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Judging the Revolution Figure (Solar Return Chart)

IN THE LAST two chapters we have looked at predictions made from the natal chart with its directions and profections. We have included the positions of the planets at the time of the annual revolution and seen how important they can be for accurately gauging the effects of these techniques; but until now we have considered them only as transits relative to the nativity. Now the time has come to include the complete revolution figure – in modern terminology, the solar return chart – in our judgements, employing the principles laid out in Chapter 5.

We begin by re-examining some of the examples discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 to see what additional or confirmatory information the revolution figures have to offer, before moving on to entirely new examples. As a result, this chapter will be the longest in the book. It is also arguably the most important, as it attempts to set out an integrated method of judging the overall results of any year of life. It concludes with an in-depth look at an extended period in the life of a single native, similar to the first example of Chapter 6, but this time employing the full range of techniques discussed rather than directions alone.

Another look at travel and romance

Let us begin with the last example of the preceding chapter, still fresh in our minds, of the native who spent most of age 24 travelling abroad – and, while doing so, initiated a long-term romantic relationship with a woman from another country. The two major chronocrators in that year were Venus, divisor of the ascendant, which had returned to its natal position (in the sign of the annual profection) within a couple of degrees, and Mars, which ruled the year.

With regard to Venus, we may note that it is powerfully angular in the revolution (figure 18), confirming its major impact in this year of life. More particularly, we see that Mars is not only a universal significator of travel and conjunct the Sun as ruler of the ninth house

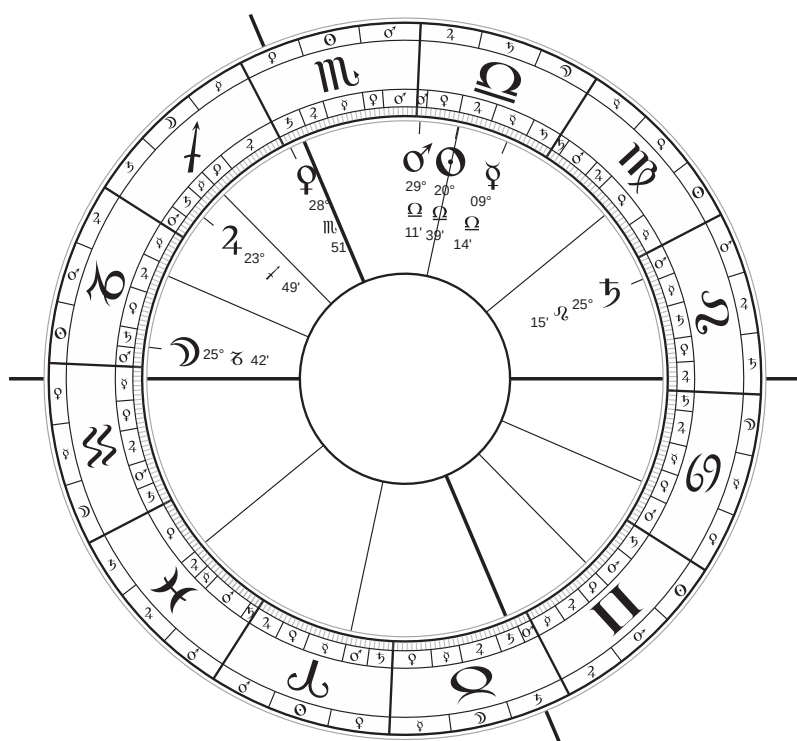


Figure 18: Native K, revolution 24.

of travel in the nativity: both planets also occupy the ninth house of the revolution (the Sun being partilely on the house cusp), strongly reinforcing that signification. This illustrates the principle of the ruler of the year managing or channelling the influence of higher-level chronocrators, as Venus, significator of love and ruler of the seventh house, manifested its results through the foreign journeys indicated by Mars.

Another look at honours and awards

We now return to the series of revolutions coinciding with professional honours in a single nativity discussed in Chapter 6 (pp. 77–82). The native (figure 19) made a name for himself with the publication of his

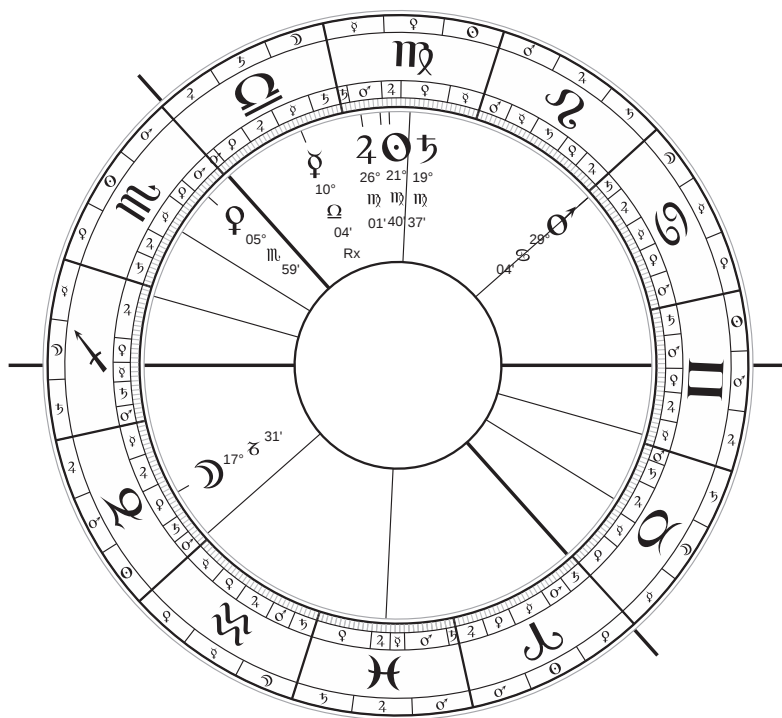


Figure 19: Nativity J.

first scholarly work at the age of 21, and we noted that this coincided not only with the direction of the ascendant through the terms of Venus (ruler of the midheaven in the tenth quadrant house), encountering the trine aspects of Saturn and the Sun, but also with both benefics – Jupiter and Venus – casting their aspects into those terms (14°–22° Capricorn) at the time of the revolution. To this we may add the fact that the annual profection had reached Virgo, making Mercury ruler of the year, which agrees well with the benefic influences manifesting through writing.

In the chart of the revolution (figure 20), we now see that Jupiter and Venus are not only highly dignified by exaltation and domicile, respectively, in addition to occupying their own terms, but are also angular: Jupiter in the first house, Venus in the fourth. This confirms

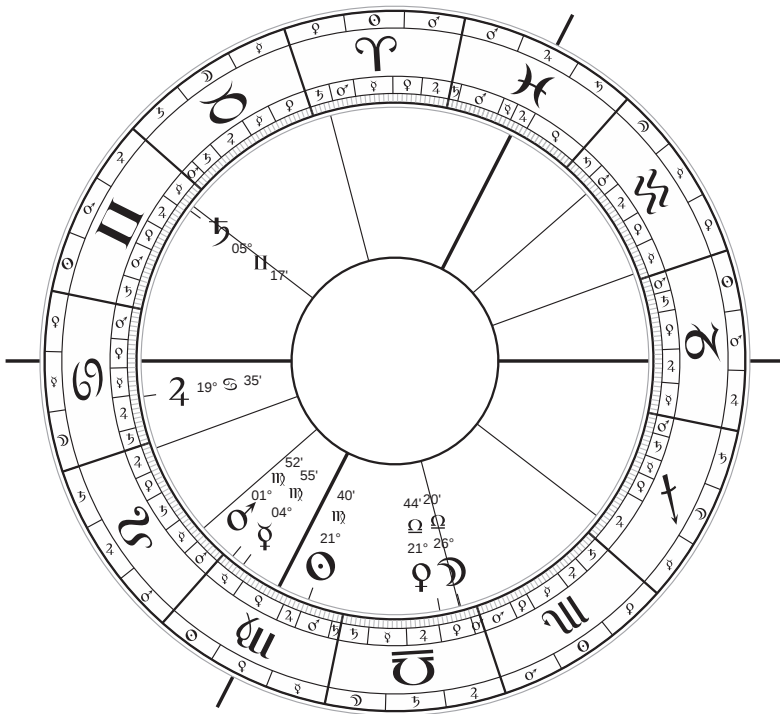


Figure 20: Native J, revolution 21.

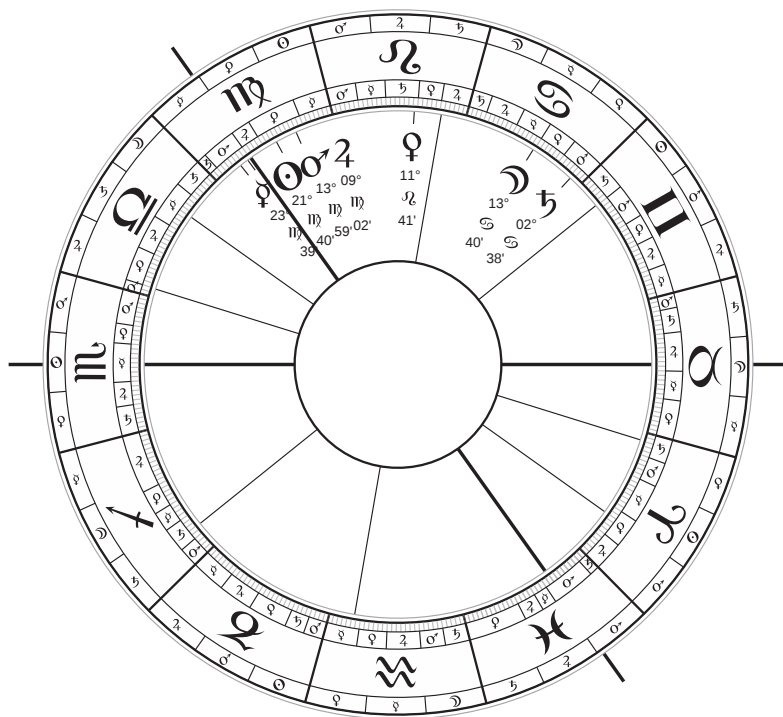


Figure 21: Native J, revolution 23.

their ability to act, that is, to manifest the fortunate potential indicated by their natures and dignities. The Sun as promissor had by definition returned to its natal position – thus repeating its trine aspect to the directed ascendant – and was similarly angular in the fourth house.

We next noted that the native received a royal academy award for his book at age 23, when the midheaven was directed to the sextile of the Sun in the terms of Jupiter (19° – 24°) in Scorpio. In the revolution for that year (figure 21), the Sun as promissor is partilely conjunct the midheaven – as classical a configuration for ‘honours from the king’ as it is possible to get – and closely conjunct Mercury in its domicile/exaltation. This dignified and highly angular Mercury casts a trine aspect into the terms of the directed ascendant as well as a sextile into those of the midheaven.

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Critical Times and Periods Within a Year

PINPOINTING THE TIME of an expected event, or even just predicting general ups and downs over the course of a year, is perhaps the most difficult part of annual prediction. It is not unlike having landed in a vast city and trying to pick your way through the maze of streets that looked so neatly laid out from the air. Nevertheless, it is often possible to identify in advance, at least broadly and conjecturally, the times at which themes and events signified by the chronocrators in a year will manifest.

The most important factor in subdividing a year of life would be the ascendant or another major significator changing terms by direction, which may happen at any time during a year; but in most nativities, most years will lack such a shift, and in any case we often want a way of breaking the year up into more than just two parts. Abū Maʿshar presents a bewildering array of methods for this purpose – many of which seem quite impracticable, and bring to mind ar-Rijāl’s colourful description of Abū Maʿshar as ‘a man gathering firewood in the dark’¹ – but in my experience, the most consistently reliable tool is real-time transits. In fact, other techniques used for subdividing a year may function less reliably not because they are in themselves invalid, but because they are so far down the predictive hierarchy that they can be trumped by a powerful transit.

General indications of early or late events

As mentioned previously, separating aspects in the figure of the revolution can signify events that are already wholly or partly in the past. A logical extension of that principle would be for the distance (in time or space) within which *applying* configurations perfect to be an indication of how soon the event signified will manifest. Although I have not seen this explicitly stated by any ancient author, my own experience suggests that such is indeed the case: an aspect that is partile or quite close to perfecting in the revolution is more likely to correspond to an early event, whereas an aspect that is far from perfecting, formed across sign borders, and/or involves a planet changing direction, may manifest closer to the end of the year.

We have already seen examples of this above. In the revolution of the man who drowned within weeks of his forty-seventh birthday (p. 138), Mercury, which was both the promissor (*anaereta*) and ruler of the year, was partilely conjunct Saturn on the cusp of the eighth house; both planets were also partilely conjunct *natal* Mercury. Conversely, in the revolution of the woman whose wedding was brought forward so as to take place at the very end of her twenty-second year of life (p. 130), Mercury – once more ruler of the year, and also divisor of the ascendant – first seemed to be separating from Jupiter (ruler of the seventh house) but eventually changed direction and perfected the aspect after some weeks. More instances will be discussed below.

Identifying key transits

As noted in Chapter 4, the most important transits are those *of* the chronocrators and *to* the directed places of the signifiers; and to these we may add transits to the natal places of the chronocrators. This is as true of the ongoing transits during the year as it is of the ‘freeze-frame’ transits at the time of the revolution – but with the important additional consideration of the varying velocities of the planets: the

transit of the Moon, which covers some 13° of the ecliptic per day, obviously cannot be used analogously to that of Saturn, which on average travels the same distance in a year.

As also mentioned previously (in Chapter 5), Abū Maʿshar at the very end of his treatment of transits in annual prediction states as a rule that if a transit configuration occurs between two planets that were already configured in the nativity, it signifies an event with an old cause; if the planets were configured only in the revolution, the cause is recent; and if neither, the cause is unknown. Turning this principle around, if two planets are configured in the revolution (and even more surely if they were also configured in the nativity), the event signified by that configuration may be expected to occur when it repeats in transit. It is not entirely clear to me whether Abū Maʿshar was talking about a real-time aspect between two transiting planets or about one planet transiting the revolution placement of another, but in my own experience, the former is the more common scenario.

Like real-time aspect configurations, the real-time zodiacal dignity or debility and solar phases of the planets involved are important in judging the effects of transits. In particular, the stations of the five non-luminary planets – turning retrograde (first station) and direct again (second station) – often quite literally signify turning points, that is, definite changes for better or worse.

A final question is whether transits to the revolution itself – through its houses and over its planets and aspect points – are astrologically meaningful. Abū Maʿshar, unsurprisingly, wants transits to be considered relative to not just two, but three sets of houses: those of the nativity, the profection, and the revolution. This is not something I would personally recommend, but I have seen appropriate transits both through houses and to planetary positions in the revolution just a little too often to dismiss them. I do, however, consider them something of

a finishing touch, similar and related to the ‘lesser condition’ of ‘Umar at-Ṭabarī discussed below.

Example revisited: on the wings of love

In the previous chapter (p. 125) we examined the nativity of a woman who, as the ascendant was directed through the terms of Venus (ruler of the seventh house) with the trine of Venus falling in them, conquered her fear of flying in order to start a new life with her new-found partner (figure 58). As discussed in that chapter, Venus in the revolution was powerfully placed but applying by square to Mars in the seventh house. Let us now consider the transits.

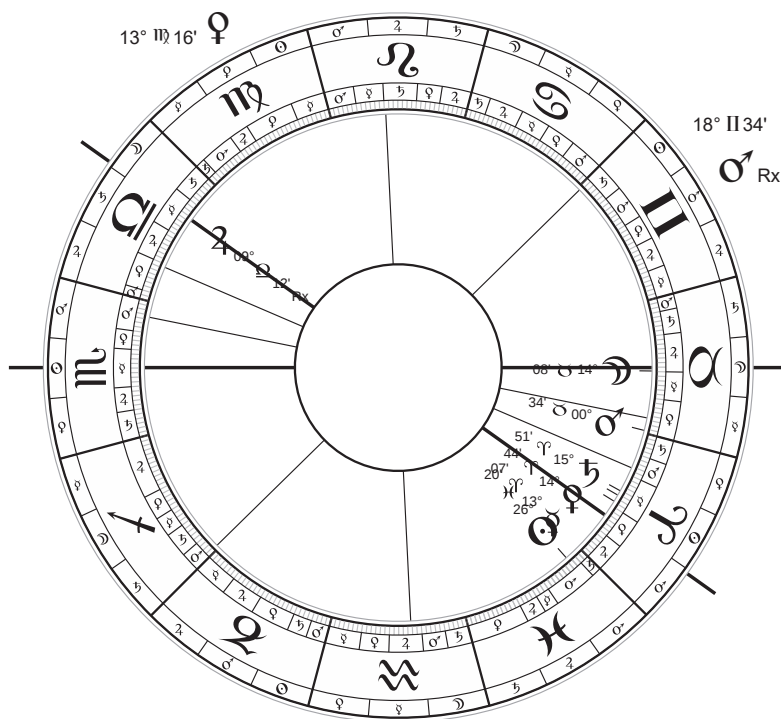


Figure 58: Nativity H, noon transits on 15 November, 2007.