

## The Houses of Relationship:

### *Siblings, Partners, Friends: Our Other Halves* by Brian Clark

Psychoanalysis theorised that we unconsciously model our adult relationships on our parents, unwittingly marrying our fathers or mothers as mythical Oedipus had done. Freud, identifying with Sophocles' drama *Oedipus Rex*, developed the Oedipal Complex, which suggests a son trapped in a triangular relationship has an unconscious urge to remove his rival father in order to capture mother for himself. His cornerstone theory echoed throughout psychology for the next 100 years. It seems young girls also want to remove their rival. Carl Jung coined the Electra complex after the heroine who complicit with her brother helped plan her mother's murder revenging the death of her beloved father<sup>1</sup>. High drama was part of the Greek mythological cycle and therefore a boon to 5<sup>th</sup> century playwrights and the fathers of psychology. However not all accepted the Freudian edict. Alfred Adler thought that the Oedipus complex was born out of the environmental climate of an only or first child. Adler, the second son, was born under the umbra of an older brother and did not relate to the parental triangle that first-born Freud described.<sup>2</sup> But Freudian theory triumphed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it was psychologically sensible to be cognisant of the perils and patterns of replicating the parental figures in adult relationships.

However by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century patterns in the social fabric were different. It was more apparent that the quest for equal relationships (as opposed to more traditional and hierarchical relationships) was primary. The impact on our adult relationships of sibling dynamics became more acknowledged than ever before. However astrological intelligence had always suggested this link through the trinity of houses known as the *Houses of Relationship*, the spheres of the horoscope that describes the developmental quest for the soul mate. The quest for a soul companion begins with the sibling in the 3<sup>rd</sup> house, the first house in the trinity.

An individual's quest for an equalitarian relationship is conceived, shaped and experienced in three houses known as the houses of relationship: the third, seventh and eleventh. These territories do not consciously model the parent-child relationship, which inclines towards unequal and dependent relationship, but champion the quest for equality and individuality. Through this trinity of houses, the theme of creating and sustaining equal relationships, as well as our urge for social intercourse, develops.

In the horoscope, assuming no interceptions, the signs on the cusps of the houses of relationship are either sextile or opposite the ascendant, conjunct or trine the descendant; naturally these houses are sympathetic to the horizon of our life. This trinity of houses support our personal view of the world, our personality and our urge to strive forward. Conversely, these houses are 'at odds' with the meridian, the vertical angle that is familial and inherited forged by the parental legacy. These houses describe relationships that are compatible with our sense of individuality and our urge to be equal, which clashes with parental and hierarchical expectations.

## The Houses of Relationship: Sibship, Partnership and Friendship

The third house symbolises our initial experiences of equality in relationship through primary encounters with others that shared our early environment (mainly sibling/s but also other neighbourhood friends and primary schoolmates). Social interactions with partners, colleagues and acquaintances have their origins in our sibling experiences. Therefore the third house of the horoscope is a template for relationship patterns.<sup>3</sup> The third house is critical since it describes how we first experience peer relationship and the impact it will have upon subsequent relationships. We first test the response from the world through the action or reaction of our sibs, using them as a mirror to how we are received. The sibling is our first partner in life and a witness to our early beginnings.

The third house is the experimental ground for relating. Habitual behaviour in relating may find its roots in the third house. Expectations we have of relationships, patterns we repeat with partners or even our choice of mate may be more influenced by the sibling/s, and the third house, than we realise. The sign on the cusp of the house, its ruler and the planets in the third house illustrate the primary bond between us and a sibling, and the potential pattern that is brought into adult relationships. The astrological statements of the third house describe the sibling or those qualities we project onto them. Early themes of relationship with our sibs can inform us of patterns in adult relationships and are foundation stones for how we will experience brotherhood and sisterhood in the world at large.

The next house in the trinity of houses of relationship is the seventh. Unlike the third, it is above the horizon of the horoscope and therefore suggests more visibility or objectivity. The arena of sibship is below the horizon and therefore there is no choice of the ‘other’; it is a non-consenting realm. But in the seventh house our partners are our choice. Siblings are contained by the larger system of the family, whereas seventh house partners come from beyond the familial system. Into the seventh we carry the *a priori* pattern of the sibling along with our experiences of relating in the sibling system.

The seventh house is the sphere of equality on an adult level, where we encounter others who feel familiar and complement what we sense is missing in ourselves. The seventh house process embraces the experience of being with an equal other in a committed and intimate way. There is mutuality and reciprocity. Whether seventh house partners are marriage or life partners, business partners or close friends, they engage with us on an equal level of exchange. Partner contains *part*, the sense of being separate – apart, yet also able to join.

Traditionally, this is the house of ‘open enemies’ where the opponent represented by the 7<sup>th</sup> house was the rival. Sibling rivalries may be re-enacted again with our partners. In a contemporary context, the seventh house open enemy may be our own shadow material rather than a literal individual. However, the unconscious is marvellously astute at choosing individuals who embody these shadowy qualities. Therefore incomplete sibling dynamics may be transferred onto our adult partners.

Psychological astrology stresses the propensity to project seventh house qualities on to the partner. While we remain unconscious of seventh house energies, we continue to proclaim them as belonging to someone else, generally the partner. Projection is an unconscious defence mechanism therefore becoming conscious of these projections provides a greater facility to be authentic in relationship. We enter a mystery in the seventh house where we are drawn to what appears as opposite and different, yet is only a partial reflection of what is still not conscious in

us. What we sense is kin, congeniality, and familiarity. Since the individual is not from the system we have known they appear as different. The partner of the seventh house stimulates us to reunite with the missing parts of ourselves. The sign on the cusp of the seventh house is an important quality and is often prominent in our partner's horoscope. Our partners often embody our seventh house qualities long before they are successfully integrated into our lives.

In dealing with issues between couples, I find it enormously valuable and revealing to ask about their birth order, number and gender of siblings, age spacing, etc. These details can often help to reveal issues from the sibling system that are infiltrating the current relationship. Third house planetary energies that are still projected on to the sibling or unexpressed in us, will find a new venue in the present relationship. The seventh house experience is directly influenced by the earlier effect and residue of our sibling relationships. Into the seventh house we drag our unresolved sibling relationships.

The eleventh house is our encounter with equals in the community outside the familial setting. These includes the 'social others' – colleagues, associates, acquaintances, friends and professional equals. This is the house of groups, communes and organisations, reminiscent of our first experience of a collective – the family. While the eleventh house depicts the group, not bound by blood or kinship ties, nevertheless our experiences of family will still be stirred. As a member of the group our relationship to the other group members will magnetise unconscious memories of our earliest peers, our brothers and sisters. In the eleventh house we are still prone to recreating the unresolved familial issues in our chosen groups and associations.

Like the seventh house, the eleventh is above the horizon, but now in the eastern hemisphere where the focus is on the individual. As individuals we are contained by the larger system of society, subject to its laws, influenced by its ethos and bound by its taboos. Our eleventh house symbolises the larger community, the groups, social structures, and the circle of friends and associates that populate society. This is the sphere where we once again become part of a system. Our sibling system was the microcosm of this larger social sphere therefore the experiences in the sibling system directly impact on our ability to feel comfortable in other social systems.

Our eleventh house relationships feel familiar, as they too are kin, allies who are kindred spirits. The 11<sup>th</sup> house spirit is a shared bond with our friends and colleagues. In a way, the eleventh house is a return home to the missing other through a sense of congeniality and enjoyment of the shared spirit of life. Congeniality literally means 'with the generations', an apt description of the eleventh house process of shared community. In the eleventh we can find the sense of belonging to a larger family, being individuals in a larger collective. This is an important aspect of the eleventh house as we learn here to be separate from the collective, which inherently prepares us for rescuing the collective soul of the twelfth house.

However, the group of friends, the group of colleagues, and the organisations we join reawaken the incomplete sibling experiences and rivalry once again is experienced. Our group experiences are often regressive, reminding us of the infantile behaviour with our siblings, fighting for the attention of the parent who is now embodied as the leader of the group. If we have not yet learned to feel an equal, then we will react to perceived acts of favouritism bestowed on the rival colleague or group member. Adults are vulnerable to playing out incomplete sibling hostilities and rivalries in their professional associations and organisations, as well as their therapy groups. Festering sibling rivalries pollute the equilibrium of the collective.

The eleventh house can also be the territory where we redeem our conflicted sibling relationships. A loving friend, an encouraging colleague or a supportive group are healing agents for earlier wounds inflicted in the sibling system. We may also be able to accomplish in the larger world what we could never do in the sibling world. While we are influenced by our sibling system we are not bound to it, and the eleventh house is the arena where we can amend this. Now we are able to choose our brothers and sisters. They come from the same spiritual tribe and generally look forward in the same direction as we do, carrying the same hopes and wishes for the future. They are partners, equals and kin in our worldly family. This is brotherhood and sisterhood.

### **The Element of Air: The Breath of Relationship**

In the natural zodiacal wheel, the houses of relationship are the air houses. On first reflection, air is not an element that we would ascribe to relationship as it is can be separate, non-attached and distant. Its focus is more on the heavens than the earth, embracing lofty and transcendent ideals that inhibit commitment in relationship. Air is the spectator, not always the participant; the messenger but not necessarily the message. However, air encourages equality, individuality and consciousness, necessary in relationship to permit merger and union without the loss of self. Astrologically, this is represented by air preceding water in the zodiac. If there is a healthy sense of separateness, then this safeguards regressing to a union of total merger or surrender where the self is lost. Air encourages enough separateness to relate to someone different from ourselves. The houses of relationship provide a venue for this task, so that the merger into relationship can be conscious. Separateness and symbiosis, two polar instincts that underlie life, are continuously balanced by the element of air.

Airy qualities of detachment, non-attachment and witnessing are all important in the participation of equal relationship. In these houses we meet the witnesses of our life. The third house sibling witnesses our childhood years, shares the same history, the same culture and is the touchstone of our early life experiences. The seventh house partner witnesses in us the process of maturation and discovery in the world beyond the family. The eleventh house colleague and friend witnesses both our personal and professional experiences as we mature in the wider world. In these houses, the record of our personal developmental history is shared and witnessed by the significant others in our lives.

The air signs associated with these houses are Gemini, Libra and Aquarius. In the natural wheel, Gemini corresponds with the third house and is the restless search for the missing ‘twin’<sup>4</sup>. Libra corresponds to the seventh house and is the quest for the ideal soul mate. Aquarius, the eleventh sign, is the journey towards social equality. The glyphs that represent these signs are dual, two lines detached from each other. Gemini and Aquarius are represented in human form while Libra is the only sign represented by an inanimate object – the scales. Duality, judging, weighing are all part of the process of relating.

The modern rulers of the air signs, Mercury, Venus and Uranus, as well as the classical ruler of Aquarius, Saturn, are the regents presiding over the territory of equal relationship. They are the deities we encounter in the archetypal process of individuation and relationship. Different forms of rulership also connect these signs together. Mercury rules Gemini and is also exalted in Aquarius or the eleventh house. Saturn, as the traditional ruler of Aquarius, is exalted in the

sign of Libra. Venus rules Libra in traditional astrology and Gemini in esoteric astrology. Threads of amity run through these signs. Throughout the air signs and houses there are consistent symbols reminding us of the process of linking, connecting, bridging, as well as separation, duality and polarity.

## On the Cusp of Relationship

The signs on the cusps of these houses in our personal horoscope are significant in delineating our approach to relating. With no interceptions in the horoscope, the same element will be on all three house cusps and this element is thematic of our experience and disposition towards equal relationships. The following table shows the combination of elements in a horoscope.

ELEMENT ON HOUSES OF RELATIONSHIP	ELEMENT ON ASCENDANT	ELEMENT ON MC	ELEMENT ON IC
<b>Fire</b>	<b>Air</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Earth</b>
<b>Earth</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Fire</b>	<b>Air</b>
<b>Air</b>	<b>Fire</b>	<b>Earth</b>	<b>Water</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>Earth</b>	<b>Air</b>	<b>Fire</b>

Let's examine the elements on the cusps of these houses to sketch an initial picture of our inclination to *approach* relationship. Fire is a spirited element and its approach to life experience is generally highly instinctive, spontaneous, forthright and wilful. When the fire element is on these house cusps, it guards the threshold to equal relationships, therefore the individual may approach relationship in a courageous, competitive, challenging and inquisitive way, empowered with a sense of self-discovery and urge for excitement. The sphere of relationship is a vital area for investigation and experimentation of the self. Fire would desire that its partner share this sense of adventure, travel and wanderlust.

Fire's burning spirit and quest for philosophical perfection and absolute truth meets its shadow in negative feeling, lethargy and criticism. Fire individuals are frustrated with their partners' inability to share their vision. Or worse, the partner may point out the potential pitfalls and problems with this vision. The fiery one may interpret this as criticism, whereas it is often a genuine attempt to help anchor the vision. Negative feelings are also denied by fire's need to be buoyant and feel the rush of life energy. Denying negativity or depression encourages projection of these feelings on to a partner, who may express the negative feelings that are difficult for fiery individuals to accept. A more earthy or watery sibling may have been the first one to carry the projected negativity or depression for them.

Fire is passionate and, like its element in nature, burns new ground and yearns to move farther afield. While there is passion and excitement, there is also restlessness and boredom. The natural tendency may be to enter relationship in a flash, with verve and dynamism, yet find the fires grows cold and the original passion wanes. Fire demands its freedom and needs to explore new territory, which often leads us away from relationship. Fire needs to feel free enough to do its own thing, yet also wants to compete and play. The necessity to be in relationship with those who are able to meet the need to adventure, quest, philosophise and discover the truth, is very

important. With siblings, partners and friends fire wants to share the quest for meaning and truth.

With the earth signs, Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, on these house cusps, there is a very different approach to relating. Earth is more conservative and self-controlled, having an appreciation of time. Unlike fire, the natural inclination is to move slowly and cautiously into relationship. Earth needs stability and security, and therefore it is important that relationships provide this ongoing structure. It is important too that our partners are committed, reliable and stable, serving the needs of the relationship. Relationships are nurtured through attention and work. Earth is serious about relationships, as they represent an investment of emotional and material resources, as well as a commitment of time.

Earth values commitment, fidelity and devotion and feels responsible and protective towards their peers. This may manifest as duty and obligation towards the sibling, which could inhibit the formation of other relationships. Hopefully, with earth on these cusps the earlier experience of rules, responsibilities and tasks of relationship helped forge a secure structure for relationships. Earth partners can be appreciative of both their own and others' need for privacy and solace. When feeling insecure they can become possessive and controlling, inhibiting the other's freedom and privacy. With earth on the cusp of relationship, control, possession and the equal sharing of resources are important issues.

Earth is the element of incarnation and materiality. Resources and possessions are important with earth on these cusps and the contemporary symbols of values, money and possessions, are an important consideration in equal relationships. Earth's task is to learn to share, to discriminate between 'mine' and 'yours', so sharing with the sibling may have been an issue. How we manage to exchange these resources with our partners is directly proportional to how bonded and trusting we feel in the relationship. We may project our issues of worth on to a partner who is unable to freely share his or her resources or who uses their resources to defend intimacy. With earth on these house cusps there is a connection between our ability to share what we have and our ability to be intimate. How we managed to share our possessions with our siblings is a major factor in how comfortable we are with sharing our resources with our adult partners.

Earth is the element of the five senses, and sharing the sensual world is important: looking at beautiful art, listening to an inspired piece of music, sharing a sumptuous meal, filling the space with fragrant essences or embracing and being affectionate with one another, are all images of the important world of earthy pleasure. Earth wants boundaries within a relationship without cutting off the life force, having a stable and committed relationship without it becoming fixed and bound to routines. Earth on these houses cusps strives to find the balance it needs in the constantly changing atmosphere of our relationships with siblings, partners and friends.

The air trinity includes Gemini, Libra and Aquarius on these house cusps. This triumvirate of signs is compatible, at least theoretically, with relationship. It is natural for air to want to share its ideas and experiences. Air is constantly seeking its other half through the process of relating. However, air seeks a multiplicity of experiences and may share its ideas and experiences in many differing relationships, being indiscriminate about privacy and containment. Relationships may be an arena of curiosity and often air's inquiring and interactive manner is mistaken for a deeper emotional or more intimate interest.

Like all elements, air needs relationship. It is comfortable with the issues of equality, sharing and the theory of relatedness but has difficulty in the sphere of intimacy and emotional constancy. With air it is natural to experiment with a range of possibilities in relationship to satisfy its curiosity and inquisitive urges. These types need a great amount of space, emotionally, physically and psychologically before they are comfortable enough ‘settling down’. Changeability is natural, and without enough space air feels stifled and unable to breathe, increasing the levels of anxiety. If the relationship feels stifling, the urge to separate is triggered. With air on these house cusps the need to experiment with relationship is necessary before an authentic commitment to a relationship can be given. The sibling relationship could be the arena we first urge to explore ideas, relate, learn and adventure. The sib is the partner to relate to and gossip and experiment emotionally with. Communication on all levels within relationship is important, and in the sibling system a lack of communication or sharing of ideas would have adversely affected later relationships.

The water element contains the signs Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, bringing a depth of feeling and love to the area of relationships. Water flows towards the mysterious and mystical side of relationship, and watery types are attracted and repelled by the ‘energy’ and ‘vibrations’ of others, unable to articulate neither the invisible thread that pulls them towards another nor the impulse that drives them away. Water also idealises the sphere of relationship along with those who inhabit its terrain – siblings, partners, friends and associates. While fire may be conceptually idealistic about relationship, water is emotionally idealistic, often drawn to unrealistic relationships. Watery types are led by their feelings, aroused by empathy and compassion for another, which can contribute to a power imbalance in relationship.

With this element on these houses, the inclination is to bring sympathy, empathy and concern to the sphere of relationship. Often these feelings may not be reciprocated, and the individual feels unsupported emotionally. Water’s power to obliterate emotional separateness can create enmeshment with others. This is experienced as an ability to feel the other’s feelings (or at least what we *feel* is the other’s feelings), to serve the other’s needs and to care for another’s insecurities. This is admirable; however, within the arena of equal relationship, some may experience this as smothering or invasive. For the watery person, this sense of abandonment and emotional inequality is enormously painful, yet ultimately necessary in learning the difficult task of separateness.

With water on the cusp of these houses we enter relationship with a sense of deep connection, moved by our need to nurture, fuse or merge with the other, probably first experiencing enmeshment within the sibling system. This could have manifested in many ways: being bound together in the sibling system because of a dysfunctional family atmosphere, through sharing inappropriate feelings with the siblings, through a powerful secret binding the siblings together or through being caretaker for an other sibling. Water confuses boundaries, and when it is important to separate, the person may be unable to leave. When it is important to be there, the person may be unavailable. The flow of water fuses and merges with what it encounters and therefore is not always comfortable within this sphere of separateness. However the transformational power of water is discovered and celebrated through its multi-layered relationships with equal others.

The cusp of a house or in this case the cusps of a trinity of houses are gateways, which open into a new realm of experience. The cusps of these three houses are gates, which open onto the territories of relationship. In these houses we find not only the soul mates of our lives, but the relics, symbols, images, feelings, patterns and memories of relationship. Astrological wisdom

reminds us of the archaic link between our primary relationships and our adult ones. Each individual's horoscope contains this wisdom embedded in the houses of relationship which weave the images of the sibling, the partner and the friend into one true soul mate.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jung introduces the Electra Complex as “a daughter develops a special liking for the father, with a correspondingly jealous attitude towards the mother.” Carl Jung, *The Collected Works, Volume 4: Freud and Psychoanalysis*, translated by RFC Hull, Routledge & Kegan Paul (London: 1961), 347-8.

<sup>2</sup> For an astrological commentary on the psychoanalytic fathers and their sibling dynamics see Brian Clark, *The Sibling Constellation*, Penguin (London: 1999).

<sup>3</sup> The fourth house is a template for attachment styles, bonding and intimacy.

<sup>4</sup> For an amplification of this archetype see Brian Clark, *Mythic Signs: The Zodiacal Imagination* (Melbourne: 2002) available from Astro\*Synthesis, 407 Johnston Street, Abbotsford 3067 or Brian Clark, “Gemini: Searching for the Missing Twin”, *The Mountain Astrologer*, Issue #91, June/July 2000.