

# The Use of the Tropical Zodiac and the Nature of the Signs in the Esoteric Astrology of Alice Bailey

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## The Cosmic Context

As students of the esoteric occultism of Alice Bailey and the Tibetan Master know, the magnificence of the infinite cosmos expresses itself through orders upon orders of celestial life, extending from formless lives on high to the more tangible versions below. Thus, the Divine Journey from the Unknown Absolute at rest within itself to the manifold dimensions of the manifested creation embraces and expresses itself through great Logocentric Lives at high levels of vibrational being as well as through specific embodied Lives in the tangible spheres of life.

At the tangible end of this spectrum are the Lives which animate the constellations of the zodiac, the star groupings which from the perspective of the Earth are seen distributed through the region of the sky known as the ecliptic. Often described as an imaginary belt surrounding the Earth, the ecliptic itself is nothing other than the plane of our solar system. From the perspective of Earth, it is the swath of the sky through which the Sun, Moon, and planets are seen to pass. It's this region which also contains the star groupings which the Tibetan refers to as the zodiacal constellations.

Understanding the zodiacal constellations is critical to a full comprehension of the spiritual teachings given in *Esoteric Astrology* by Alice Bailey. These constellations constitute fundamental building blocks of the esoteric teaching on evolutionary astrology as given by the Tibetan for use in the New or Aquarian Age. In fact, the zodiacal constellations constitute some of the big, general, and inclusive themes overarching the smaller, specific details of the esoteric astrological system. This relationship of general to specific is a reincarnation of the ever-relevant occult dictum that right esoteric study should proceed from universals to particulars. In this context, the Tibetan framed the matter this way: the general concepts concerning the signs of the zodiac should be considered and taken to heart well before the details of the esoteric astrological system are broached.<sup>1</sup> In other words, students should start by gaining an understanding of the zodiacal constellations, and then work their ways down to the more detailed levels of the teaching, such as the triple rulership system and the esoteric natures of the planets. Many students want to start with a consideration of what the planets in specific signs and houses of the chart signify. But, according to the Tibetan, to do so is to start from the wrong end of the stick by emphasizing details over general principles. Not the right approach, says esoteric occultism. When it comes to the use of esoteric astrology as either a contemplative or an interpretive device, start with the zodiacal constellations.

## Zodiacal Constellations and Signs of the Zodiac Contrasted

The first thing to know in this regard is that the zodiacal constellations and the signs of the zodiac are in fact two very different things, a distinction of importance fully acknowledged by the Tibetan Master when he stated through the stenographic writings of Alice Bailey, "In the understanding of the significance of the distinction between constellations as galaxies of stars, and signs as concentrated influence will come fresh light upon the science of astrology."<sup>2</sup> Obviously, it is necessary that these two terms – constellations and signs - be defined and clearly comprehended.

The Tibetan offered a plainly stated definition for only one of these terms: constellation. A constellation he defined as "...two or more solar systems or series of suns with their attendant planets."<sup>3</sup> In this sense, then, a constellation is any grouping of at least two stars (or suns, which is what stars are), though a constellation as the Tibetan defined it may also be constituted of at least two "sequences" or internal subgroupings of stars, which would make a constellation pretty well chock full of stars. However,

the Tibetan also alluded to constellations as “galaxies of stars,” as in the passage quoted above. An entire galaxy’s worth of stars would of course encompass quite a bit more than “two or more” stars and possibly greater than two or more sequences of stars as well. So exactly what did he mean – two or more stars, two or more groups of stars, or entire galaxies?

A word or two from modern astronomical knowledge might help simplify this complexity. As now widely recognized, galaxies are constituted of vast numbers of stars, perceived from the vantage point of planet Earth to be positioned in all directions of space, not just along the swath of space where the zodiacal constellations are found. Thus, it is not likely that the Tibetan meant that his “galaxies of stars” comment be taken in any literal sense. Instead, in all probability he employed the term “galaxy” in this regard as a bit of hyperbole intended to emphasize the difference between constellations as collections of star systems, and signs as something other. Thus, the zodiacal constellations are not literally galaxies, such as the Milky Way Galaxy of which our solar system is a member, or such as the other relatively nearby galaxies, but simply groups made of many stars. In fact, these groups of many stars constituting the zodiacal constellations are all located within the same galaxy (The Milky Way Galaxy) as is our solar system. True galaxies, then, they are not, but groups of stars they are. Thus, the word “constellation” simply means a group of stars constituted of at least two suns.

Such groups of many stars are to be contrasted with the signs of the zodiac, the Tibetan pointed out. As for the definition of the signs of the zodiac according to the Tibetan, that is a complex matter. The word *sign* in the astrological context refers to a division of the ecliptic, so the word *ecliptic* must be understood as well. The ecliptic is essentially the plane of the solar system as seen from planet Earth. Earthlings see the ecliptic in the southern sky of our planet as the belt of the heavens through which the Sun, Moon, and planets appear to move in a twenty-four-hour period. Though all these bodies certainly have some kind of motion of their own, the main reason why they are thus seen to pass from east to west in the southern sky is the daily rotation of the Earth on its own axis. This motion takes our planet ever rolling eastward and hence brings a new portion of the sky into view while it simultaneously obscures from view another portion of the sky in the west.

As a result, any point on Earth experiences a 360-degree view of the sky in a day’s time. The ecliptic is nothing but a mathematical representation and measuring system for the resulting 360-degree view of the sky. Obviously then, the ecliptic can be represented as a circle. The planets, the Sun, and the Moon can be perceived and mapped within this 360-degree frame of reference or circle. When divided into twelve equal segments of thirty degrees each, this circle becomes the zodiac of astrological signs. However, there are at least three starting points from which this dividing and measuring of the circle may commence.

First, the ecliptic may be divided into twelve equal sections starting with the positions of the bright stars such as Aldebaran, Regulus, and Antares, assigning these the positions of 15 degrees Taurus, Leo, and Scorpio respectively, and allotting the remaining sections accordingly. This is the approach which was taken by the Babylonian and Egyptian astrologies in the centuries leading up to 0 C.E.<sup>4</sup>

Second, a single bright star near the ecliptic may be singled out as a beginning point from which to mark out twelve even divisions of the ecliptic. This is the approach embraced by the traditional astrology of India and of western sidereal astrology, both of which assign the star Spica the value of either 29 degrees Virgo or 0 degrees Libra, and allot the remaining sections accordingly.<sup>5</sup> These systems of mapping the ecliptic are called sidereal, after the Latin word *sidus* for star. All sidereal systems are based on measurement of space using visible star groupings.

Third, the ecliptic may be divided and measured on the basis of the points in space against which the Sun is seen when Earth is experiencing the equinoxes and solstices. This last approach has been embraced by the bulk of western astrology since approximately 127 B.C.E. when the Greek astronomer Hipparchus identified the phenomena of the precession of the equinoxes and conceptualized the twelve equal divisions of the ecliptic based on the equinoctial-solstitial framework.<sup>6</sup> This approach is called the tropical

system of astrology, not because it has anything to do with bright and sunny beaches, but because it is founded upon the same astronomical fundamentals that result in the weather zones on our planet, which are bounded by the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Hence, it is the tropical astrological system, which is to say, a system founded on the astronomical fundamentals which generate the seasons and weather zones on our planet. In this system, the signs of the zodiac are mathematical creations, precise, even, and regular 30-degree sections of space measured along the ecliptic.

Use of the tropical system generates completely different sign positions for celestial bodies from that which the sidereal system yields. That's one reason it's so important to know about the two systems and their different starting points. However, there's a second reason the esoteric student needs to know about the tropical and sidereal systems. It has to do with the technical indicator of the astrological ages, such as the Ages of Pisces and Aquarius so often discussed in the Alice Bailey literature.

The technical indicator of the changing astrological ages is referred to as the precession of the equinoxes. The precession of the equinoxes is a celestial motion caused by the migration of the tropical frame of reference within the sidereal frame of reference. Yes, you read that correctly. The tropical frame of reference results from the Earth-Sun relationship. It's closer to home, and that's why it can be seen to move in comparison to the stars much farther out in space. It's this movement of one frame of reference within another which is the basis of the precession of the equinoxes.

Knowledge of the precession of the equinoxes has been an item of esoteric initiatory knowledge for millennia on our planet. For example, a measurement for the length of the precessional cycle was apparently built into certain dimensions of the Great Pyramid by its prescient designers.<sup>7</sup> Exactly when such knowledge is certain to have been recognized by at least a privileged initiatory group hinges upon the dates accepted for construction of the Great Pyramid. Conventional archaeology places the construction of this great monument at about 2500 B.C., but recent research by innovative thinkers undaunted by the prevailing academic paradigm has pegged the date of construction for some of the monuments of the Great Pyramid complex at 10,500 B.C.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is possible that knowledge of the precessional cycle has been present on Earth for some 12,000 years or more.

By contrast, knowledge of the precessional cycle has been present in western exoteric science just over two thousand years, having been acknowledged in approximately 127 B.C.E. when Greek astronomer, astrologer, and mathematician Hipparchus realized from his lengthy and painstaking celestial observations that the position of the spring equinox point shifted very slowly against the background of stars, moving at the rate of one degree of space every 72 years. This discovery marked the moment in the timeline of science, mathematics, and astronomy at which the sidereal and tropical systems for mapping the celestial globe were definitively demarcated one from the other. It was at this point that forward thinking minds realized that much greater accuracy of celestial position could be produced by a system based on divisions of ecliptical space which were absolutely equal (as in the tropical system), as opposed to divisions of ecliptical space which were dependent upon the highly irregular shapes and sizes of the zodiacal constellations. From that moment forward, the tropical system became the dominant mapping system used in Mediterranean celestial observation and philosophy, from which western astrology was spawned.

As a result, western astrology in the modern world operates from within a zodiac which has its starting mark located at the point in front of which the Sun is perceived on the day of the Spring Equinox in the northern hemisphere. That day becomes the first day of the astrological year, and the corresponding point in the ecliptic against which the Sun is seen that day becomes zero degrees Aries. From that point forward, twelve segments of thirty degrees each may be marked out. These are the twelve signs of the western astrological zodiac. They are perfectly even and equal mathematical divisions of the ecliptic.

It should be noted that each of the three methods (described above) for marking off the circle of the ecliptic yields, as a result, significantly different degree and sign positions for the various celestial bodies which may be perceived in and therefore mapped in the circle of the ecliptic. However, these three

methods are all alike in that all are simply methods for dividing the circle of the ecliptic into twelve equal segments. In this regard, they stand apart from the mapping of the ecliptic on the basis of actual visual star groupings, or the constellations which can be seen in the region of the ecliptic. These constellations (though of the same names as the signs of the zodiac) vary greatly in size, with some small and angled away from the ecliptic, others vast and sprawling. For that reason, the shapes and sizes of the constellations (i.e., the visible star groupings) are not conducive to the uniform measurement of space.

The uniform measurement of space must, however, be accomplished, if the movements of the Sun, Moon, and planets are to be observed and predicted accurately. Thus, an absolutely even measuring system is required. Any of the methods of dividing the ecliptic into twelve absolutely equal sectors accomplish that purpose. The zodiacal signs have arisen within the development of astrology (and ancient astronomy as well) for this purpose and are mathematical entities resulting from the equal divisions of the ecliptic; by contrast, constellations are actual star groupings of various sizes. It is needful to hold this difference in mind, for as the Tibetan has stated, "In the understanding of the significance of the distinction between constellations as galaxies of stars, and signs as concentrated influence will come fresh light upon the science of astrology."<sup>9</sup>

However, the immediate question for students of the Ageless Wisdom is as follows: which one of the methods for dividing the ecliptic into sign sectors accurately reflects the concentrated influences to which the Tibetan referred, the recognition of which is to bring fresh light on the science of astrology? The answer to that question might be had by determining which of the systems for dividing the ecliptic was used by the Master Djwhal Khul in his dictations given through Alice Bailey.

Sufficient evidence exists that the equinoctial-solstitial framework was the ecliptical division system from within which the Tibetan spoke. Perhaps the most arresting item of such evidence is the statement given by the Tibetan to disciple Eugene Cosgrove (ISGL in *Discipleship in the New Age I and II*) that Cosgrove was born in the sign Gemini.<sup>10</sup>

Author of *The Science of the Initiates* (published by Lucis Publishing Company in 1934), *Letters to a Disciple* (Ashram Press of Chicago, 1935), and *The High Walk of Discipleship* (Ashram Press, Chicago, 1945), Eugene Milne Cosgrove was born on June 1, 1886.<sup>11</sup> The Sun is in Gemini on this date each year only in the mapping system based on the equinoctial-solstitial framework, which is to say, the western tropical system (the one used by most astrologers in the west since the second century B.C.E.) In the sidereal system used in India and by some western siderealist astrologers, Gemini does not begin until June 15. The Egyptian-Babylonian zodiac structured on Aldebaran, Regulus, and Antares would present approximately the same divergence of dates. Thus, the Tibetan's astrological frame of reference was without a doubt tropical in his statement to Cosgrove.

Further, consider the following. The Tibetan equated June with Sun in Gemini<sup>12</sup> and August with Sun in Leo.<sup>13</sup> In the sidereal system, the Sun is in Gemini for only half of the month of June, while in the tropical system, the Sun is in Gemini for two-thirds of the month of June. So with August, for in the sidereal system, the Sun is in Leo only one half of the month of August, while in the tropical system, the Sun is in Leo for a full two-thirds of the month of August. Thus, on measure of sheer probability, it would appear that the greater likelihood is that the Tibetan was referring to the dates of the Sun signs as given in the tropical system.

Then there is the matter of the various spiritual festivals held throughout the year. The Three Spiritual Festivals were placed by the Tibetan to follow the Spring Equinox,<sup>14</sup> which is of course a key point in the tropical system, but not in the sidereal (either based on the positions of Spica or upon those of Aldebaran, Regulus, and Antares). In particular, the Tibetan stated that the first of these Festivals would fall on the first full moon of Spring and be called the Festival of Easter. Easter itself is defined in the civil calendar by the western Christian faith as the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. That the Tibetan called this Festival by the name of Easter and placed it on the first full moon following the beginning of the tropically defined astrological year strongly suggests that to the Tibetan, the

equinoctial-solstitial frame of reference was not only relevant but central. This argues for the tropical frame of reference as legitimate and reliable.

Further, placing the Three Spiritual Festivals on the three full moons following spring equinox suggests that the festivals themselves have to do with the increase of solar power, which is only entirely dominant over the darkness or night force (in the northern hemisphere) during the time when the Sun is seen against the divisions of the ecliptic known as the tropical signs of Aries, Taurus, and Gemini. This again suggests that the equinoctial-solstitial (or tropical) frame of reference is basic and fully accepted in the way that Hierarchy analyzes energies and plans spiritual observations.

So also does the placement of the Festival of the New Group of World Servers, held every seventh year during the period December 21 through December 28<sup>15</sup> and designed to increase the spiritual linkage of Humanity with Hierarchy. The December dates on which it occurs are not particularly notable in the sidereal calendar, falling in the early part of sidereal Sagittarius. However, December 21 in the tropical system is a standout date, for it is almost always the date of the winter solstice itself, a time point in the calendar year recognized as sacred by many spiritual traditions. The week of the NGWS Festival therefore would in the tropical system be firmly attached to a key time point in the astrological year, the first week following the point at which amount of daylight begins to increase after its steep decline initiated at autumn equinox. This dramatic *return of light* theme would seem to be entirely in keeping with the intent of the NGWS Festival, which seeks to bring spiritual light to Humanity. Thus, placement of this Festival seems to have been determined by association with both the symbolic and real occult power in the winter solstice point.

Speaking of December in particular, the Tibetan simply equated the month of December to the influence of Capricorn in one passage,<sup>16</sup> which equivalence is only true in the tropical system, for Capricorn does not begin until January 15 in the sidereal system. So this taken together with the placement of the Festival of the NGWS in late December essentially at the winter solstice constitutes a rather convincing two-punch argument supporting the contention that the Tibetan spoke from within the tropical frame of reference. There would be no other reason to situate the Festival of the New Group of World Servers at the winter solstice.

Finally, as further evidence suggesting that the Tibetan spoke from within the tropical or equinoctial-solstitial frame of reference, it might be mentioned that the tropical mapping system was used by the Theosophical astrologer Alan Leo,<sup>17</sup> whom the Tibetan pronounced closer to the esoteric position than certain others, and by astrological enthusiast Roberto Assagioli, who was a personal student of the Tibetan's.<sup>18</sup> If the Theosophical astrologer Alan Leo was right on this, just as the Tibetan said he was on other things, then it would appear that the western tropical system for establishing the divisions of the ecliptic and thereby the astrological signs is the one referred to by the Tibetan. The same could be said for Assagioli's example, for if under the guiding influence of the Tibetan Master's mental and spiritual radiations, Assagioli was moved to think in tropical terms, this but adds weight to the growing list of reasons which suggest that the tropical or equinoctial-solstitial frame of reference was sanctioned by the Tibetan Master.

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It is therefore to the signs of the zodiac which attention must be directed; it is they which function as regions of *concentrated influence*, as the Tibetan phrased it. And of what nature is such influence? Simply, those of the zodiacal constellations, for as the Tibetan has stated plainly, "...when speaking of signs I am referring to the influences of the constellations as they are represented by the signs."<sup>19</sup> To cast the matter in the most essential terms, then, the following can be stated.

According to the esoteric astrological doctrine given by the Tibetan through Alice Bailey, the tropical signs of the zodiac represent the constellations of the same names. These signs function as zones in which the influences of the related constellations are concentrated. This means that, for example, the sidereal

constellation of Aries works through the tropical division of the ecliptic named Aries, the constellation of Taurus through the tropical ecliptic division named Taurus, and so on through the entire sequence of the twelve zodiacal constellations and their representative signs. Again, it should be reiterated that the signs are equal divisions of the ecliptic arranged around the solstitial-equinoctial framework rather than being defined in space by the irregularly sized visible star groupings.

Signs as such are astrologically activated when from the point of view of the Earth, the Sun is mathematically perceived in any one of them, when the planets or Moon are mathematically perceived in any one of them, or when any one of the twelve such divisions of the ecliptic is caused by the constant eastward rotation of our planet to pass over the eastern horizon, the overhead point, the western horizon, or the directly underfoot position. Yet these divisions of the ecliptic are always there, as the Earth turns continuously within this circular frame of reference. Even so, there is nothing tangible about the divisions of the ecliptic. They are mathematical and geometrical entities marked off in a circular frame of reference moored to the equinox and solstice points.

The zodiac of signs has been defined in this fashion since the twelve equal divisions of the ecliptic were conceptualized by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus in the second century B.C.E.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, constellations are actual physical groupings of stars which can be seen in the night sky with either the physical eyes or with an optical aid and which have been visible as long as humans have been on Earth. However, the zodiac of signs can never be seen in the night sky, for the distribution of the signs around the ecliptic can only be seen in some kind of figurative representation of space, such as a diagram in a book or other reference material. Signs are abstract entities; constellations are made of physical stars. However, they use the same twelve names – Aries, Taurus, and so on.

This distinction between constellations and signs would present little or no difficulty for the inquiring mind were it not for the fact that even though the zodiacal constellations (those actual star groupings perceived near the ecliptic) and the twelve divisions of the ecliptic bear the same twelve names, they are not found in exactly the same locations in space. As potentially disorienting as this fact may be, there is a simple and meaningful reason why it's so. The reason? It's the precession of the equinoxes, a factor well acknowledged and understood by all informed astrologers. Even so, the apparent contradiction has been exploited by those both inside and outside of the astrological community who would discount the relevance of the twelve equal divisions of the ecliptic. Critics of the tropical system typically find fault with it, for as they say, no planet is really ever located in this or that sign; it is, instead, found in such and such a constellation.

However, the relevance of the signs was addressed specifically by the Tibetan, who acknowledged them in a statement embedded in a discussion of the very long time cycles which govern and affect spiritual evolution on our planet, including the important precession of the equinoxes (which defines an approximately 26,000 year long cycle). In the midst of that discussion, he stated, "...when speaking of signs, I am referring to the influences of the constellations as they are represented by the signs."<sup>21</sup> There are several important implications packed within this statement.

The first and perhaps most notable point to be extracted from this statement is that the Tibetan felt called to make a distinction between the signs and the constellations. Undoubtedly, he registered a need to address this point because of questions which would inevitably arise in the minds of those who would read his dictations on the esoteric astrological topic. It is likely that the Tibetan Master knew that at least some of his readers would be well aware of the difference between the sidereal mapping system and the tropical mapping systems, the first based on visible constellations, the second upon the twelve even divisions of the ecliptic.

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An argument about the relative merit of these two mapping systems has been waged by astrologically inclined minds since the second century B.C.E. when western thinkers realized the two diverge. It was

then that observational astronomers and astrologers realized there exists a constant gradual migration of the position of the Sun as seen against the backdrop of distant stars when Earth is experiencing the equinoxes and solstices. This constant but gradual migration of the equinoctial-solstitial framework is called the precession of the equinoxes. It is the astronomical cause for the spatial divergence between the twelve even-sized divisions of the ecliptic and the constellations of the same names. These two frames of reference do not line up along a line of sight, as studied from planet Earth.

This discrepancy has given rise to an ongoing discussion about the best and most proper mapping system to use. The question is a very relevant one now in the early twenty-first century, for over the centuries, the divergence between the two mapping systems has become pronounced on account of the precession of the equinoxes - that continual, minute migration of the equinoctial-solstitial framework relative to the constellations visible near the ecliptic. Further, the sidereal constellations are not evenly sized, some taking far more and some far less than the uniform thirty-degree portion allotted to the divisions of the ecliptic, which makes the business of matching up these two frames of reference even more complex.

Fortunately, the Tibetan made very short work of resolving this otherwise thorny problem in his statement that the signs represent the constellations. In other words, the zodiacal constellations are the energy sources for the signs. From this it can be gathered that the signs express the energies generated by the star groupings in the constellations lying along the ecliptic. Thus, in essence the Tibetan said that both the constellations and the signs are factors germane to esoteric astrological considerations, while making plain that by the word *sign* he did not mean the visible star groupings lying along the ecliptic. By the word *sign*, then, he meant the twelve even sized divisions of the ecliptic, and not the sidereal constellations, as some might have assumed or wondered. It can therefore be inferred that, from the esoteric perspective, the signs of the zodiac do indeed constitute a relevant consideration. If they had not, the Tibetan would not have assigned them the important function of representing the constellations.

Thus, it can in simple and in sum be gathered that the Tibetan accepted the tropical zodiac as the one nearest in influence to the matters with which Earth-based astrologers would be concerned. In other words, the twelve even-sized divisions of the ecliptic are indeed the windows and doors through which the energies of the zodiacal constellations gain entrance to our region of experience. Such a model is completely in keeping with the general principles laid down by the Tibetan in regard to the hierarchies of influence which constitute the life of space, for it features a means by which the influence of greater lives is passed on to lesser lives. Here, the greater lives are those embodied in the zodiacal constellations, the lesser lives our solar system and all units within it, and the signs (or divisions of the ecliptic) the means by which influence is transmitted from the greater to the lesser.

An important and illuminating point to consider in this regard is the fact that the signs of the tropical zodiac arise from the astronomical fundamentals which define the Earth to Sun relationship. These fundamentals include the shape and size of the Earth's orbit around the Sun, together with the angle at which the Earth's axis of rotation is inclined to the plane of the solar system. All these factors interact to produce the angle at which sun light strikes the face of our planet at any point within the year, which is to say, the combined effect of these factors creates the seasons as they are known in the temperate climates. Further, it is these astronomical fundamentals which also produce the equinoctial - solstitial frame of reference. In other words, the astronomical fundamentals built in to the Earth-Sun relationship define the equinoctial-solstitial frame of reference. As a consequence, it could with accuracy and fairness be said that the equinoxes and solstices are indications in time and space of the particular relationship had by our planet to the Sun, a matter of importance to any serious student of esotericism, for it illuminates the relationship of our Planetary Logos to the Solar Logos.

Since the equinoctial-solstitial frame of reference is also the structure upon which the signs of the tropical zodiac are arranged, this notion can be extended to the signs themselves as well. Thus, the zodiacal signs may be understood as consequences of the particular relationship that our planet has with

the Sun, or to use the language of esotericism, the relationship that our Planetary Logos has to the Solar Logos. This is why the tropical signs may be considered relevant in the field of astrological analysis and inquiry. The tropical signs stand for phases and points in the Earth-Sun relationship, a relationship which is physically defined by the particular orbital path followed by Earth around the Sun, and the angle at which Earth's axis of rotation is inclined to the plane of the solar system, both of which are symbols for the spiritual relationship existing between Earth and Sun – which is to say, Planetary Logos and Solar Logos.

It is the entirety of the phases of relationship between Earth and Sun which have been associated by the Tibetan with the circle or cycle of the constellations lying farther out in deep space, and consequently with the representative signs of the zodiac. The Tibetan Master did not delve into this matter in the way it has been described here, electing instead to embody his thought about the matter in a pithy admonition: "...when speaking of signs I am referring to the influences of the constellations as they are represented by the signs."<sup>22</sup> That's the short course on the subject, a formulation characteristic of Hierarchy's usual method of communication via symbols packed with multiple levels and layers of meaning. However, what it implies is that the twelve even-sized divisions of the ecliptic function very nicely as conduits for the energies of the stars lying farther out in space.

Again, it might be asked why it was even necessary that such a question be broached. The answer comes in the examination of several passages from the Bailey writings which can be interpreted to indicate that there exists a fundamental flaw in the tropical or equinoctial-solstitial frame of reference. Due to those passages, it has come easily to hand for generations of Bailey students to wonder if perhaps the true "signs" were not in fact the constellations, and that therefore if not the sidereal mapping system based on bright stars were the one to use. However, the Tibetan Master anticipated and answered that question unequivocally. His answer: "...when speaking of signs I am referring to the influences of the constellations as they are represented by the signs."<sup>23</sup> Thus, if the constellations were themselves the true signs, there would have been no need for the Tibetan to have made such a statement. It can therefore be safely concluded that he well knew of the ecliptical division systems and approved of their use. As to exactly which one, evidence presented above has pointed conclusively to the tropical mapping system.

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Even so, in fairness to the principle of open and thorough discussion, the passages which have raised the question as to which he employed in his own thinking must be explored.

The issue was raised early in the pages of Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology*. There the Tibetan fired the first salvo on this question to be recorded in his explicitly astrological volume, igniting the controversy this way. "The statement is frequently made that astrology is an exact science but that is far from correct in spite of the many mathematical computations. Astrology is based, curiously enough, upon illusion for, as you well know, the zodiac is naught but the imaginary path of the sun through the heavens, and this as it appears from the standpoint of our totally insignificant planet. The sun is not, as stated, in any sign of the zodiac. It simply appears to be so as it passes between our little sphere, the Earth, and the constellations at any particular time or season."<sup>24</sup>

The key assertion in this passage is that "astrology is based on illusion." That just downright sounds bad. After all, illusion itself is misleading, corrupt, and spiritually repulsive, is it not, so doesn't this mean that all of astrology is blighted? Prickling suspicions thus alarmingly raised, the reader goes on to encounter "the zodiac is naught but an imaginary path," and "the sun is not in any sign of the zodiac." By the time all that goes down the hatch, it's a wonder anyone reads on. Such are the intended tactics employed by watchful Hierarchy in its discussion of the mysteries.

The hardy press on, wading unsuspectingly into a discussion of the precession of the equinoxes and the technical explanation for why the signs of the zodiac and the constellations are no longer lined up in space as contemplated from Earth. And there, in the midst of other matters, the reader finds that, alas, this

illusion business is not quite as condemnatory as it might seem! The despicable illusion, the reader finds, is none other than that created by observation of the solar system from a particular point. That point becomes the center of space to the observer thus positioned, though the actual center of the solar system is the Sun (a fact well known by the astrologers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries).

Apparently dismissive language notwithstanding, none of this claim of “appearance” (or illusion) succeeds in imprecating the signs of the zodiac by virtue of disproving the relationship of the Earth to the Sun upon which the signs are based, though minds unfamiliar with the technical matters of astrological mapping may easily think so. Nor is this “illusion” unveiled to be some sort of moral failing which has contaminated the astrological philosophy. Instead, it is simply a matter of physical mechanics concerning the point from which observation of space is made. On closer inspection, it’s evident that’s the “Great Illusion,” and nothing other.

That dispatched, it remains to point out that calling the zodiac an imaginary path sounds equally dismissive. Perhaps the word “imaginary” is not quite indicative of facts in this context, for as has been shown, the zodiac of signs is veritably a sequence of thirty-degree divisions of the ecliptic, and there’s nothing delusional about that. True, the zodiac of signs is not tangible, but that fact does not render it a figment of wild imaginings entertained solely by the woolly-minded. In fact, the zodiac of signs is a mathematical and geometrical reality. To some, an item of that order may well be imaginary, and perhaps it was to that perspective which the Tibetan addressed himself in this passage. However, the only real sense in which the zodiac of signs can be labeled imaginary is that it can’t be seen in the night sky. Thus, it is visible only as a mental image; therefore, perhaps, imaginal.

So, as it turns out, two of the “illusions” specified can easily be corrected via the mind, which can know greater truth than the physical eyes can sometimes see.

Yet what about the fact that the Tibetan has said the Sun is never “in” any sign of the zodiac? And by the way, don’t these assertions taken in sum and total pretty much pass judgment on astrology as nothing but a cheap bag of tricks palmed off on a gullible public? If so, it might be asked, just exactly why did a Fifth Degree initiate devote nearly 700 pages to the topic? All these questions crowd into the mind of readers who first encounter what appear to be scathing denunciations of both astrological philosophy and method.

Yet to return to the point by point refutation of that apparent dismissal, it should be said that indeed, the Sun never is “in” any sign. Rather, it is, to state the circumstance more accurately, simply seen against a portion of the ecliptic. To say that the Sun is “in” a sign is simply slang or informal language describing the actual situation. The Tibetan was quite right to point this out, though in the doing, it appears to the unwary that the whole of astrology deserves to come crashing down of its own weight in a smoldering heap of useless and outmoded ideas. Which is to say, all this raises questions as to the right method for analyzing spatial relationships – ecliptical or sidereal? For, some readers have reasoned, if the Sun is not truly in a sign, might it not then be more truly said to be in a constellation? Thus, this is one of several passages which have given rise to uncertainty as to what the Tibetan actually meant.

A further such passage can be found in *Esoteric Astrology* in a discussion of what the Tibetan calls the Great Wheel, a poetic term for the circle of the zodiac or the Wheel of Life. Once again, the Tibetan seems to issue a scathing denunciation of astrology. He states, “I have frequently referred to the fact that the entire science of astrology is based upon a non-existent condition. It has no basis in material fact and yet is eternally based on truth. The zodiac is, as you well know, the imaginary path of the Sun in the heavens. It is therefore largely an illusion, from the esoteric point of view. But at the same time the constellations exist, and the streams of energy which pass and repass, intermingle and interlock through the body of space are by no means illusions but definitely express eternal relationships.”<sup>25</sup> In this passage, astrology is apparently said to have no basis in material fact and yet to be based on truth, a Zen koan if ever there was one, while the constellations are hailed as bona fide real things. This looks like an out and out endorsement of the sidereal or constellationally-based astrological mapping system, were it not for the

inconvenient fact that this non-existent condition to which the Tibetan referred is also said to be eternally based on truth.

What, one might therefore ask, is the so-called non-existent condition, the one that “has no basis in material fact?” The answer: It is the mathematical concept of dividing the ecliptic circle into twelve equal sectors – sectors which indeed have no tangible or visible existence. That’s the so-called non-existent condition upon which astrology is based. Note, however, that this non-existent condition is “eternally” (the Tibetan’s word) based on truth, but also an illusion from the esoteric perspective.

What class or condition could possibly fit such a definition? Number principle, for one, just might. Number principle according to many a mystery tradition is an eternal truth, and it is precisely number principle which creates the division of the circle (or the One) into twelve equal divisions (symbolizing the many). In other words, the non-existent or intangible condition to which the Tibetan referred is quite very likely a metaphysical principle, that of number. This metaphysical principle is itself highly reflective of truth as expressed in the Divine Creative Process, which operates according to number and geometry, as the Tibetan himself has many times said.<sup>26</sup> But since anything manifest is contaminated with at least a modicum of illusory quality, then number principle may be sullied, tarnished with a degree of illusion to go along with the eternal truth with which it is invested.

At any rate, it is certain that the great principle upon which the tropical system is based is that of number as an agency of the Divine Creative Process, a certain type of eternal truth. This means that the signs, themselves results of number at work within the circle, can be considered legitimate considerations. The Tibetan even said so, straight out. “When we state, for instance, that the Sun is ‘in Aries’ it conveys an esoteric truth but not an exoteric fact,” he allowed,<sup>27</sup> in spite of his pronouncement to the contrary only 59 pages earlier.

An esoteric fact, but an exoteric non-fact, the signs are. So there it is. Thus, if by the phrase “Sun in Aries” the Tibetan meant the period of time from the Spring Equinox forward for about 30 days, then he has as much as said that these pesky immaterial and non-existent signs are in fact esoteric truth, which is to say, the mathematical and geometrical concept of dividing the ecliptic into twelve equal sectors arranged around the equinoctial-solstitial framework carries weight and authenticity at the highest levels of perception.

Even so, the controversy over the proper mapping system rages on, perpetuated by certain passages which appear to call the relevance of the twelve equal divisions of the ecliptic (or the tropical system) into question. These passages largely do no more than to bring attention to the divergence between the tropical and sidereal frames of reference,<sup>28</sup> doing so in such a way to suggest that the readership of the Bailey books was expected to have been unaware of this issue. Though that lack of awareness may well have characterized the readership at one time, at least the astrologically inclined are now fully aware of the differences between the several systems by which celestial space may be mapped. To this audience, the mere pointing out that the signs and constellations are located in a slightly skewed spatial relationship does not serve to conclusively answer the question as to which should be employed. That question is best answered by the evidence presented above in regard to the legitimacy of the western or tropical frame of reference, as demonstrated by the Tibetan’s own use of birth dates and timing considerations.

## §

Thus, the definition of the word “sign” as used by the Tibetan has been demonstrated. A sign is a division of the ecliptic, and the circle of the twelve signs of the zodiac is tied to the natural facts of equinoxes and solstices. It is these signs, the familiar twelve faces of the zodiac and their traditional western dates, through which pour the influences of the constellations of the same name. In the signs, the influences of the eponymous constellations are brought to focus and intensity - “concentrated,” as the Tibetan has said.

Getting this fact clearly in mind is of the essence, for as the Tibetan informed his readership, fresh understanding of the science of astrology will result from a clear grasp of two main points:

- 1) There is a distinction to be made between the constellations as groups of stars on one hand, and the signs as mathematical entities on the other.
- 2) Astrological signs, even though invisible in the sky and only defined by the mathematics of the Earth-Sun relationship, nonetheless function as zones of concentrated influence emanating from the related constellations.<sup>29</sup>

With these two concepts firmly in mind, the emergence of the new astrology will be facilitated in the light of the promised fresh understanding, and study may proceed to further considerations of the zodiacal signs according to the esoteric astrological doctrine.

### **The Nature of the Astrological Signs According to the Esoteric Occult Doctrine**

Now that the technical definitions of the words *sign* and *constellation* have been given, it is possible to look at the function of the signs as seen from the occult philosophy of the Ageless Wisdom. As it turns out, this perspective offers a very different view of the astrological signs, one that takes into account various basic premises of the esoteric occult doctrine.

Perhaps first and foremost should be pointed out the genesis or origin of the astrological signs, as seen from the inner knowledge of Hierarchy. According to the Tibetan Master, the actual origin of the astrological signs and the reason for their real influence lies in a project of Hierarchy undertaken during the Atlantean Race period. It was during that period, the Tibetan has stated, that Hierarchy undertook to create on the mental plane specific thoughtforms embodying the notion of zodiacal signs as a sequence of symbols representing wholeness and the individual qualities which go to make up that completeness.<sup>30</sup> This is undoubtedly the archetype on the mental plane which precipitated into the concept of a mathematically-based zodiac, one built not on anything tangible but rather upon an abstract notion.

As promised above, it can now be stated that it is in this occult origin for the astrological signs that probably lies the significance of the distinction to be made between signs and constellations, as urged by the Tibetan. The distinction is significant because it holds an occult mystery teaching pertaining to the work of Hierarchy in a previous era. It was an effort to tie distant stellar influences to planetary experience via the mental plane. This effort has now resulted in a close relationship between factors of a physical nature (the zodiacal constellations) and factors of a mental or abstract nature (the twelve divisions of the ecliptic), the latter in spite of their relative intangibility nonetheless exerting considerable influence in their role as conduits for the energies of the constellations.

Many thousands of years intervened between the time during which Hierarchy originally established the idea of the circular zodiac on the mental plane and the time when, in the second century B.C.E., western thinkers began to entertain the idea that the mathematical division of the ecliptic could legitimately symbolize wholeness and its divisions. Here is an example of the occult aphorism that “there is naught in manifestation but organized energy, and energy follows thought.” In other words, thoughtforms create organized energy, which energy eventually precipitates to the physical plane as form. Thus, Hierarchy exerted specific thought projection back in Atlantean times to establish images of the zodiac on the mental plane. This effort has now resulted in a definite approach to understanding experience in the solar system and beyond, an approach (or as it might be called, a science) which has its roots in deliberate visualizations undertaken by Hierarchy in the previous race period.

Since that time, the idea of a circular zodiac has not only filtered down into the minds of men (and women), but has also hardened into an exacting body of precise knowledge, subject as it has been to the particularly crystallizing effect of the Fifth Ray, dominant in this the Aryan Race. Under the impetus of the Fifth Ray in the Aryan Race, this exacting and concretizing ray influence has brought the astrological science to an emphasis upon minute detail and the hair-splitting division of space and time in what would

appear to produce an air-tight system of mathematical certainty built on hard and fast measurements, strictly delineating the boundaries between signs and other factors.

By contrast, the Tibetan has stated that the boundaries between the signs are not that distinct.<sup>31</sup> This ambiguity of boundary is also perfectly true of the constellations, which have been conceptualized and drawn so very differently throughout history that none other than Hierarchy can say with absolute authority where ends the figurative outline of one constellation and where begins another. All this is well to keep in mind as an antidote to the excess precision sometimes demanded by the lower mind, which on occasion makes a god out of what ought not be deified.

Further, strong Fifth Ray influence invites, as the Tibetan has said, “the glamour of assurance,”<sup>32</sup> which is a false belief that the mind has captured all there is to know on a subject, or that exceedingly rigorous analysis alone will suffice to forever nail down all essential truths in one unassailable formulation. In spite of the fact that such a notion may appeal dearly to the data-dominated Aryan mind, higher truths do not always so obligingly submit to rule by inch and foot. This it is well to remember when Fifth Ray allure suggests that if only enough numbers are generated, the final truth may be known.

Even so, it is in the nature of the Fifth Ray-influenced collective mind, with its emphasis upon counting, to ask, “How many?” In this case, “How many are the signs of the zodiac?” This question surfaces in the minds of Bailey students because there are two passages in Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology* which refer to a zodiac of either 10 or 11 rather than 12 signs, though one of these pertains to the distant past, and another to the equally distant future.<sup>33</sup> Blavatsky also mentioned zodiacs divided into numbers other than 12.<sup>34</sup>

The number of signs in the zodiac depends upon the way in which the zodiacal constellations are conceptualized. Certain star groupings can be viewed or even joined in such a way as to produce any number of arrangements. However, at present, the archetype of the zodiac used by Hierarchy is based on the division of the circle of the sky into twelve sectors. There are esoteric reasons for the use of the twelve-based division. These reasons are primarily two, and they hinge upon the inner structure of the solar system and star space, as the Tibetan has revealed.

Of the zodiacal round of constellations (upon which the divisions of the ecliptic are based), the Tibetan stated, “The zodiacal wheel is itself essentially a cosmic centre; it is a twelve-petalled lotus within the thousand-petalled lotus of an unknown cosmic Entity, the One referred to...as the One About Whom Naught May Be Said.”<sup>35</sup> His comment here of course pertains to the subjective structure of the constellational zodiac, which subjective structure is only visible to advanced clairvoyant vision. This comment also places the twelve-petalled zodiacal wheel somewhere within the head center of the Cosmic Logos or the One About Whom Naught May Be Said.

From that remote position, the full beauty of this twelve petalled lotus is essentially invisible to physical sight, though the physical matter which has coalesced around the twelve petalled inner subjective structure is very much visible as the twelve zodiacal star groupings. These star groupings in turn are composed of many solar systems, or the manifested bodies of distant Solar Logoi. It is likely that these twelve groups of Solar Logoi constitute one of the important egoic or soul groups of our own Solar Logos. Each month when the moon is full and on the opposite side of the Earth from the Sun, the psychic emanations of one of the twelve petals pours through the Sun to our planet. These psychic emanations are constituted of the natural telepathy that goes on all the time between our Solar Logos and his egoic or soul group, the other Solar Logoi who make up the twelve petals of the great zodiacal lotus. It is this natural telepathy amongst Solar Logoi which is perceived as enhanced solar activation by esotericists meditating at the Full Moon period.

At any rate, the key point remains that the relevant number is twelve, for as the Tibetan has revealed, the prototypical, subjective form upon which the known zodiacal constellations is built is an immense lotus of twelve petals. Twelve is also the number of petals in the subjective lotus form upon which our

solar system is built.<sup>36</sup> Given this dominant and repeating twelve-based structure upon which both the constellations of the zodiac and the solar system are built, it is entirely in keeping that the zodiac of signs in the ecliptic should reflect the same pattern. Further, the Tibetan specified twelve signs throughout Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology* and alluded to twelve labors associated with the signs. Hence, the number of signs in the zodiac may be confidently understood to be twelve. This means that the zodiacs of 10 and 13 signs proposed by contemporary sources may be safely set aside as considerations relevant for some other period in evolution, but not the current.

The central and critical importance of these twelve influences is undisputed in the Ageless Wisdom tradition. According to Blavatsky, the final analysis of influential energies is to be sought in "the occult forces of the constellations,"<sup>37</sup> which according to the Tibetan, pour in through the representative astrological signs (i.e., the divisions of the ecliptic). In particular, Blavatsky held that "the descent and re-ascend" of the monad or soul were inextricably bound up with influence emanating from the zodiacal signs.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the process of incarnation and then of disincarnation and return to spiritual realms is much involved with the energies emanated by the constellations and passed on to Earth through the astrological signs (or divisions of the ecliptic). Essentially the same notion was embraced by the early Gnostic philosophers, who conceptualized the journey of the soul as a progressive taking on of sheaths from celestial sources as the soul filtered down from higher levels into physical incarnation, and then a reverse process of shedding those same sheaths and relinquishing them whence they originally came in the ascending return to the higher planes of existence. Spiritual tradition has long suspected and in fact outright affirmed the intimate relationship between zodiacal influence and spiritual evolution.

From the standpoint of esoteric occultism, there is one great simple reason why. As the Tibetan has so eloquently stated, the zodiacal influences are potent because the entirety of the heavens, the constellations, the planets, and even the signs themselves are the expressions of the qualities and intents of Great Beings who have brought them into form as their bodies of manifestation.<sup>39</sup> Thus, what Earthlings perceive as potent astrological influence is in fact the purposeful energy field of some greater being. From this perspective, it can be said that the process of individual incarnation and disincarnation is but an artifact of life waves pulsing through these greater fields of existence. In the cases of the signs, the lives of which they are the expression are the entities which indwell the constellational groupings of the same names. Thus, the astrological sign of Aries expresses the energy, quality, and intent of the great being which uses the constellation of Aries as its body of manifestation. So with Taurus, Gemini, and all the remaining signs. They are all expressions of the greater lives indwelling the constellational groupings of the same names.

These constellational lives are likewise affected by potent energies circulating in the life of space. As the Tibetan stated, the zodiacal constellations "...are themselves the recipients of many streams of energy coming to them from many sources. These fuse and blend with the energy of any particular constellation and – transmuted and 'occultly refined' – eventually find their way into our solar system."<sup>40</sup> Thus, the astrological signs which are their representatives can also be said to be the recipients of many and potent energies from the life of space, transmuted and occultly refined by the lives indwelling their source constellations. These many and potent energies received by the zodiacal constellations and consequently by their representative signs are of course the Seven Rays in various forms, of which the astrological signs in turn become the specific agents and distributors,<sup>41</sup> each sign distributing a number of rays.<sup>42</sup>

The general and overall effect of these greater lives acting through the astrological signs upon the lesser forms within their purview is threefold, according to the Tibetan. This threefold effect stems from the inherent triple nature of all in manifestation, based as it is on the Divine Trinity of electric, solar, and frictional fire, or spirit, consciousness, and form. The signs are no different in this regard. They are three-part in their effect upon the lesser units within their fields of influence. Thus, the astrological signs accomplish the following three objectives in the Great Cosmic Plan.

First and foremost, the astrological signs bring forth constellational energies the function of which it is “to evoke the emergence of the will aspect of the Heavenly man and of all monads, souls and personalities who constitute the planetary body of expression.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the astrological signs transmit the First or Will Aspect to all beings within their field of contact, which field includes the Planetary Logos of our scheme plus all the monads expressing as souls and personalities within that scheme at any given time. Simply put, this means that all the astrological signs carry and convey the nature of the Will, which factor they obtain from the great lives inhabiting the related constellations.

According to the Tibetan, it is the nature of the Will to dramatically decrease the draw exerted by the form nature toward the personality side of existence, and concomitantly to facilitate attraction toward the consciousness side, which is to say, directly toward Planetary Hierarchy as the great Second Aspect correlate in our planetary life.<sup>44</sup> Thus, it may be rightly concluded that the influence of the astrological signs serves on one hand to starkly diminish involvement with form and personality, while on the other, to augment momentum toward soul functioning and thus linkage with Hierarchy, doing so through the life lessons associated with the signs of the zodiac.

This fact is of signal importance to all individuals striving toward the status of discipleship and beyond, for the life objectives of such units are greatly engaged with the formation of an increasingly functional link and relationship with Planetary Hierarchy. Esoteric astrologers (or those endeavoring to become such) should always bear in mind that the influences of the astrological signs can do just that. In so doing, the influences of the astrological signs are certain to produce the detachment crises often seen in the lives of those pledged to the path of discipleship and initiation. It is well to take mental note of this facet of sign influence, which is not an effect commonly attributed to general sign influence in conventional astrology. However, from the esoteric astrological perspective, it is but the first of three general hitherto unsuspected effects worked by the influences of the astrological signs.

The second objective accomplished by the astrological signs is perhaps but an elaboration upon the first, for it concerns the enhancement of the consciousness aspect just as did the first. This second function of the astrological signs in general hails from the fact that the constellations of which they are representatives are, according to the Tibetan, “...concerned primarily with the stimulation of the soul within the form...”<sup>45</sup> Thus, so are the signs. It can be stated, then, that the astrological signs have as their function the activation of the Second Aspect in all things, which is to say, the activation and vitalization of consciousness, of soul functioning, of Love-Wisdom, of awareness of quality, and of awareness of Hierarchy, the great Second Aspect correlate on our globe and its very heart center. Thus, it is seen yet again that the influence of the astrological signs conduces to soul awareness, and likewise leads eventually to awareness of Hierarchy and all for which it stands.

The third objective accomplished by the astrological signs is like the first two in that it concerns the liberation of units from undue identification with and control by the form nature. According to the Tibetan, under the influences of all the signs except for Aries and Libra, there comes a point of crisis in which the effect of the energy pouring through the sign to the individual reaches its greatest point of effectiveness. In time, this stimulation precipitates a psychospiritual crisis, the process of which acts to release the individual from the planetary influences conditioning the personality and to bring him or her more definitely and consciously under the influence of that particular sign, rather than the planets. Under Aries and Libra, the Tibetan stated, this process is brought about by an interlude of balance rather than by a crisis, but the detachment from planetary influence still occurs as a result of influence flowing through the signs involved.<sup>46</sup>

The reader will recall that the esoteric astrological doctrine posits three levels of astrological influence in a structure of ascending subtlety, leading the individual from personality activity, through soul consciousness, to monadic awareness. These three levels of astrological influence are represented respectively by the planets, the zodiacal constellations and their representative signs, and the fixed or non-zodiacal stars and constellations.<sup>47</sup> Planetary influence acts upon and engages the personality level or the

Third Divine Aspect, zodiacal constellations and their representative signs act upon and engage the soul level or Second Divine Aspect, and the fixed or non-zodiacal stars act upon and engage the monadic level, or the First Divine Aspect.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, to say that sign influence ultimately culminates in the freeing of the individual from planetary influence is equally to say that sign influence eventually frees the individual from undue susceptibility to the lure of the form or Third Aspect. This fact completes the threefold work of sign influence, which addresses itself to all three major aspects of Deity, thus –

1. conducting Will to the Planetary Logos and all its monadic, soul and personality units,
2. enhancing consciousness or the function of the Second Aspect,
3. and finally weakening the grip of the Third Aspect on the individual seeker.

The effect of sign influence in regard to the weakening of the lure of matter or Third Aspect is particularly to be noted, for it was pointed out in two ways by the Tibetan – the first in regard to the First Aspect nature of all sign influence, the second in regard to the psychospiritual process undergone in each individual sign. It seems the Tibetan Master was particularly keen that this point be assimilated. It is a specific case of the general esoteric principle that all lives exist within Greater Lives, subserving their own lesser ends while at the same time being caught up in the greater objectives of superior Lives. In this case, the Greater Lives work through astrological influence which pours through the zodiacal signs to lesser lives below, slowly prying the lesser units off their narrow focus in favor of a much larger horizon of engagement. What results is an expansion of consciousness, which is the cumulative effect to be expected from protracted experience under the influence of any given sign of the zodiac.<sup>49</sup>

The expansion of consciousness engendered by individual sign influence mirrors the effect of the zodiac as a whole, the entire round of which has been called by the Tibetan a model for the complete history of the human race, its signs and symbols depicting the entire journey in consciousness made from animal-man to the present status of intelligent Humanity with further divine potential.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the zodiac of signs itself is a model for wholeness and completion, as well as for the gradual unfoldment of potential through the processes of time. It stands, therefore, for the Allness as well as the particularities found therein. The zodiacal circle is thus a great comprehensive symbol for totality.

It is this encompassing wholeness to which the Master of the Wisdom at length attains. Likewise, the striving disciple and initiate on the earlier stages of the path aspire to the same universal attunement. Stating this process in astrological terms and holding out an ideal toward which effort might be exerted, the Tibetan pointed out that the entire range of zodiacal influences can and should be present and exquisitely expressed in the advanced server. He stated it thus: "...in the initiate of the higher degrees, all the twelve zodiacal energies can focus simultaneously and produce a complete exhibition of divinity, as it is intended eventually to express itself through humanity on this planet."<sup>51</sup>

A complete demonstration of divinity, then, is the ultimate objective toward which the influence of the zodiacal signs leads. And this demonstration of the full spectrum of divine qualities brought about by the complement of the zodiacal signs pertains not just to this planet and the Human Kingdom, for according to the Tibetan, the overall-influence of the zodiacal signs implements purposes pertaining even to cosmic and solar objectives.<sup>52</sup> Hence, the signs of the zodiac (representing the powers of the zodiacal constellations) can be said to function as major agents of evolutionary advancement over a broad swath of creation.

As anyone can see, this role for the signs is a far cry from the characterization of daily domestic, social, and workplace dramas to which the powers of the zodiac are prostituted on a daily basis in popular news sources, these being but comic if not downright grotesque caricatures of mighty transformative energies raining down upon struggling and unsuspecting Humanity from potent celestial sources. The esoteric astrological doctrine conceptualizes the matter of influence from the signs very differently.

Instead of an astrology which champions and celebrates the peculiarities and unique psychological shadings to be found in each sign, here is an astrological perspective which posits an explicitly synthetic ideal and which invokes the combined sensitivities and facilities of all the Great Lives emitting their radiations through the zodiacal constellations and their representative signs, that they may in unison show forth as a demonstration of divinity within form.

But then, the esoteric astrology of Alice Bailey and the Tibetan Master is the astrology of discipleship and initiation, a very different matter than an astrology required to describe personalities competing with themselves and with one another for a sense of relevance and validity. The astrology of discipleship and initiation exists for and about something quite other: the process of learning to manage the energies of cosmos in a responsible and benevolent manner. That achievement requires a long curriculum in the cultivation of consciousness and a meticulous attentiveness to energies. Following such a curriculum, the seeker ultimately purifies self enough to perceive all energies (including those of the zodiacal constellations working through their representative signs) in a form more nearly like what they inherently are, rather than in the distorted versions of same so meanly portrayed by the popular astrological press.

This eventual self-purification and resultant improvement of perception is why, as the Tibetan has stated, “In the stage of initiation, the energies of the signs and their...attendant constellations...come through in a purer form and in a more direct line than upon the Path of Discipleship and the earlier stages of evolutionary development.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is not until a fairly advanced stage of the path is reached that the unit is in a condition to properly perceive and express the influences of the astrological signs. Since many are called but only a few attain, then perhaps it is no mystery that the signs of the zodiac are not yet known in their full majesty as revealed by the esoteric teaching. To accept them in their higher essence and cosmic function is therefore a movement in consciousness much needed on this planet. This study has been offered toward that end, beginning the discussion of the astrological signs with consideration of the broad and general truths concerning their nature, just as requested by the Master.<sup>54</sup>

## Summary

This study has demonstrated that the signs, from the esoteric perspective and viewed in the context of relevant historical and astronomical information, are:

1. To be studied from the angle of general concepts first.
2. To be distinguished from the constellations of the same names.
3. Located in the ecliptic by at least three possible methods.
4. Spoken of by the Tibetan in the sense of the tropical system.
5. Regions of concentrated influences inflowing from the zodiacal constellations of the same names.
6. Tied to the astronomical fundamentals that generate the equinoctial - solstitial framework, and are therefore built on the fundamentals of the Earth-Sun relationship.
7. An eternal esoteric truth based on number principle.
8. Results of an archetype established by the Spiritual Hierarchy on the mental plane during the Atlantean Race.
9. Twelve in number.
10. Relevant to the journey of the Soul and the Monad.
11. Conduits for the energies of Great Lives.
12. Distributors for the Seven Rays.
13. Agents of divine Will.
14. Productive of expansions in consciousness leading to recognition of the Spiritual Hierarchy and beyond.
15. Effective to lessen the grip of the form nature on the unit.
16. A model of totality and the entire history of human development.
17. All twelve to be expressed by the attained initiate.

18. Perceived and expressed more purely by the advanced seeker.

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<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 344.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 621.

<sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 1* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1936), 152.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril Fagan and Roy C. Firebrace, *A Primer of Sidereal Astrology* (American Federation of Astrologers, 2008), 5; 6; 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; 6; 12.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Powell, *The Zodiac: A Historical Survey* (Acs Publications, 1996), 13. See also James H. Holden, *A History of Horoscopic Astrology* (American Federation of Astrologers, 2006), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Tompkins, *The Secrets of the Great Pyramid* (HarperCollins, 1976), 112.

<sup>8</sup> See Graham Hancock and Robert Bauval, *The Message of the Sphinx* (Penguin Random House, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op cit.*, 621.

<sup>10</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2* (Lucis Publishing, 1955), 513. The identity of ISGL was included in materials released in the late 1990s by the School for Esoteric Studies in Asheville, NC, USA, an area in which Cosgrove had lived and worked intermittently in the 1950s and 1960s. Cosgrove's birth date and those for the other *DINA* group members were released in the 1980s by a group of Bailey students who obtained the information from the former Marian Walter of New York City, who made her transition in the late 1980s. Walter was RSW in the *DINA* letters and the last living member of the *DINA* group. Her identity was also included in the material released by the SES in the late 1990s to interested students.

<sup>11</sup> As given in information released from the papers of Marian Walter.

<sup>12</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 355.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>14</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 420.

<sup>15</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 196.

<sup>16</sup> *Externalization of the Hierarchy, op.cit.*, 422.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Leo, *Esoteric Astrology* (Destiny Books, 1978), 37.

<sup>18</sup> Roberto Assagioli was F.C.D. in *Discipleship in the New Age, Vols. 1 and 2*, according to information released by the School for Esoteric Studies in Asheville, NC, USA. Further, archival material there includes personal correspondence from Assagioli originally written in the 1960s that was examined by the author in June, 2003. These communications reveal that Assagioli used the tropical system for arranging the zodiac of signs around the ecliptic.

<sup>19</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 410. A similar statement appears in Alice A Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1927), 277, where it is said that cosmic force flows to the signs of the zodiac from the "corresponding constellations." This would seem to make it clear enough that the constellations are represented by the signs of the same names. Thus, the constellation of Aries expresses itself through the sign of Aries, and so on.

<sup>20</sup> Powell, *op.cit.*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 410.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> There exist "...basic patterns, forms and symbols that are the blueprints of the archetypes determining the evolutionary plan, and that produce eventually the materializing of the divine Plan. They are also the great symbols of humanity's unfolding consciousness." *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2, op.cit.*, 505. "The solar system is a twelve-petalled lotus...." Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1925), 1018. "...the whole moves in unison, and is geometrically accurate." *Cosmic Fire*, 598. "The rays, planes, races, laws, chains, and globes form a geometrical unit." *Cosmic Fire*, 598. Speaking of the ray and plane forces as they stream into our solar system, the Tibetan Master stated, "All these streams of energy form geometrical designs of great beauty to the eye of the initiated seer. We have the transverse and bisecting lines, the seven lines of force which form the planes, and the seven spiraling lines, thus forming lines of systemic latitude and longitude, and their interplay and interaction produce a whole of wondrous beauty and design. When these are visualized in color, and seen in their true radiance, it will be realized that the point of attainment of our solar Logos is very high, for the beauty of the logic Soul is expressed by that which is seen." *Cosmic Fire*, 1184.

<sup>27</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 256, 410; Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 437.

<sup>29</sup> Paraphrased and expanded from *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 621.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>32</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour, A World Problem* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 122.

<sup>33</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 231, 242.

<sup>34</sup> H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine, Vol. 2*, 502. See also a reference to an out-of-print edition of *The Secret Doctrine* in *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 637.

<sup>35</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 339.

<sup>36</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 183.

<sup>37</sup> *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Works, Vol. 14*, 224. Also quoted on 636 of Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology* from an out of print edition of *The Secret Doctrine*.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted from an out-of-print edition of *The Secret Doctrine* given on 637 of *Esoteric Astrology*.

<sup>39</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 257.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; 14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

<sup>42</sup> The astrological signs were said by the Tibetan to distribute not only the rays specifically associated with each, but also the rays associated with the exoteric, esoteric, and hierarchical rulers of each sign, and more. See *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 164; 187; 363; 364; 393; 423.

<sup>43</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1948), 71; 72.

<sup>45</sup> *Esoteric Astrology, op.cit.*, 51.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 28; 29; 411.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 – 29.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 565.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 268; 269.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 344.