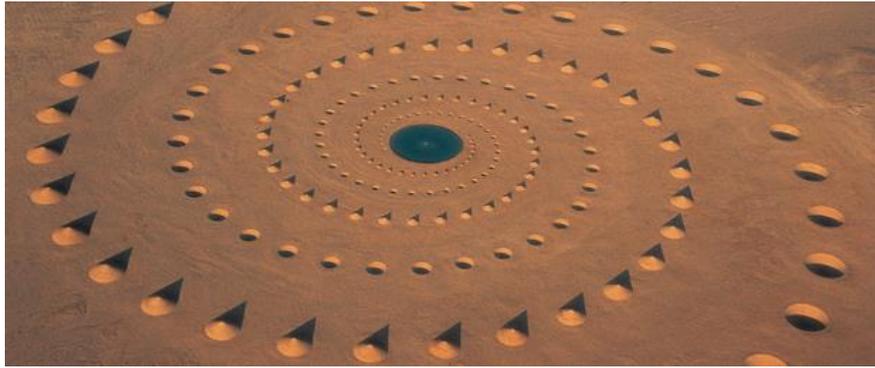


Reflections on Time

by Brian Clark



A Question of Time

Inherent in the astrological discourse is a natural treatise on time; in essence, astrology is centred on nature-based timing, observable, measureable and cosmetic in its order and beauty. The discipline of astrology is horological, a study of time, and each horoscope is a testament to this mystery. A horoscope ensouls time, inviting us to imagine and animate it with the spirit and nature of the moment. Horoscope is derived from the Greek *hora*, hour and *skopein*, to look at; therefore a horoscope is a view of time. Mythologically *hora* refers to the Horai, the trinity of goddesses whose collective name refers to the seasons and the eternal ordered round of time.

Individually the Horai were known as Dike, Eirene and Eunomia or justice, peace and order. Together they represented the hours, the dance of seasons and the passing of time. The Horai were goddesses of the seasons who oversaw the turning of the heavenly wheel determining the natural movements of time. Being daughters of two orderly gods, Zeus and Themis¹, the natural impulse towards organizing time is rooted in their parentage. Each horoscope and horary chart invokes these early goddesses, who were the custodians of the seasons and personifications of the virtues of justice, peace and order that underscore time.

The Horai were also sisters to another trinity of goddesses known as the *Moirai*, or the Fates. As weavers of time each sister had a particular role: Clotho spun the fabric, Lachesis measured the length and Atropos cut the cord. The length of the cord that was woven, measured then cut, not only epitomized the life span, but also the seminal moment of birth. Fittingly time and fate are sisterly concepts in Greek mythology, woven together in both our collective and personal cosmogonies; our personal cosmogony being the horoscope. Both the Horai and the Moirai were imagined as apportioning time through their participation with nature and the heavens. A measure of time was metaphoric, part of a greater and more mysterious process that evoked a relationship with the gods.



The Horai

The Mythic Language of Time

There are many ways of thinking about time; for instance the ancient Greeks knew *chronos* as the unyielding passage of time. Like the eponymous Titan who devoured his children, time was seen to consume all things.² Images of the passing of time like the hourglass and crutches became linked with Chronus. As an early agricultural god the sickle was also his symbol. While this symbol was associated with power and prosperity, it also symbolised the cutting down of time. Ironically Chronus also presided over a Golden Age, an era when man lived in peace and prosperity like gods, and a miserable age rested not on them³

Once upon a time the age of Chronus was benevolent and undying, but now his time is all consuming. This ambivalence towards Chronus underpins the astrological archetype of Saturn. Chronus time enters our vocabulary through words that represent the passing and recording of time like *chronological* or the arrangement of recorded time; *chronicle*, a detailed account of events arranged sequentially; *chronometer*, an instrument that measures time. But perhaps the word that reminds us most of the troubling relentlessness of time is *chronic*, a mnemonic of the inevitability of temporal corrosion. Chronus remains a powerful symbol of time in our language and his surrogate Saturn remains one of astrology's great chronocrators.

But the Greeks knew another time and that was *kairos*, which had a subjective, even supernatural quality. While *chronos* characterised linear and measurable time, *kairos* referred to a critical moment, an appointed time or the right moment in time. In early usage it was linked with opportunity or the moment when possibility penetrated the present. In ancient Greek terminology it referred to an opening and *kairos* was the critical moment to enter into and take advantage of the moment. In the Homeric Greek *kairos* was the impenetrable opening which may have originated with the archer who aimed at the cracks in the armour to seize the right moment,⁴ an early symbolic association between arrows and time.⁵

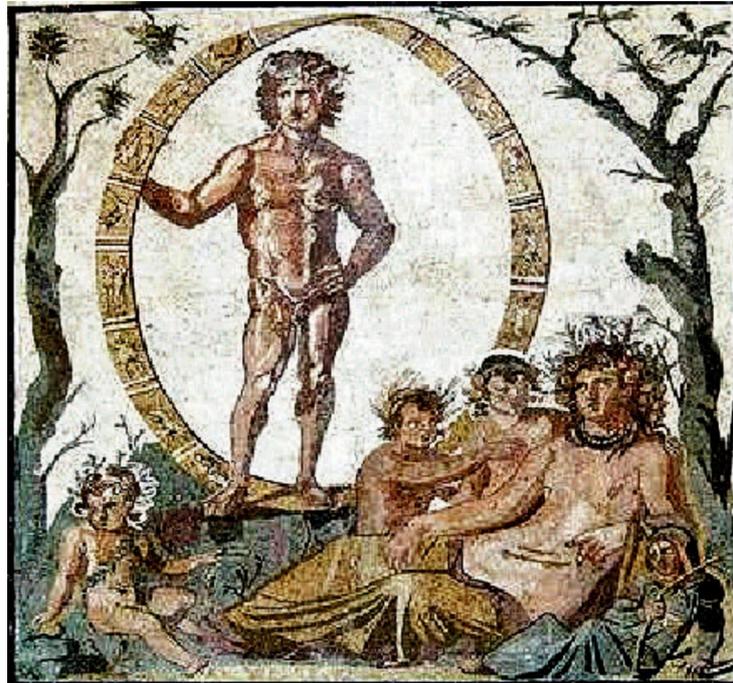
The word was also associated with weaving which is frequently connected to fate and time, conjuring up the sisterly alliance of the Horai and the Moirai. Eternal moments are woven into the web of fate and *kairos* time is when these breach the surface of our everyday lives. In that instant the veil of time lifts and an opportune moment arises, akin to the idea that the time has come. *Kairos* is the mysterious process aligned with the ripening of time. *Kairos* could be likened to the birth moment, which opens us up to the vital opportunity of life, or other times when a fissure between the worlds appears.

These two concepts embody the quantitative and qualitative nature of time and its literal and fictional qualities. As astrologers we constantly work with both, investing the literal planetary cycles with meaning, using *chronos* timing to become aware of the *kairos* moments of life. It is not the mechanism of time that creates the opportunity, but the willingness to participate freely in the imagined possibilities that astrology aptly outlines.

The ancient Roman god associated with the thresholds of gateways and doorways was Janus, the patron of beginnings. As the spirit of the doorways his blessing was essential at the birth of each life, as well as beginning of each day, month and year, as evoked each January. Janus had two faces, one that looked east to the rising Sun; the other west, to its setting. As a two-faced god of time he also reminds us of the different attitudes towards time in Eastern and Western cultures, the objective and subjective nature of time, its measurable and mystical aspects, as well as the ancient Greek ideas of *chronos* and *kairos*.

By the later Hellenistic period the image of Aion had made his way into mystery cults connected with Cybele, Orpheus and Mithras. Immigrating from the East into Egypt he found his way into Plato and Aristotle's writing developing into a Hellenistic deity connected with time. Our modern

word aeon which suggests an indefinitely long period of time is his contemporary incarnation. As the god of eternity, Aion was depicted within an orb representing the zodiac or the eternal cycle of life. By Hellenistic times the ouroboric orb of the zodiac had enclosed infinity and become the perpetual symbol against which man measured time.



Measured Time

Our contemporary reliance upon clocks to measure time maintains the illusion that time is physical. Hourly appointments, daily rituals, monthly rent, yearly tax returns and twenty-five year mortgages define the modern-day parameters of our relationship with time. Because it can be defined and divided, time has become a commodity. As a product it can be quantified and sold. We even have a price on what an hour of our time is worth; no wonder we might find it difficult to see time as something other than concrete or fixed. Time has become some-thing, when ironically it does not really exist. Perhaps what exists is a complex of rules that govern time, but time itself is invisible. Ironically even though time is invisible, it is a felt experience.

When we liberate time from a chronological trajectory and consider its other dimensionality, time becomes meta-physical. A common occurrence in crisis or under duress is to experience a time warp; seconds feel like hours, the past may be re-lived or the future threatens the present. The nature of time is a mystery best left to the meta-physicians and quantum-physicians to probe. But as astrologers, our consideration is how to reflect on time and the soul in order to participate in the fullness of the moment for ourselves and our clients.

Astrological timing is both quantitative and qualitative. Yet in both practice and theory, astrological timing is commonly thought of as only quantitatively, fixing the timing of a planetary movement to an event in clock time, whether that is hours, days, weeks, months or years. Prediction is limited when planetary symbols and movements are explained then projected onto future events or episodes. When time is fixed literally, astrological practitioners are coerced into anticipating future possibilities. When we are anticipating time, we no longer are participating in it. Pulled into the linearity of time and objectivity, we lose access to the cyclicity and subjectivity of the subtle world that astrology reveals. If this occurs then divination is severed from prediction since the porous boundaries vital to subjective involvement becomes eclipsed by literality and objectivity.

From a quantitative point of view astrological periods are measured by the time it takes for a planet to pass through a particular point in the heavens, whether that is a zodiac sign, a degree of the zodiac or an aspect to another planet. For instance Pluto moves into Aquarius on the 23 March 2023 for the first time since its discovery and will move back and forth across the zodiacal cusp of Capricorn - Aquarius four more times until it enters Aquarius for nearly two decades on 19 November 2024. On 12 January 2020 Saturn conjoins Pluto at 22°46'. Depending on an orb of influence⁶ we can time the period when the two planets will aspect one another. Quantitative time compares these planetary positions with a natal chart to personalise the advance of time. But how we engage with this symbol of time is the key: do we interpret, divine or imagine time?

Qualitative timing is imaginative and symbolic, encouraging participation with the moment. It is not read in the context of a calendar but considered and reflective. Through using imagination we make time for soul,⁷ not by marking out time but taking time. The astrological alignment of both times promotes soul-making through honouring its symbols. We first respect the symbols of the cosmos by noting the planetary movements; then we value the symbol in context of the soul through imagination, participation and reflection.

When speaking to an astrology conference James Hillman suggested that by setting aside the literalistic attachment to time we might also be free of another dangerously compelling power in astrology: the temptation to predict.⁸ A refreshing thought. But setting aside the literalistic attachment to time, given astrology's deeply-entrenched roots in the Ptolemaic model, is not a simple task in a world whose dominant mythology is scientism.⁹

Ironically, astrology is a model that espouses the meaningfulness of time, yet its value is diminished when set amidst a literal and chronological rhetoric on time. Even quality time¹⁰ in a contemporary sense means an intentioned period of time, defined by human will for a measured outcome with little room for divine intervention. Similar to the wandering planets, astrological practice needs time and space for the soul to wander along its course until it reveals the significance of its symbols.¹⁰

Carl Jung was impressed by astrology's capacity to accurately reconstruct a person's character¹¹ which demonstrated the relative validity of astrology. But this validity is not corroborated by modern scientific methods; in fact Jung pointed out that due to the precession of the equinoxes modern horoscopes are no longer exact reflections of the heavens. This led him to assert that: 'If there are any astrological diagnoses of character that are in fact correct, this is not due to the influence of the stars but to our own hypothetical time qualities. In other words, whatever is born or done at this particular moment of time has the quality of this moment of time.'¹¹ Jung reiterates that astrological perception does not operate on the cause-effect spectrum, but pictures the qualities intrinsic in the moment through the symbols of that moment.

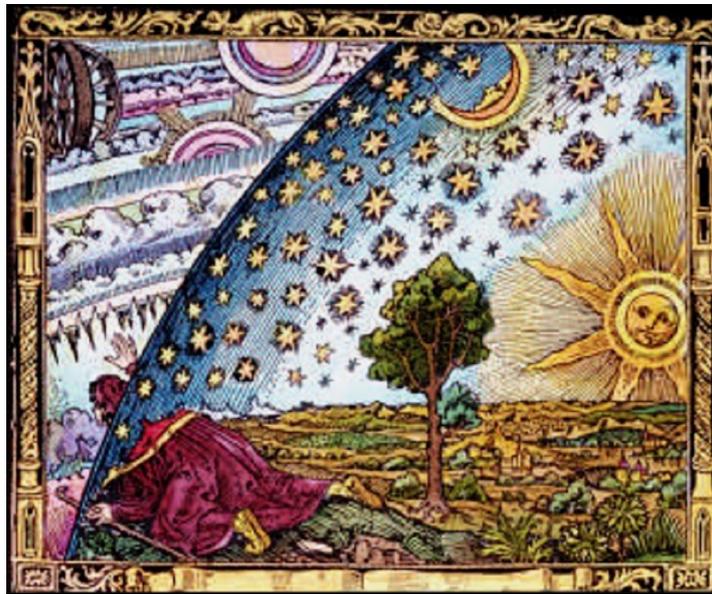
Astrology and astrological practice are commonly denigrated by science, sceptics and systems, yet it is not astrology they denigrate, as most have not taken the time to actually become familiar with the tradition. What is degraded is its mystery and unknowing, its randomness and wanderings which result in revelations. As astrologers we must struggle with our questions on time in a world smitten with explanations and evidence.

In astrological thinking each sign of the zodiac contains qualities and essences that characterize the mood of the time. For instance, when the Moon is in Scorpio, time has different features to when it is Gemini. As Pluto transits through Capricorn, the collective experience of time is different to when it will be in Aquarius. Each planetary archetype contributes to the timing of the moment; it is the imaginative skill of the astrologer that tells the time by planetary cycles. Active imagination and participation become fundamental in releasing the symbol from its chronological restraints.

Participation is a subjective practice; a way of experiencing the non-linear and non-rational world through instinct and intuition, not concepts or theories. It is an anthropologic idea inspired by animistic cultures where nature was imbued with soul and unseen forces animated the universe. A characteristic of participation is a fusing of relationship between the observer and the observed; hence a feeling of unity or oneness. In a way astrology is animistic. Astrologers perceive the planets as subjective, both inner and outer dimensional, as well as respecting the unseen forces that give life to the universe. Alexander Rupert articulated this idea this way:

Astrologers study the sky because it gives them an experience of universal order, they do not seek to detach themselves from the universe and its rhythms as the scientists do, but rather identify themselves with these rhythms.¹²

Therefore the participation mystique with astrology permits other experiences and inspires other intelligence beyond the confinement of rationality. When caught in the grooves of linear time, celestial timing becomes explanations of truthful facts rather than a participation mystique with the eternity of time.



Currently Brian is working on a book on Astrological Time and this text is part of the work in progress

¹ Themis was a Titan, the goddess of divine law and order.

² For a discussion on the development of thought around Chronus and time see John Cohen, "Subjective Time" from *The Voices of Time*, edited by J.T. Fraser, George Braziller (New York, N.Y.: 1966), 274-5.

³ Hesiod describes the Golden Age in his *Works and Days*. This quote from the translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, MA: 2002), 11.

⁴ James Hillman, "Notes on Opportunism" from *Puer Papers*, edited by James Hillman, Spring (Dallas, TX: 1994), 153.

⁵ For a discussion on symbols of time, including time's arrow see Joost A. M. Meerloo "The Time Sense in Psychiatry" from *The Voices of Time*, 246 -252.

⁶ An orb is an allowance of variable degrees either side of a planet, point or angle which the influence or receptivity to other bodies is considered to operate. There are no agreed-upon standards in astrology regarding the allowance of orbs, but a general rule for natal aspects suggests that faster moving planets should have wider orbs. With this directive, the Moon could have an orb up to 10 degrees. Major aspects are often granted wider orbs than the minor ones. Astrologers also vary considerably on the orb of influence for transiting planets. Their usage in classical astrology is also confusing and unarticulated. .

⁷ Edward S. Casey, *Spirit and Soul Essays in Philosophical Psychology*, Spring Publications, Inc. (Putnam, CT: 2004), 279 ó 280.

⁸ The lecture by James Hillman was originally given at the 1997 *Return of Soul to the Cosmos* conference and repeated at the *Alchemical Sky* conference in Bath, UK in May 2005. Hillman, James, "Heaven Retains Within Its Sphere Half of All Bodies and Maladies" at <http://www.springpub.com/astro.htm> [accessed 15/01/04].

⁹ Throughout *The Moment of Astrology*, Geoffrey Cornelius skilfully demonstrates astrology's susceptibility to becoming mechanistic and literal. On page 190 he states; "the Ptolemaic model of astrology has obscured the foundation in participatory significance by treating symbolism as an expression of causes, or as an expression of some objective cosmic order."

¹⁰ The ancient Greeks saw the planets as wanderers, unlike the other fixed stars. Embedded in the word planet is the Greek notion of wandering. While Edward S. Casey does not refer to astrology, he does associate the irregularity and regularity of the planets with soul, which to me is inspiring: see *Spirit and Soul Essays in Philosophical Psychology*, 279.

¹¹ C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works, Volume 15, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, translated by R. F. C. Hull, Princeton University Press (Princeton, N.J.: 1971), 15: 82.

¹² Alexander Rupert, *Cycles of Becoming*, CRCS Publications, Davis, CA: 1978, 3.