

The Ages of Man

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages¹.*

Thus begins the character Jaques's speech in Shakespeare's famous play, *As You Like It* where he goes on to describe the different stages of human life from infancy to old age. The Seven Ages of



A Medieval woodcut showing the Seven Ages of Man from infancy to old age.

Man, as they are known, was commonplace knowledge in Shakespeare's day but its origin can be traced back to Ptolemy and some believe, even before then. The Seven Ages of Man refers to periods of life allotted to the planets as follows: the Moon is given jurisdiction from birth up to four years; Mercury, the next ten years; Venus, the following eight years; Sun, the subsequent nineteen years; Mars, the next fifteen years; Jupiter, the following twelve years and Saturn is given over to the years from the age of seventy.

The allotted periods for each of the planets have puzzled commentators and scholars for many years as some like Jupiter's period coincided with the planet's cycle but others did not. However, the most plausible explanation is that the periods are associated with what the Greeks called *apokatastasis*. The term means roughly "return to the original position" and the nineteenth century Theosophist and astrologer, Sepharial² explained it clearly:

They (sc. The Chaldeans) found that Saturn came to the conjunction with the same asterism or group of stars after a period of 30 years, Jupiter after a period of 12 years, Mars after a period of 15 years, the Sun after a period of 19 years, Venus after a period of 8 years, and Mercury after a period of 10 years, as seen from the earth.³

This seems a most fitting explanation for the periods allotted to each planet and Ptolemy goes on to suggest that the human life can be examined via the planets that hold sway over these periods.

*At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.*

According to Ptolemy, this first period of life from birth to four years of age is ruled by the Moon as it is,

¹ William Shakespeare *As You Like It* Act 2, Scene 7. The text of the full speech appears at the end of the article

² Pseudonym of Dr Walter Gorn Old, notable 19th century astrologer.

³ As quoted by Jim Tester, *A History of Western Astrology, Chapter 4*, Ballantine Books, 1987.

... presenting rapidity of growth, being nourished by moist things, and possessing a highly variable habit⁴.

The Moon describes the body and appetites and the babe in arms is ruled totally by the physical appetites for food, for sleep, for comfort and for warmth. Nothing exists outside of this sphere and the infant's world revolves around the satisfaction of these appetites. Mirroring the Moon's quick movement through the heavens and the ever-changing phases is the infant's rapid growth rate and changing needs over a short period of time.

An infant, under normal circumstances will nearly triple its birth weight after the first year, and by the second year will weigh up to four times what it did at birth. Birth length doubles in the first year and by the time the child is two years of age, the brain has reached 80% of adult size.⁵ Motor skills and social development follow and in these first four years the foundation of physical, emotional and social health are established.

We can then apply this information and look at the natal Moon and its condition to determine the quality of childhood and the nurturing received by the individual. Tester suggests that this may contribute to our modern interpretation of the Moon as the signifier of nurturing and caring received in childhood.⁶

*And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.*

At the beginning of the fifth year, the second stage of development is ruled by Mercury and lasts ten years, taking the individual to the age of fourteen. Ptolemy tells us that this is when,

...the intellectual reasoning faculties of the mind begin to take their character, imbibing the seeds of learning, and developing as it were, the elements and germs of the genius and abilities, and their peculiar quality. The mind is also roused to discipline and instruction, and to its first exercises.⁷

The child develops reason and an understanding of right and wrong. Formal education also starts, usually after the fifth or sixth birthday and continues until approximately the end of the fourteenth year, this being the minimum level of formal education in modern Western societies. Mercury's condition will describe the individual's learning patterns, their grasp of language, their ability to reason, negotiate and make decisions. This is also the stage at which verbal and motor skills are honed and improved.

*And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.*

Venus takes over at fifteen and this period, redolent with hormones and high drama lasts for eight years until the age of twenty-two. According to Ptolemy,

...from her, the movement of the seminal vessels originates, as well as unrestrained impetuosity and precipitancy in amours.⁸

⁴ Ptolemy *Tetrabiblos*, Book IV, Chapter X. Trans. J M Ashmand

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_development_stages Accessed 8/9/2011.

⁶ Jim Tester *A History of Western Astrology*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Here the young adult must grapple with an emerging sexuality as well as the expectations and demands of social interaction and the first attempts at meaningful relationships. Venus in the natal chart will describe the individual experience and the challenges which must be faced.

*Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.*

*And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part.*

The next period after Venus is where there is a slight variation as Shakespeare's order puts Mars ahead of the Sun while Ptolemy tells us that from the twenty-third year and for the next nineteen years, the period belongs to the Sun, as this is when,

Authority of action now commences in the mind, the career of life is entered upon, distinction and glory are desired, and puerile irregularities are relinquished for more orderly conduct, and the pursuit of honour.⁹

Therefore from the age of twenty three to forty two, the individual sets out to make their mark on the world: to gain honour, reputation and power through career or simply making a life for themselves. This is a time when the individual puts aside the frivolous ways of youth and takes on the responsibilities as well as developing their own individual journey. The Sun's placement and condition will describe the path that this takes and the challenges which are intrinsic to their fate.

From the age of forty-three, Mars claims this period for fifteen years until the age of fifty-seven and, according to Ptolemy,

...induces greater austerity of life, together with vexation, care and trouble.¹⁰

Mars as the significator of action and strife suggests that this period of life will take the individual through trials which may define or destroy them. If we consider that in our modern life this dovetails with the mid-life crisis where the individual must look to redefine themselves and their lifestyle, we can understand that it is a period when Mars is both harnessed and endured. Mars' natal condition will say much of the person's ability to fight and overcome the obstacles and conquer the difficulties presented.

*The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound.*

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The sixth period from fifty-eight to sixty-nine belongs to Jupiter coinciding with Jupiter's fifth return (and Saturn's second return) to the natal position and the person looks to embrace life in a different form. This is, according to Ptolemy, where there is

...the relinquishment of labour, of hazardous employment and tumult, and produces greater gravity, foresight, prudence, and sagacity, favouring the claim to honour, respect and privilege.¹¹

As the great benefic, Jupiter suggests a time to enjoy the fruits of one's labour and hopefully, the attainment of some level of wisdom. Jupiter's natal placement and condition will describe how the individual experiences this time.

*Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

Finally and fittingly, from the age of seventy years, there is Saturn, exercising the power of limitation on the final act of life. Here we see the body slow down, the mental faculties dim and the appetite for life reduced to a minimum.

According to Ptolemy,

He obstructs mental movements, the appetites and enjoyments; rendering them imbecile and dull, in conformity with the dullness of his own motion.¹²

The great malefic Saturn slows down the life force, breaks down the body and begins the process of limiting movement, experience and expectation. Saturn has dominion over the last portion of life but there is no indication for how long although some sources allot thirty years to Saturn. At this stage of life the individual confronts their mortality and some take on the role of judge and jury on those around them. Saturn's nature is cold and dry, mirroring the process of ageing where attrition leads to feeling the cold more, to a lack of normal lubrication leading to dry skin and hair and of course, the slowing down of mental and physical faculties.

The Seven Ages of Man provides a theory of planetary rulership for the different ages and stages of life and the next step is to apply these principles to determine whether they will help to shed light on individual lives. Before doing so, there is one more consideration: Ptolemy suggests that everything is not governed solely by a benefic or malefic as an individual's fortune is always mixed:

...for many conflicting events frequently occur at the same period, and a person may, at one and the same time, lose a kinsman, yet inherit his substance; or be at once ill in health, yet prosperous and advantageously established in regard to fortune...¹³

This suggests that we must always keep in mind that the unfolding of events in any one life is a series, rather than stand alone episodes; that we must take into account all factors before we pass judgement.

In applying the Seven Ages of Man to a chart, we take each stage of the person's life and consider the ruling planet and judge its condition according to the following criteria to determine how this colours the individual's experience of that period:

- Essential dignity
- Sect

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

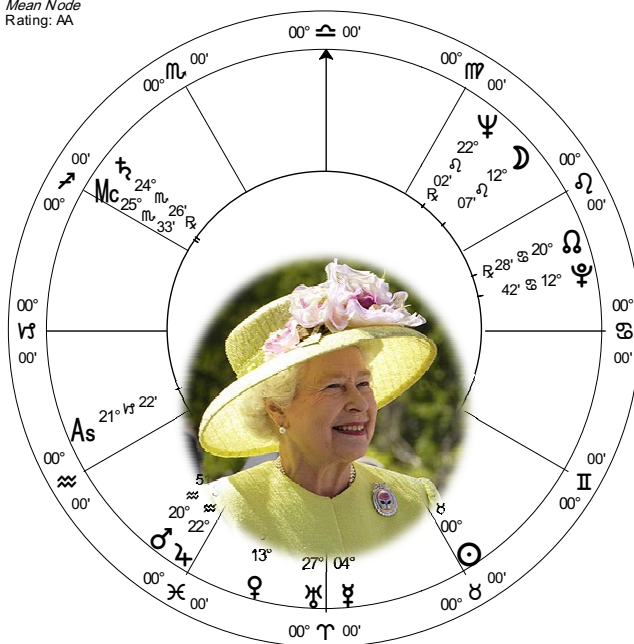
¹³ Ibid.

- Motion – direct or retrograde
- Combustion (if applicable)
- House placement
- Aspects – difficult or easy aspects from other planets which may either be beneficial or harmful.
- House rulership – may also suggest the matters that are brought to the surface at the time

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Reigning monarch of Great Britain, Elizabeth II has been on the throne for nearly sixty years. In

Queen II, Elizabeth
Natal Chart
 21 Apr 1926, Wed
 2:40 am -1:00
 London, England
 51°N30' 00"W10'
 Geocentric
 Tropical
 Whole Signs
 Mean Node
 Rating: AA



applying the principles we have outlined to the chart of Queen Elizabeth II, let us consider the different stages of her life:

Birth to four years : 1926 - 1930

This stage is ruled by the Moon in Leo which is in neutral condition. It is in the in the 8th however, in spite of the difficult reputation of the 8th, the Moon is one planet that is not affected by being there. The Moon is also the Sect light and sits in her own hemisphere away from the Sun. Additionally, it is a waxing Moon and according to Valens it is fortunate.¹⁴

The Moon does not receive any difficult aspects as both Mars and Saturn are over 8° from square or opposition. It can be said that Elizabeth had a fortunate infancy, was reasonably healthy and her physical and emotional needs were met by the nurturing she received.

Five to Fourteen years : 1931 - 1940

This period is ruled by Mercury in Aries in the 4th, the stage of of study and learning but not necessarily one that was purely academic. Mercury is direct in motion and neutral in Leo but has accidental dignity in the angular 4th suggesting that this period of learning was also productive and effective. Mercury rules the 6th and the 9th hinting that obligations and education flavour this time.

Mercury is not in sect as the chart is nocturnal but it rises before the Sun and is in the same hemisphere as the Sun suggesting Mercury's influence is not diminished by its placement. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth was educated at home by a series of governesses and tutors. Again, Mercury receives no difficult aspects from malefics suggesting that education and learning was fairly straightforward, active and engaged. It is at this time when Elizabeth is made aware of the obligations of her position when her uncle, Edward VIII abdicates the throne and her father is crowned king and she becomes the heir presumptive.

Fifteen to Twenty-two years : 1941 - 1948

From fifteen to twenty-two, Queen Elizabeth went into the Venus ruled stage and this is when she met and married her husband, Philip Mountbatten. It was also in this stage, with the outbreak of

¹⁴ Vetius Valens *The Anthology*

the Second World War, that the then Princess Elizabeth undertook her first public duties as heir presumptive, making the first radio broadcast and being appointed a Councillor of State.

Venus in her chart is exalted in Pisces in the 3rd and is in sect in the nocturnal chart but is in the same hemisphere as the Sun where she does not belong. Venus rules the 5th and the 10th signalling that children and public life are brought into prominence now. Venus also receives a trine from Pluto emphasising that there is an intense quality to this time. Her relationships were intense but not necessarily the 'normal' school girl relationships but beneficial, intense and uncompromising. A Girl Guides company, the 1st Buckingham Palace Company, was formed specifically so she could socialise with girls her own age.

Elizabeth's courtship and engagement to Philip was also quite unusual but beneficial (exalted Venus but cadent). Firstly, as a young member of the Royal family, opportunities to socialise were rather limited. Elizabeth first met Philip in 1934 and 1937 but after another meeting at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth in July 1939, Elizabeth – though only 13 years old – fell in love with Philip, and they began to exchange letters. Note that the correspondence started during the previous period which was Mercury ruled. Additionally, Philip was the godson of Elizabeth's uncle, Lord Louis Mountbatten and it was with his encouragement that the relationship flourished. The marriage was not without controversy as Philip had no financial standing, was foreign-born (though a British subject), and had sisters who had married German noblemen with Nazi links.

Marion Crawford¹⁵ wrote,

*"Some of the King's advisors did not think him good enough for her. He was a prince without a home or kingdom. Some of the papers played long and loud tunes on the string of Philip's foreign origin."*¹⁶

The exalted Venus in a cadent house gets a bit of help! This is also the period when she gives birth to her first child, Charles in 1948.

Twenty-three to Forty-two years : 1949 - 1968

As Elizabeth moved into the Sun ruled period, she lost her father within the year and ascended the throne to become one of the youngest monarchs of her time. Her Sun in Taurus is in neutral condition in the 5th and receives no aspects from any planet. The Sun rules the 8th house suggesting that this period brings crisis and change. Fifth house matters of reputation are also brought to prominence as they are reflected in a time when Elizabeth literally makes a name for herself as monarch and individual.

This is the period, Ptolemy suggests, when the individual looks to gain acknowledgement and make their mark on the world and this is what Elizabeth does. Her efforts modernise the British monarchy and for the first time in history, the Royal Family is featured in a documentary where they are portrayed as a modern family in extraordinary circumstances. She is also portrayed as both monarch and mother.

Forty-three to Fifty-seven years : 1969 - 1983

At forty-three she goes into a Mars ruled period when, Ptolemy tells us, we strive to overcome the challenges and difficulties that are thrown our way. Mars in the Queen's chart is in Aquarius in neutral dignity in the second. Mars is in sect by virtue of being in a nocturnal chart but is in the same hemisphere as the Sun. Mars is conjunct Jupiter, in opposition to Neptune and squaring the Saturn, which is in the 10th suggesting that this period in her life is likely to be one of great adversity

¹⁵ Marion Crawford or "Crawfie" was nanny to Elizabeth and her sister, Margaret.

¹⁶ Marion Crawford, *The Little Princesses: The Story of the Queen's Childhood by her Nanny*. 1953

and which involves her public life and crisis. Mars rules the 4th and 11th suggesting that family, heritage, groups and ideals are brought to prominence.

This period starts in 1969 when the Queen oversaw the dismantling of many colonies and their establishment as independent nations. In 1977, Elizabeth marked the Silver Jubilee of her accession to the throne and her popularity was high, despite consistent negative press coverage of her sister, Princess Margaret's separation from her husband. The year 1979 brought two blows: the unmasking of Anthony Blunt, former Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, as a communist spy; the other was the assassination of her uncle, Lord Mountbatten by the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

At this time, Britain was heavily involved in the sectarian troubles in Ireland and terrorism was a constant threat. During the 1981 Trooping the Colour ceremony, six shots were fired at the Queen from close range as she rode down The Mall on her horse. Her composure and skill in controlling her mount were widely praised. The following year, the Queen awoke in her bedroom at Buckingham Palace to find an intruder in the room with her. Remaining calm, she spoke to him while he sat at the foot of her bed until assistance arrived. Queen Elizabeth also endured an anxious time as her son, Prince Andrew, was serving with British forces during the Falklands War. Though she hosted President Ronald Reagan at Windsor Castle in 1982, and visited his Californian ranch in 1983, she was angered when his administration ordered the invasion of Grenada, one of her Caribbean realms, without her foreknowledge. A testing time and a strong statement of her Mars with her display of valour, resilience and steely resolve in the face of daunting challenges.

Fifty-eight to Sixty-nine years : 1984 - 1995

Jupiter rules this period where one might expect to see an enjoyment of the fruits of one's labour as well as gaining the wisdom of experience. Now this is very interesting as in the Queen's chart, Jupiter conjuncts the Mars, opposes the Neptune and squares Saturn, suggesting that the three periods ruled by Mars, Jupiter and Saturn will be inadvertently linked to each other. Jupiter is in Aquarius in the 2nd in neutral condition but aspected by malefics, Saturn and Mars by square and conjunction suggesting this is not a period of ease or comfort. Jupiter rules the 12th and 3rd suggesting that hidden matters, siblings and truth and information come to the fore.

During the 1980's and 1990's a string of royal scandals, separations and divorces including those of her daughter Princess Anne in 1989 and her son, Prince Charles in 1992. There was also much media attention and scurrilous gossip associated with daughters-in-law Diana and Sarah. To make matters worse, a fire destroyed parts of Windsor Castle in 1992. It was also during this period that the Queen voluntarily chose to pay taxes from which she is legally exempt. This was in response to a public backlash on the cost of maintaining the royal households. In this period, the Queen was literally fighting for both her family, her credibility as monarch and her relevance as head of state amidst negative publicity of her personal and public life.

Seventy Years Onwards : 1996 to Present

Saturn is sovereign planet of this period and the Queen's Saturn is retrograde in Scorpio conjunct her MC and the apex of the T-square involving the Mars-Jupiter conjunction opposing Neptune. Saturn rules the 1st and the 2nd highlighting her as an individual and also what she stands for. One can also say that with Saturn conjunct the MC her public life and personal goals will be the focus.

In this period the challenges of the previous period reached a crescendo when, in 1997, Diana, mother of the heirs apparent, was killed in an automobile accident. The Queen became the scapegoat to public grief when she was perceived to be aloof to the impact of Diana's death on the nation. To her credit, Elizabeth rose to the occasion and played the benevolent Saturnian monarch and responded to those concerns with humility balanced with a responsibility to uphold due protocol and process.

Since then, she has celebrated sixty years of marriage, half a century on the throne and, weathered the concerns about the controversial romantic relationship of her son, Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles and the questions about the validity of a civil Royal wedding between them, as the Royal Family was specifically excluded from the law which instituted civil marriages in England.

Amidst much public adulation, Queen Elizabeth, in the last period of her life continues to personify Saturn in her demeanour, her age and her concerns for her family, her nation and its allies. She maintains a demanding schedule, keeps abreast of all political matters, oversees a monarchy which today is as popular as ever and presides over four generations of a family of whom she is the senior member.

In conclusion, the technique of the Seven Ages of Man can help give us an overview of the person's life highlighting certain periods where difficulties may be expected or ease anticipated. No one technique can tell the whole story, but this is an interesting exercise as it can provide a bird's eye view of an individual life.

Mari Garcia

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Copyright Mari Garcia 2011. *Mari Garcia is a consulting astrologer who has been involved with astrology since 1990. She has lectured widely both in Australia and the USA and has published articles in Australia and overseas and writes for several local and national publications. She runs a consulting practice in Adelaide and is co-principal of **ASTRO MUNDI**, which offers a four year course in astrology, a Traditional Astrology course as well as special interest workshops and Master Classes. Mari can be contacted on 08 8563 9182 or check out the website at www.astromundi.com. Keep abreast of developments at Astro Mundi on Facebook.*

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Jaque, William Shakespeare *As You Like It Act 2, Scene 7*