

Seven Lots of Vice and Virtue

Humanity has always had a fascination with numbers, and even before Pythagoras revolutionised their concept, we have been using numbers and attaching spiritual and mystical significance to them. By the time Pythagoras linked the number 7 to religion because it was controlled by the seven celestial spirits (the seven planets revolving in their heavenly spheres), it was a foregone conclusion that 7 was ‘worthy of veneration’.

Fifteen hundred years before Pythagoras, religion and the number seven were linked through the Persian religion of Mithraism, named after the cosmic ruler Mithras who upheld order in the dual worlds of gods and men. A major cornerstone of this religion became known as the ‘Persian Mysteries’ whereby a devotee was required to pass through seven stages of initiation in order to reach their god. These Seven Stages were a sacrament of Mithraism as they were a temporal re-enactment of the soul’s descent through the seven gates (the planets) to earth, and then the soul’s eventual ascend, back through the gates, to the heavens once the physical body no longer functioned.

It is likely that the Greek philosopher Plato (429-347 BCE), had knowledge of the ‘Persian Mysteries’ when he put forward his own interpretation of the Decent of the Soul. In his dialogues he spoke of the 8th sphere, the dome of fixed stars, being the realm of God and the birth place of souls. From the 8th sphere, each soul travelled down to earth, and while descending visited each of the seven planets, starting at Saturn, moving to Jupiter, then Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and lastly, the Moon. At each of these planets the soul would be blessed by the planet’s pure essence. When the soul reached earth, the planets’ qualities became corrupted by earth’s influence. When death occurred, the soul ascended through the heavens, returning to each planet to deposit any negativity peculiar to that planet, which it had collected during the soul’s time on earth. This cosmic purging meant that the soul became lighter and less polluted the further it moved from earth, so by the time it re-entered God’s 8th sphere it was once more completely flawless and pure. Aristotle adopted Plato’s theory, and it is often he who receives the credit for the origin of the Ascent of the Soul.

St Thomas Aquinas was a great admirer of Aristotle and obviously aware of Aristotle’s theory of the connection between the soul and the seven planets. We might speculate that Aristotle’s theory was the seed which germinated into one of the most basic doctrines of the Catholic faith. Aquinas was responsible for drafting the Seven Cardinal Virtues and their accompanying Seven Vices (Deadly Sins), and introducing them into Catholic theology. The first three Virtues, Hope, Faith, and Charity, were known as the Theological Virtues, whilst the remaining four Virtues, that of Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, and Justice, were called the Natural Virtues. The following table is a list of the Seven Virtues and Vices, and I have speculated on their possible relationship or ‘protection’ by the planets.

The Seven Virtues	Planetary Association	The Seven Vices
Hope	Moon	Gluttony
Faith	Sun	Pride
Charity	Venus	Lust
Prudence	Mercury	Envy
Fortitude	Mars	Anger

Temperance	Jupiter	Avarice
Justice	Saturn	Sloth

My initial interest in the Seven Virtues stems from research into the Lots concerning each of the seven planets. The more commonly recognised name for the Lots is the Arabic Parts. These Lots or Parts are simply mathematical calculations, where the zodiacal distance between two planets is measured and then this distance (in degrees) is projected from the Ascendant. This produces a zodiacal degree in the chart which can be delineated through the rulers of its sign and degree, and any aspects which the planets make to this particular degree. In my research into the ancient texts I came to suspect that each Basic Lot has a spiritual significance as it seemed to reflect, not only a certain aspect of the planet involved, but also the quality or essence which a particular planet imparts on an individual's soul.

The following text is the exploration of a possible link between the Planetary Lots and Aquinas' Virtues and Vices.

THE LOT OF THE MOON : PARS FORTUNAE

FORMULA : Diurnal Chart ⊗ = ASC + ☽ - ☉
Nocturnal Chart ⊗ = ASC + ☉ - ☽

When a medieval astrologer read a natal chart, one of the first questions he might have considered was "Where is the promise of Fortune in this life?", and for this information he would look to the Part of Fortune for guidance as to the native's quality of life or worldly comfort, the amount of inheritance he might gain, and whether he achieves reputation and glory : in other words, his gains and losses in life.

The Part of Fortune is a perfect tool to provide answers to questions regarding a person's fluctuating fortunes ; it is the Lot of the *Moon*, and where could you find a planet more aptly suitable to judge the purely reactive, passive, vegetative aspect of the soul? In this role the Part of Fortune indicates the inferior (or worldly) appetites of the soul, and by its position and condition in the chart, it makes known the quality and determination of the motivations associated with these material appetites.

THE MOON'S VIRTUE : HOPE

Today, as in the past, we all *hope* that God has blessed our soul (and consequently, our life) with a capacity for comfort, contentment and happiness as the Part of Fortune is not so much about what happens to the individual, as it is about one's attitude to hardship and suffering and the ability to rise above it. The virtue of Hope gives the individual the ability to survive even the worst fortune and still believe things can, and will, get better.

THE MOON'S VICE : GLUTTONY

However, if the individual is not content with their "Lot in life", and they are constantly wishing for better fortune or bemoaning the good fortune of others, then they are susceptible to the Vice of Gluttony. They run the risk of bloating and contaminating the soul if their appetites overtake them, as they feed on discontent and the overindulgence of their desires. The Part of Fortune in the chart can give an indication of someone whose passions are never satiated, who must fill to excess on material wealth, and whose need for fulfilment becomes a voracious animal who is never satisfied.

THE LOT OF THE SUN : PARS DAEMON

FORMULA : Diurnal Chart $\Phi = ASC + \odot - \text{D}$
Nocturnal Chart $\Phi = ASC + \text{D} - \odot$

The Sun's Lot has many names. It has been called the Part of Spirit, the Part of Things to Come (*pars futurorum*), the Part of the Good Spirit (*agathos daimon*), and the Lot of Mystery (from the Hebrew, *ta'aluma*), and its concern lies with the individual's concept of God. Socrates described his own good spirit, his *daemon*, in his trial when condemned to death for introducing new divine powers to the young nobles of Greece. In his defence, Socrates said that his *daemon* was God's own creation but peculiar to him alone, that it was his inner voice, a divine force warning him and directing him throughout his life, ever since he was a child. Unfortunately this defence was not enough to save Socrates, but it is a wonderful description of the *pars daemon*.

THE SUN'S VIRTUE : FAITH

Regardless of a person's religious affiliation, their commitment to organised religion, or their susceptibility to religious dogma, the Lot of the Sun belongs to the individual, as it is their unique concept of God. This is *faith*; trust or confidence in something which is inexplicable or invisible to others. Look to the Lot of the Sun in the chart and you will find an indication of the individual's fidelity and commitment to a truth, to a belief, or to a deity which is theirs alone. As we become more aware of this Lot and the astrologer gains confidence in its capacity to give solace or direction, then I believe we have the power to provide a wonderful service to our clients if we are competent in examining the sign, its rulers and the relevant aspects to the *pars daemon* in the chart.

THE SUN'S VICE : PRIDE

Pride cometh before a Fall. Very old, very true. To fall from Grace is not just a sudden dip in popularity, position, or character; it is much more, especially when we consider the significance of the Sun's Lot. In theological terms, a fall from Grace is 'the loss of the unmerited love and favour of God, to lose His divine influence which renews and morally strengthens man; estrangement from God'.

The Sun's Lot not only signifies the worship of God, and the native's highest hopes and aspirations, but it also indicates the quality and determination of the active, conscious, divine powers of the soul, and the soul's motivation and possible realisation. However, should the person lose faith in their God (whatever it is), and instead in their own mind *they* become a manifestation of that deity, if they believe themselves to be morally or spiritually superior to others, then Pride has stepped in and they have succumbed to the Sun's Vice.

Disillusionment, bitterness, despair and weariness of the soul can result from this path if it is taken, and the placement and condition of the *pars daemon* can be a good indicator as to the manifestation of both the Sun's possible Virtue and its corresponding Vice.

THE REMAINDER OF THE LOTS

The Part of Fortune and the Part of the Spirit become pivotal points in the Lots of the remaining five planets. In the Lots of Jupiter and Venus, the Part of Spirit (the Sun's Lot) is used as one of the significators to the equation. These two planets were called 'benefics' by the ancients as their distinguishing properties supported the growth and regeneration of life.

Both Jupiter and Venus were given the qualities of Hot and Moist, and the combination of these attributes were considered to be excellent conditions for fertility and growth on earth.

We have no way of knowing how or why the ancients decided to associate the Sun's Lot with these benefics to form their own Lots, but I suspect that it occurred by natural association. The religions of that time were solar religions, and the Sun's Lot gave expression to the superior aspirations of the soul, therefore it seemed only natural to associate God, the Benefactor and Creator, with the two planets which encouraged and supported Life.

This left the other three planets, Mercury, Mars and Saturn. The planets of Mars and Saturn were assigned the qualities of Hot and Dry (Mars) and Cold and Dry (Saturn). These characteristics either inhibited or prevented growth, as in the case of extreme cold or extreme dryness, or shrivelled and burnt it up, in the case of extreme heat. Therefore these two planets were called 'malefics' as they did not support or encourage growth, but instead could destroy its possibilities by their involvement. Mercury was considered to be extremely unstable, like its physical form, quicksilver, when it came to working out whether it was beneficial or detrimental to life. It could adopt any of the four qualities, and therefore was very unpredictable.

What to do with these Lots then? Ironically, the ancients combined the Part of Fortune, the Moon's Lot which signified the worldly appetites of the soul, with these malefic planets in order to form their own Lots. By measuring the distance between Mercury and the Part of Fortune and projecting this from the Ascendant, the Part of Necessity or the Part of Poverty as it was also known, was revealed in the chart. Mars combined with the Part of Fortune brought forward the Part of Courage, whilst the Part of *Nemesis* was created when the malefic Saturn was measured against the Moon's Lot.

Perhaps the ancients reasoned that the Part of Fortune could pacify or contain the malefics, and when I consider the Moon's Virtue, I am reminded of the Greek myth of Pandora who released all the woes of the world (the domain of Mars and Saturn) but managed to shut the box on Hope (Moon's Virtue). I have concluded with the Lots of Mars and Saturn, as I consider them to be interesting applications of the planets' energies. As we have been discussing the connection of the soul to the Lots, I think we should not consider the 'malefics' as evil or damaging to the soul. Even the ancients, although cautious of the malefics' effect on the chart, could see positive expressions for Mars and Saturn, as after all, the malefics also came from God, and therefore could manifest God's natural preference for goodness. Rather, we should exercise the same caution in recognising the Virtues and Vices peculiar to them, when we acknowledge these Lots in our charts, and in our lives.

THE LOT OF MARS : PARS MARTIS

FORMULA : Diurnal Chart ASC + ☿ - ♂
Nocturnal Chart ASC + ♂ - ☿ (*pars fortunae*)

The other names given to the Lot of Mars are the Lot of Courage or the Lot of Daring, and whilst it is also concerned with wars, battles and conflicts, these are not the conflicts of the mind (as the Lot of Mercury describes), but rather battles of might, force or swiftness of

action. Naturally, this part also concerns itself with acts of treachery and villainy, but if the Lot of Mars indicates -through sign, rulers and aspects - that the individual has ‘the worth and sharpness of the soul’ , then all may be well.

MARS’ VIRTUE : FORTITUDE

To quote Guido Bonatti : *‘The Lot of Mars signifies resolution, anticipation, and greatness of heart with impulse and haste’*. These are all apt descriptions for the Natural Virtue of *Fortitude*. I can only add a definition from the Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary which states : *‘Fortitude is the strength of mind which enables a person to encounter danger or to bear pain with coolness and courage’*. Look to the Lot of Mars, which incorporates the *pars fortunae*, for the soul’s capacity to be fearless, and to endure the greatest of hardships with quiet dignity.

MARS’ VICE : ANGER

This Vice needs no introduction nor any great expansion in linking it to either the planet, or the Lot of Mars. We may find it difficult to imagine the soul’s capacity for anger, or even agitation. However, we would be naive if we thought that boldness, courage or resolution - considered to be virtues and qualities of the soul - could not quickly sour to wilfulness, recklessness or blind, stupid rage, with the potential to become cruelty, thoughtlessness and destruction. The Lot of Mars in the chart can give an indication as to how one Virtue can swiftly turn into a Vice.

THE LOT OF SATURN : PARS SATURNI

FORMULA : Diurnal Chart ASC + ☉ - ♃
Nocturnal Chart ASC + ♃ - ☉ (*pars fortunae*)

*‘In Greek mythology, **Tyche** (Roman **Fortuna**) is the daughter of Zeus, to whom he has given power to decide what the fortune of this and that mortal shall be. On some she heaps gifts from a horn of plenty, others she deprives of all they have. Tyche is altogether irresponsible in her awards, and runs about juggling with a ball to exemplify the uncertainty of chance : sometimes up, sometimes down’.*

This is a wonderful description of *Fortuna*, the name linking Greek mythology to the Part of Fortune, and indeed, it is an appropriate description of the apparant disregard by which the gods choose the fates of men. The text then warns of the penalty for ignoring the goddess’ grace, and the subsequent invocation of the goddess *Nemesis* to punish the native if they do not pay homage to *Fortuna*. The act of hoarding one’s wealth is also a punishable offence by *Nemesis*.

*‘But if it ever happens that a man, whom Tyche has favoured, boasts of his abundant riches and neither sacrifices a part of them to the gods, nor alleviates the poverty of his fellow-citizens, then the ancient goddess **Nemesis** steps in to humiliate him’.*

Robert Graves : The Greek Myths: Book One

Here we see the nature of Saturn encapsulated by the measure of its Lot, and true to Saturn, it may be interpreted in several ways. Interestingly the other name given to Saturn’s Lot is the Lot of *Nemesis*. The literal translation of the Greek word *nemesis* is ‘judgement’, and the

terms retribution, or '*righteous anger aroused by injustice*' are an addition from the dictionary. Paulus Alexandrinus tells us that the Lot of *Nemesis* becomes a contributing cause of subterranean fates and of everything which is ice-cold, of demonstration, impotence, exile, destruction, grief, and the quality of death. Ibn Ezra says this Lot indicates depth of thought, working the soil (farming), loss, theft, poverty, prison, captivity, and death.

SATURN'S VIRTUE : JUSTICE

Because of our modern interpretation we might be mistakenly led into thinking that *Justice* belongs to the planet Jupiter. Rather this Virtue is rightly under the jurisdiction of Saturn, especially as its agent is shown to be the Greek goddess of retributive justice, *Nemesis*. This Lot is concerned with equity, even-handedness, and lawfulness, not just because it is expected from us as responsible adults, but because our soul demands that we are vigilant in guarding against falsehoods, injustices and matters of blind prejudice.

SATURN'S VICE : SLOTH

This is Saturn's warning if we are too lazy, apathetic or disinclined to become involved in anything which is unpleasant or confronting. By its very nature, this Vice is not so much the presence of activity ; rather it is the removal of an essence - perhaps it is the nemesis of *Nemesis* itself! If the goddess cannot be bothered 'smiting' or punishing those who break its laws, and retribution is not worth the pain or effort, then we are truly deserving of Saturn's cold wrath. Perhaps the best method of understanding this ambiguous Lot is by candidly examining its placement in our chart. Through this exercise we might benefit from addressing Saturn in our lives where we meet both its Vice and its Virtue. Saturn's Vice through the failings of Sloth when we look the other way because it is easier than confronting, or we become overwhelmed by a difficult issue, or when we encounter Saturn's Virtue if we are tempted to personify *Nemesis* by becoming the avenging angel. The problem with personification of the goddess is the danger of becoming too Saturnian, and perhaps allowing our fear or ignorance to destroy the soul's natural capacity for decency, fairness and mercy.

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