

Southern Hemisphere astrology projects its own psychology onto the zodiac. While the roots of our Western astrology are Northern the essence of the signs remain true to those who experience them then south of the Equator.

Southern Signs and Seasons

By Brian Clark

On the summer solstice I was in the midst of my last minute Christmas shopping. It was an unbearably hot day and so I was frustrated with having left things to the last minute. By eight in the evening I was nearly finished. The heat was still strong and there was still another hour or so of daylight left. I collapsed on a bench outside the shops and watched a Santa sweltering under the burden of his costume. From a distance I could faintly hear "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas" echoing throughout the complex of shops. In a few days my family and I would be celebrating Christmas over lunch in the back yard, under our big shady gum tree. Christmas Day was forecast to be hot, in the low 90's and the long-term forecast predicted a long hot summer to follow.

What is wrong with this picture? Nothing, if you live in Australia. The Christmas festive season ushers in summer holidays on the beach. Europeans living in the Southern Hemisphere celebrate the same festivals, simultaneously as their northern cousins, without the seasonal overlay associated with them. Easter Sunday is still the first Sunday after the full moon following the equinox, however it is our Autumnal, not Vernal equinox. Our Wheel of the Year is still punctuated by festivals that arose in conjunction with northern myths and customs, but not synchronous with northern seasons. Northern myths and images still psychically influence Western people living

in the Southern Hemisphere. For instance it is still more common for a white Australian to dream of bears and tigers than kangaroos and emus.

The Wheel of the Year is defined by festivals that cluster near the solstices and the equinoxes as well as the mid point between them. Ancients marked the beginning and the middle of each season festively. Astrologically we know this as the beginning of the cardinal signs (the end of the mutable) and the middle of the fixed signs. The symbolism of cardinal signs is inspired by the beginning of the season, fixed with the middle of the season while mutable signs usher in the changing of the seasons. These festivals reminded the ancients of the turning of the wheel of the year and the season's change.

The seasons were also defined by the movement of the Sun in its yearly cycle against the backdrop of the ecliptic's constellations. The Sun's annual itinerary distributes the seasons amongst twelve months. When the twelve zodiacal signs were adopted from the constellations the seasonal metaphor of the Sun's journey through the signs remained. Western astrology emerged out of the Indo-European mix from its Mesopotamian roots, with seasonal and agricultural metaphors becoming prominent. With modern popularisation of astrology, "Sun" signs began to be described by these images. Aries was the emergence of spring, the beginning of a new agricultural season and the promise of new life as the seed burst open in the moist earth. Taurus was the image of the earth's abundance and the Beltane (May Day) festivals celebrated and affirmed the fecundity of both the earth and domestic animals. The change-ability of the mutable seasons is affirmed in Gemini with the changing winds leading to the Summer Solstice. So the Solar round of the sun through the signs

amplified the meaning of the signs from the northern bias of its experience of the seasons.

For contemporary astrologers, signs are seasons, however they are psychological seasons, not literal ones. While the Sun in a sign pinpointed the time of year (since this is how time became measured) any another planet in a sign does not equate with these literal seasons. Metaphorically Aries is a beginning whether it marks the beginning of spring or not. Jupiter in Aries may be a robust beginning but obviously is not spring. Seasonal metaphors for the twelve zodiacal signs are solar based. Northerners often ponder whether the meaning of the signs should be reversed to accommodate the seasonal differences. Again this is fixing the zodiacal metaphors from the Sun's point of view. Carl Jung often used to refer to astrology as a "projected psychology". Onto the heavens we cast our myths animating the constellations with our human psychology. Here in the South hemisphere the zodiacal signs are also able to be adapted seasonally with Capricorn being dry or Cancer being wet. The archetypal zodiac responds to its projections.

Here in the Southern regions the archetypal images are still contained in the signs, but not bound exclusively to the Solar Round as has become a tradition in the North. In some ways this frees the way we view the zodiac. In the Southern Hemisphere we look North to the ecliptic and so the MC's direction is N, not S; the IC is S, not N. The Moon's first crescent is reversed from the way it is viewed in the Northern Hemisphere and our skies are full of constellations not visible in the North. Ascendant-Midheaven combinations differ in the South. For instance Aquarius on the MC in Northern moderate latitudes will yield between mid Taurus and late Gemini on

the ascendant whereas in the Southern Hemisphere the Ascendant will hover between late Aries and mid Taurus. The signs of long and short ascension are reversed. However all of these technical mechanics do not alter the archetypal essence of the zodiac, life's wheel. It only needs to be adapted to the culture and individual that views it. Reversing it would be colluding with a northern bias.

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