

Gender in Astrology

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Introduction

Applying the basics of astrology is central to accurate delineation and astrological prediction. It makes little difference how good you are at other things such as the use of aspects - if you get the basics wrong then your astrological work will be seriously flawed.

Two of these basics are the division of the planets and signs into masculine and feminine, and diurnal and nocturnal. Ptolemy¹ has expounded these, but it is Lilly's practical application² of them which is our concern here.

Planetary Natures

Firstly, we need to consider what Ptolemy calls the "Power of the Planets" and what has developed into their primary "natures":

	Ptolemy's "Power"	Lilly's "Nature"
Saturn	Mostly cooling, moderately drying	Cold and dry
Jupiter	Heating and humidifying	Hot and moist
Mars	Drying and burning	Hot and dry
Sun	Heating and somewhat drying	Hot and dry
Venus	Warms moderately, mostly humidifying	Cold and moist
Mercury	Drying and humidifying	Cold and dry when alone
Moon	Mostly humidifying, moderately warming	Cold and moist

¹ Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 2nd century AD, trans. F.E. Robbins, Loeb. and trans. R. Schmidt, Project Hindsight.

² William Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 1647, Regulus facsimile edition, 1985.

In this categorisation, the Sun and Moon need to be addressed separately because they are representative of the king and queen of the heavens. The Sun is the Giver of Life, the source of life in many mythologies, the Moon his consort. The Sun produces the greatest light and the Moon and planets rely on that for their own light (or light and heat). They also form the basis of other divisions of the planets – obviously that of nocturnal and diurnal – and therefore need to be given prominence.

Ptolemy explains that the Sun's power is easily recognised through observation and that the closer it approaches its zenith, the more the Earth is affected by its heat and dryness. The Moon is moist because it absorbs the *moist exhalations* from the Earth; it is warming because of the Sun's light.

Saturn's power is attributed to the fact that it is the farthest from the heat of the Sun and the moist exhalations of the Earth. The power of Mars, Ptolemy says, conforms to his fiery colour and nearness to the Sun, which is just below Mars. Jupiter is temperate because it is between Saturn and Mars and partakes of the powers of both, but its heating power is the greater, again, because the sphere of Mars lies just below his own. Venus is temperate like Jupiter, but gives moderate warmth because of her proximity to the Sun. Her greater light enables her to acquire moisture from the Earth, like the Moon. Mercury, always common, is drying because of its nearness to the Sun and humidifying because it is next above the Moon, but changes quickly from one to the other through of its speed of motion.

Planetary Gender

Moisture is considered to be more prominent in females and so is considered to be feminine, thus the Moon and Venus are feminine. As moisture is not as evident in the others, Saturn, Jupiter, the Sun and Mars are masculine. Mercury is common because it produces dryness and moisture.

Mention is needed, too, of when a planet is oriental or occidental of the Sun. Here again is demonstrated the importance of the Sun in the basic scheme. The Sun returns to the day in the east (sunrise), therefore the eastern or oriental is considered masculine. The Sun sets in the west or occident, which is considered to be feminine.

When a planet rises before the Sun it is classified as oriental, when it sets after the Sun, it is occidental. Orientality increases masculinity, so a masculine planet that is oriental is reinforced, whereas a feminine planet that is oriental is weakened, in terms of its femininity. The same is true in reverse of planets occidental of the Sun.

Gender can also be modified or increased according to the quadrant a planet is in. The two oriental quadrants are from the Ascendant to the Midheaven and from the Descendant to the IC, the remaining two quadrants being feminine.

Diurnal and Nocturnal

Next comes the most obvious division of time and the allotting of the planets. The day is masculine *because of its heat and active force* and the night is feminine because of its greater moisture and, Ptolemy adds, *its gift of rest*. In this we can see how the masculine is associated with activity and the feminine with receptivity.

So, Venus and the Moon as feminine planets are nocturnal because this agrees with their powers or natures. The Sun and Jupiter as masculine planets are diurnal for the same reason. Mercury is again common: nocturnal when it is occidental of the Sun and diurnal when oriental of the Sun (evening star and morning star, respectively).

The malefic planets, Saturn and Mars, are attributed for the opposite reasons. Saturn is extremely cold and is thus given to the warmth of day, whilst Mars being extremely dry is given to the moisture of the night. This is done to ameliorate their destructive powers and thus induce moderation.

Overview

Having demonstrated the foundation of the scheme according to Ptolemy, it is necessary to compare it to that in use now. The natures of Venus and the Moon have changed in that Ptolemy makes them warm and moist. By Lilly's time they have become cold and moist. This ties in with their being nocturnal and thus not receiving light or warmth from the Sun.

	Ptolemy's Powers	Lilly's Natures	Gender	Time
Saturn	Mostly cooling, moderately drying	Cold and dry	Masculine	Diurnal
Jupiter	Heating and humidifying	Hot and moist	Masculine	Diurnal
Mars	Drying and burning	Hot and dry	Masculine	Nocturnal
Sun	Heating and somewhat drying	Hot and dry	Masculine	Diurnal
Venus	Warms moderately, mostly humidifying	Cold and moist	Feminine	Diurnal
Mercury	Drying and humidifying	Cold and dry when alone	Common	Common
Moon	Mostly humidifying, moderately warming	Cold and moist	Feminine	Nocturnal

Differences aside, it is clear that there is order, or an attempt to make sense of that order. It is enough for our purposes to be aware that this is the case and that it is fundamental to astrology. Ptolemy's explanation helps us to gain insight into the elegant complexities of the Art, so that we might better apply that insight.

Sign Gender

The signs, too, were assigned genders, but from a simpler starting point. Ptolemy says that the first sign is Aries because it is here that the vernal equinox occurs. Antiochus³ explains it from the point of view of the human body. He says that since Aries associates with the head, it becomes the first sign. He further associates the starting point, as does Ptolemy, with the *ages of man*, life beginning where there is the greatest moisture, that is, in Spring.

So, starting with masculine Aries, the rest of the signs are ordered alternately feminine and masculine. It is not necessary here to continue with the further associations of planets to signs which is done elsewhere.⁴

³ Antiochus of Athens, *The Thesaurus*, late 2nd century AD, trans. R. Schmidt, Project Hindsight.

⁴ The Traditional Horary Course, Foundation Studies. www.sue-ward.co.uk

Practical application

In astrology, planetary gender is used to delineate males and females specifically, or their active and receptive principles generally. The following chart demonstrates both.

Women were ordained into the Church of England for the first time on 12 March 1994 in Bristol, the ceremony began at 6.00 pm GMT . The chart for the time of the ceremony (shown at the end of this paper) demonstrates very clearly how gender works in a practice, and offers a graphic description of this momentous event.

Once the decision had been made to allow women priests, there followed much argument and noisy opposition. Subsequently some priests and lay members of the Church left to take up Roman Catholicism. Bishops and ordinary members of congregations demonstrated their protest by leaving the Church, carrying out their threats once the decision was upheld and executed. The argument, many said, was not against women priests as such, but against the way in which the decision was made and carried out.

Pisces is generally accepted as the sign associated with Christianity, and it is here on the cusp of the 7th house of women; it is double bodied and suggests partnership. The common angles support this idea and show a repeated situation. The late degree of the Moon also indicates impending change.

The theme of male and female partnership is repeated by the Sun and Moon, conjunct in the 7th, the Sun as God and the Moon as Goddess, or priest and priestess (this word being studiously avoided by the Church).

Venus, a feminine planet, rules the 9th of the Church and ceremonies and is placed in the 7th. It also rules the hour, which is fitting, and is in mutual reception with the Sun by exaltation indicating the strong bond between them. Both Venus and the Moon are occidental of the Sun (vespertine) in the western angle and a feminine quadrant, which is a very feminine configuration.

The Moon's separation from a conjunction with the Sun is a strong sign of a new beginning. The Sun is in a feminine sign and feminine angle, in the house of women, it is poised to sink below the horizon – its symbolic death; an event that could signal the end of this religion as a patriarchy. But as the Sun God dies it still holds the Moon within its thrall by combustion. The Moon then is still under the power of the Sun and both are peregrine, that is, without essential dignity, so their ability to act is reduced and places them under obligation to Jupiter, their dispositor. Jupiter, the natural ruler of the Church, offers its friendship to them through the trine aspect, but it can offer little help since it is peregrine and weak itself.

The South Node in the 9th house of religion suggests deceit and betrayal emanating from this source. This is further supported by the Sun's rulership of the radical 12th house of secret enemies. The Moon's combustion is indicative of secrets and hidden matters, as is the loss of the Sun's light. So, as the light of the Sun fades, the Moon's light is only just recovering from the obliteration of combustion. The situation is overcome by shadows and darkness. Venus is detrimented in volatile, masculine Aries, showing the Church acting out of character and the difficulties that will follow. Venus is at only 5°, so it will be some considerable time before this situation settles down when it moves into its own sign of Taurus, the sign of the Moon's exaltation.

The Moon, natural significator of the general public, applies to conjunct Venus, significator of the Church of England, after its change of sign into Aries. The public seems to favour this new Church, but this same configuration also implies more aggression. It could also imply that the women will have to fit into a male dominated environment. That environment will not change to account for femininity. Changes will come fast and be more radical once the Moon enters moveable, impatient Aries. This could, however, have more popular appeal since England falls under the sign of Aries.

The Moon is the natural ruler of messages and also rules the 3rd from the 9th: the Church's message. Its imminent change of sign could be reflected in a change of message, or at least in the tone of that message. Certainly a more thrusting approach might be expected. Since their message is based on the Bible's New Testament, particularly the Gospels, might we be looking at a new translation, or interpretation in the light of feminine influence, or perhaps to justify the inclusion of women?

Mars is the strongest planet in this chart with a score of 19. Mars indicates strife and battles, although mitigated by a strong mixed reception with Venus (by sign and exaltation). Mars rules the 7th from the 9th, the enemies of the Church, the reception between it and Venus, suggest that an accommodation or compromise will be sought. Mars is oriental of the Sun, in an oriental quadrant, but in a feminine sign. So, although fundamentally strong, it is less effective as an open fighting force. Its applying conjunction of Saturn is ominous for the Church's opponents, while being a natural malefic, it rules the unfortunate 6th and so is accidentally malefic, too. Mars also rules the 3rd, and its application to Saturn would seem to muffle negotiation and hamper communications, especially as both are in Pisces which is designated as mute.

The women priests will need some years before they progress to positions of authority within the Church, so the combustion of the Moon is more telling as it remains in the grip of the Sun. As the Sun sets perhaps we are witnessing the end of the Church of England as a solar religion. If this is so we must wait for the Sun's journey through the Underworld, and its subsequent rebirth at the Ascendant, before we see the full import of this event.

Conclusion

The utility and importance of planetary and sign genders is made clear in this chart judgement and yet they are so often ignored in modern astrological literature. We have seen that it is not simply a case of calling the masculine or male energy positive and the feminine or female energy negative. These are not only archetypal properties, but physical and actual: they relate to the material world, too.

It is pointless to begin to learn about delineation at any other point than the beginning of the astrological order. That beginning is found in the categories of planets and signs, some of which having been explained here. Before we run ahead to try to find our answers in aspects, midpoints, asteroids, or trans-Saturnian planets, we would do well to address these fundamental principles first.

