the sake of making my job preparing for a reading with a client easier.

However in the last ten years or so I have done a 180 on this approach as I gradually realized I was throwing away a lot of information that was worthwhile to my client as well as to myself. It is this I want you to consider and comment on if you have an opinion. And let me start out with an analogy the points toward what I feel we are losing when we only use aspect orbs.

Let's say I am cooking dinner for you at my house and discover I am missing an ingredient or two. You volunteer to do a round trip to a store or two to pick up what we need. Now in this story the grocery stores you will visit are the exact aspects and the rest of the trip is just the circular path you are on. As it happens, your car breaks down and you phone me. I ask you where you are and you tell me you are so still some miles from the first store. No, you are not at the store (exact aspect) but you are in some definite part of the circular trip you are on. If I have to come and get you, it is helpful to know just where you actually are.

My point is that by only looking at the exact aspects between two planets (defined by an orb we set) does not tell the whole story. Suppose the pair of planets we are looking at have not reached within the orb we set or have already moved by a gnat's eyelash outside that orb. Are we just going to ignore that pair of planets? Yes, the aspect is not exact but it is closer to that aspect than to any other aspect in the whole 360-degrees of possibilities. It is in that ballpark and no other one.

Let's face it folks, every planetary pair is important. Let me rephrase that: every planet pair exists in some angular separation whether we look at it or not. It is we who ignore it for the convenience of not being overwhelmed with too much information. But what if it is a planet pair that is all about what we or our client is concerned about, let's say Mercury-Saturn and the question is about concentration. You can use your own example, but traditionally the Mercury-Saturn aspect is one place I might look for signs of disciplined thinking.

But alas, these planets are not at an aspect for which I have set orbs. Does that mean they don't exist? Does it suggest that they suddenly are not in their orbits working together as they

do 24x7? Don't I want to look at what the angular separation between the Mercury and Saturn actually is, regardless of whether it fits into some little orb bin or slot I set up? One thing I can be sure of is that this planetary pair is somewhere between one aspect I will recognize (or another), and probably closer to one or the another.

Mercury and Saturn don't just "not count" when they are between user-defined aspects. Not at all. They are chugging along doing their thing and what they are doing is what I want to find out about here. So all I have to do is look and see. Perhaps the angular separation for Mercury and Saturn is somewhere between a Square (90-degrees) and a Trine (120-degrees), perhaps closer to the Trine. This is important information. I can see the tension of the Square is fading and the ease or spaciousness of the Trine is in the immediate future.

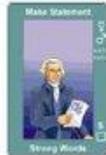
Sure, there is not an exact aspect present but the information is exact enough to be useful. I will save for another post the fact that there are two Square aspects in 360-degrees and two Trines, a waxing Square and a waning Square, and the same for Trines.

My point here is that some years ago I started listing out all aspect combinations and not just those that were within my orbs. No, I did not stop looking at orbs (this is a BOTH/AND not an EITHER/OR situation), but I started also looking at where the two planets were, regardless of whether the aspect was sloppy orb-wise or not. This habit has given me a great deal of useful information and I am kicking myself for not having done it years earlier.

In the enclosed graphic, see how I have listed all planet pairs for Mercury, not just the exact aspects. And I purposefully left out the angular separation in degrees (which I will include in the actual report) so you are forced to consider each pair. I have noted what standard aspect they are closest to.

Mercury in your Natal Chart (continuation)

Mercury
Square
Mars
(Waxing)



Make a Statement

You are often moved to commit yourself mentally, whether in words, writing, speaking, etc., and transition from potential to actuality, with a sense of overcoming obstacles and actually making a statement.

Mercury
Semisextile
Jupiter
(Waxing)



Career Plans

Skilful words, and their use, and using the mind to solve problems and find your way through life's thickets are natural to you, as is counseling or guiding others. You make plans in these areas and look to others to help you carry them out.

Mercury
Semisquare
Saturn
(Waxing)



Obstacles

Your attempts to concentrate, think deeply, and, in general, use the mind to organize or be more disciplined may be at times frustrated by all manner of distractions that might appear to hold you back. Best to move patiently ahead into clearer waters when this takes place.

Mercury
Semisquare
Uranus
(Waxing)



Insight Blocks

New ideas and mental solvency may be partially blocked from time to time, making it difficult to come up with original or insightful words and thoughts. This should be worked through, without allowing these distractions to push you off course. Keep moving forward in these areas.

Mercury
Square
Neptune
(Waning)



Public Inspiration

You have a penchant for compassionate (inspired) words that capture something of the impermanence of life, and put the best light on it. You enjoy a sense of nostalgia, and attempt to make the most of something, probably already beyond recapturing.

Mercury
Semisextile
Pluto
(Waning)



The Furnace

Your mind is like mental crucible, with thought that seeks to penetrate to the core essence, keeping only that. A seed time.