

The Composite Chart

Although most successful astrological techniques have long histories of usage which may go back as far as the ancient Greeks and Babylonians, the composite chart is by these standards brand-new. It probably has its origins in Germany in the 1920's, but it only came into use when John Townley introduced it in America in the early 1970's. Unlike the plethora of other new and often doubtful techniques which were being tried out during this period, the composite chart turned out to be so consistently and often brilliantly revealing that it was taken up by virtually every astrologer and a generation later has become a standard technique for analyzing personal relationships.

The concept is so simple it's a wonder no one thought of it earlier. A composite chart is simply a horoscope made up of the mutual midpoints between the natal charts of two different persons — the composite Sun is located at the midpoint between the two natal Suns, the composite Moon is at the midpoint between the two natal Moons, and so on. What results is a new, artificially-produced horoscope that literally describes the interface between the two personalities: the shoreline where one leaves off and the other begins. Like any coastline, it may be even and easygoing at one point and convoluted and forbidding at another. And, like any shore, it is subject to fair and stormy weather.

This astrological "weather" is the repeating transits of the planets and Lights which, as in the case of physical coastlines, have literally created the shape of the coastline to begin with. It is a mathematical phenomenon, described by the numbers themselves that are used to construct the composite chart to combine the two personalities. For instance, we know each person experiences regular daily, monthly, and yearly transits to his/her natal sun, giving that point a rising and falling rhythm. The composite sun is precisely that point where any of these rhythms shift over from one person to the other, shift from relative increase to decrease and vice-versa, one to another. It is really a critical, phase-shift, handshake point where one person (usually without knowing it) hands the ball to the other with a mutual shift of energy and responsibility. It is a point of mutual empowerment, the swing point where one gives over to the other at the most primal level. As the transits roll by, the individual solar rhythms continually recreate this transfer point establishing a separate, mutual rhythm unique to the relationship. This happens not only to the two individual's natal Suns, but to all their other natal bodies as well; and when you connect the points, you begin to describe this composite shoreline.

Like any natal chart, this physical/mathematical combo takes on a life of its own which may be quite different from that of the two individuals from which it has sprung. Two persons who both have easy aspects between the Lights may find they have a composite Sun/Moon square which may be quite difficult to deal with — difficult in ways with which the two are natively quite unfamiliar which makes them wonder just what is going on. Conversely, persons who may have quite a struggle by themselves in certain areas, may find that the relationship all by itself seems to magically free them to function better than either could alone. It is here that the relationship does indeed become revealed as more than the sum of its parts.

Since the composite chart (and by extension the relationship itself) is created by the combination of repetitive individual cycles and their mutual exchange, the longer two people are together, the stronger the effect of the composite chart as it ingrains itself and achieves a momentum of its own. This makes good aspects more reliable and makes bad habits repeat themselves and very much contributes to the long-term strengths and weaknesses of a relationship. Since both strengths and problems in most relationships tend to sustain themselves at an unconscious level and are thus often difficult to control or change, the composite chart becomes a matchless tool for throwing light on the workings of the relationship and opening it to conscious development and growth. It is probably the first thing both partners should look at when establishing a relationship. They should continually refer to it as time goes by during which they will become much more in control of how the relationship develops and will be less likely to be carried away by circumstances outside of their understanding.

It may be said that some marriages or partnerships were meant to be and others not meant to be. Composite charts most certainly indicate this immediately, but using them to begin with gives both partners a kind of control they previously would not have had and enables them to fix to some extent that which should otherwise have been avoided and to maximize benefits that might otherwise have been taken for granted. It enables both partners, if they are willing to take the individual responsibility, not to be controlled by this strange third party, that a relationship itself becomes, but to step in and out of it to their mutual advantage. This is actually quite a modern, revolutionary idea, particularly where marriages are concerned. In the past, both partners have been considered to be slaves to the marriage which must by agreement dominate their lives, however well it is working out. The Reformation's message was: if it doesn't work out, divorce. This new view of relationships, in recognizing that any two persons are dealing with a powerful but manipulatable third party made up by the interaction of the two of them, allows both to slip out and become individuals when it is better to do so and to ride the power of the relationship when both will benefit. Just as the composite chart itself describes the subtleties of mutual empowerment, the use of the technique further empowers those involved and allows them further control over their lives which otherwise would have been unwittingly denied them. In astrology, as elsewhere, knowledge is power: blind fate is

the child of ignorance, and destiny is an afterthought of what you should have considered (and acted upon) in the first place.

INTRODUCING THE PLAYERS

When analyzing this composite chart, you will be looking at four different levels of understanding which represent four different sections or layers of the relationship. They are Planets, Signs, Houses and Aspects. Planets (10) include the eight known planets (besides Earth, Sun and Moon) are the driving wheels of the chart. They are the energy sources that interact to make up the dynamics of the relationship from which everything derives or modifies their natures and influence. Each planet has its own contribution to the whole: Sun gives life force, Mars gives physical energy, Saturn creates limits, and so on. If beneficially interacting or modified, their overall effect will be positive and in concert. If positioned poorly, they may conflict and detract from each other, causing problem areas in the relationship.

SIGNS (12) may be seen as filters through which the energies and influences of the planets pass, giving them a particular stylistic twist and coloring the overall picture in characteristic hues. The Sun's rays and inner light, for instance, are consistent throughout the signs of the Zodiac; but as they pass through Gemini, they have a special lightness and clarity, through Scorpio, a darker and deeper coloration, and so on, each sign selectively letting more of certain characteristics than others pass through.

HOUSES (12) are the personal landscapes onto which these influences are brought to earth. Whereas the planets and signs have more to do with energy and style, the houses are, by and large, quite physical and behavioral in nature. They cover physical areas like property, children, partners and behavioral areas like sex, travel, or recreation. Where the effects of the planets fall by house will be where you see them manifested in your immediate lives and surroundings.

ASPECTS (5) are the angles at which the planetary impulses reach earth and either combine, conflict, or pass each other by entirely. These largely determine the kind of action, or lack of it, you will experience in the relationship, because they are the motivating forces in interaction. Mars (energy) blending nicely with Saturn (limitation) can mean well-controlled and focused energy. The same two at odds with one another can mean a debilitating energy drain or limits that are broken when they should not be. Add the signs and houses to these, and you'll find where it happens in life and with what kind of style and coloration.

Combine 10 planets with 12 signs, 12 houses, and 5 aspects and the number of possible blends becomes, appropriately, astronomical — a broad palette, indeed. Add further the Ascendant and the Moon's nodes, each having their own special place in the picture, and the possibilities are numerous and the knowledge you gain becomes exceedingly fruitful. In such an in-depth study many other factors that defy computer analysis come into play: integration of signature planetary patterns, interdependent midpoint structures, symbolic degree areas, elemental and proximity weighting,

progressions, transits, cycle phases, and a host of other technologies that add enormously to the detail and background and in some cases may even contradict what a simpler readout might suggest. There is no substitute for human expertise.

The greater use you can derive from this kind of presentation, therefore, is an introduction to a host of intricacies of your relationship that you likely did not know were there. Once these intricacies are spotted, you have the opportunity to take better advantage of what is already going for you and more effectively grapple with problems that were hidden or only partially-revealed before. Perhaps the greatest benefit of all may be an expanded awareness of the structure of relationships and the realization that you have a great deal more power over how they proceed than you might previously have thought. Herewith are some of the most elementary tools for exercising that power; use them well and they will lead you on to higher planes of human interaction and personal empowerment.