



SECONDARY PROGRESSIONS

STEPPING INTO THE MYSTERY

by Anne Whitaker

Editor's Note: This is a lightly edited version of the author's original article with the same title, which first appeared in the May/June 2017 issue of the *AA Journal*.

"I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding."

— John O'Donohue

Consider this surprise. Astrology textbooks tell you that the planets from Jupiter outwards move so slowly by progression that their shifts are of no consequence. On the very day in June 2016 that my 3rd-house Jupiter moved by secondary progression from its hitherto lifelong occupancy of Scorpio into Sagittarius, I was offered a large library of astrology books from a university lecturer whose wife, a keen student of astrology, had recently died. In another case, "Phoebe," a participant in the 1997–98 research I did on Jupiter–Uranus conjunctions, started piano lessons for the first time and became very interested in fashion/image in 1997 — the year her natal Neptune in Libra went direct by secondary progression. No doubt readers could add their own examples of progressed planetary effects, which supposedly are of no consequence!

Introduction

I am very well aware that there are several ways of progressing a horoscope, which are no doubt valid. However, traditional secondary progressions, or SPs as I shall now call them for short, are the only type which have consistently spoken to me with great accuracy. These are calculated by moving the planetary positions in the ephemeris for the day of birth forward one day for every year of a person's life, of-

fering a means of determining the timing, and understanding the meaning, of significant developmental points in that individual's unique unfolding journey.

In this article, I am not proposing to reinvent the astro-wheel by offering detailed tuition on what SPs are, how to calculate them, work with them, and relate them to whatever transits may be in operation at any given time. There is plenty of information of that type available on the Web, as a quick Google search will reveal.

Instead, my aim is to offer a personal reflection on secondary progressions, continuing in the same spirit as the opening paragraph above. I'd like to share my clients' experiences of those mysterious symbolic tools, as well as my own. My observations are also offered to experienced practitioners in such a way that they can take a moment to step back from their astro-toolkit and be freshly awestruck by the essential Mystery which SPs evoke. Most of all, I'd like to intrigue and inspire readers who are fairly new to astrology to begin their own journey into this misty, awesome territory.

Secondary Progressions offer a means of determining the timing, and understanding the meaning, of significant developmental points in an individual's journey.

From the time I discovered SPs as a Faculty of Astrological Studies student in the 1980s, they have fascinated me. This fascination was amplified as I slowly became an experienced astrology teacher, using my classes (as you do) for the brilliant qualitative research opportunities “on the hoof” that they undoubtedly provide. When you first go around a class of a dozen students, tracking their Suns changing signs by secondary progression and discovering their corresponding life changes as well as your own, it does rather cause you to scratch your head — after you and your students have come down from the sheer buzz of it all — and ask: “But *why* does astrology work? And *why* does a purely symbolic technique like SPs seem to work, too?”

Help Is at Hand: Quantum Science

These are good questions, which astrologers have been asking for centuries, millennia probably, ever since those Chaldean priests from their chilly watchtowers scanned the night skies for helpful advance warning signs that their kings and kingdoms were under threat. I do not propose in this short article to add to the vast amount of erudite speculation which has arisen from such questions.

However, very briefly, my conclusion is this: Modern quantum science has demonstrated that we live, move, and have our being as part of a vast energy field which ripples and changes in a sinuous, shapeshifting dance between order and chaos — order arising out of apparent disorder and in invisible patterns, which would appear to contain 4% matter, 23% dark matter, and 73% dark energy in a vast cosmic web.

I think that astrology works by tracking and mapping those energy patterns through planetary cycles against the backdrop of either the constellations via sidereal astrology, or our more familiar tropical astrology, which is pegged to the ecliptic. By a blend of astronomical calculation, mythic imagination, intuition, and observation of correlations between life on Earth and planetary movements over millennia, humans arrived at a way of deriving meaning from the energies generating the solar system, our tiny corner of that vast cosmic web. It is no surprise that reductionist thinking cannot cope with the possibility that something of great value to the human project could have arisen from this eclectic weave.

There are several ways in which one can creatively reflect upon that ratio of 4%–23%–73%. I like to think of it in terms of the worlds of consciousness, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious, respectively. Jung’s term “psychoid” is very useful in enabling me to make sense of energies which can and do manifest simultaneously — all the way from being obvious and tangible to being invisible to the wider world though highly influential in a person’s life.

For example, consider the client I saw some years ago, with a dominant Saturn square Neptune aspect in his horoscope. “James’s” profession was highly tangible: He made musical instruments. But a significant factor in the unfolding pattern of his life, also linked to that Saturn–Neptune square, was his having had to survive growing up with a severely alcoholic father. Being very aware of an inherited tendency to indulge in addictive escapist behaviours, he was

In working with Secondary Progressions, you are stepping into the mysterious, intangible world of the purely symbolic.

trying to address this when he came for a consultation — as his secondary progressed Sun triggered his natal Saturn square Neptune.

I think that an important part of the creative value of being a practising astrologer lies in helping clients like James to understand, accept, and work constructively with the shapeshifting potential inherent in the particular energies with which they came into the world.

From the above perspective very briefly outlined, it isn’t too difficult to tie the planetary patterns in the sky — here and now — into the static picture of the natal horoscope. You are working, at least in part, with what you can actually see. However, in working with SPs, you are stepping into the mysterious, intangible world of the purely symbolic. I find that my (metaphorical, at least!) understanding of that 4%–23%–73% ratio is very helpful in feeling comfortable with such mysterious territory. That which cannot be seen, perceived, or understood via our five senses within the 4% world of matter still has energetic validity in the landscape of the unseen 96% — that which modern science tells us is there, although we can only perceive it by inference and don’t yet know what it is.

Secondary Progressions: Family Inheritance

The most striking example of the mysterious power of SPs that I have ever had occurred a number of years ago, when I was playing around with the weave of interconnectedness which you find as soon as you begin to spend time looking at family horoscopes. Having acquired the birth certificates of all four of my grandparents (three with accurately recorded birth times) and having calculated their horoscopes, I took a notion to progress the birth charts of the two grandparents who had been most significant for me, and whose characteristics I most clearly recognised blended in myself, i.e., my maternal grandfather Calum and my paternal grandmother Isabella — both born in different years at different times. I progressed their charts, both with accurate birth times, to the day of my own birth.

The results stunned me. *Both* grandparents’ progressed Ascendants were at 9° Virgo, *both* progressed Midheavens were at 28° Taurus. And my angles? Yes, you’ve guessed it. My natal Ascendant is at 9° Virgo, and my natal Midheaven is at 28° Taurus. My North Node is also at 28° Taurus, and the degree of my prenatal solar eclipse is 28° Taurus, thereby emphasising the significance of the MC–IC axis in the transmission of family fate, karma, genetic inheritance, or

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whatever you wish to term it. I have written about this before and described my feeling then of having been “brushed by the wing of a great Mystery.”

Recently, whilst thinking about this article, I recalculated that set of progressions, just in case I had somehow made a mistake all those years ago. The result was the same.

Progressed Planets and the Progressed New Moon

When I am preparing for an in-depth astrology reading, I routinely do an “SP scan” through the ephemeris: Planets going retrograde, then direct some years later, usually reveal significant phases in a person’s life. Take “Antonia,” for example, aged 61 when we met two years ago. She has been living in Scotland for many years. Her Venus went retrograde by progression at age 18, at which time she “escaped” from a difficult family life in another part of the United Kingdom. At age 59, when Venus went direct, she began to feel the pull back to her home country, as well as feeling greater openness to people and to the possibility of a significant relationship, after having been single for a number of years.

I also note years where there was a progressed New Moon (when the progressed Sun and Moon conjoin). Depending on the length of a client’s life to date, there may be two or even three of those, if the first one occurred in the early years. “May’s” first progressed New Moon occurred when she was six years old, at which point she moved with her parents to the UK and a new life phase began. Her second progressed New Moon, at age 36, coincided with her return to the UK (she had by then been living abroad again for a number of years), her marriage, and the birth of her child.

“Pearl”: An Unfolding Life

By a timely piece of serendipity, last autumn 2016, as I was beginning to reflect on writing this article, I encountered a client in her mid thirties who ticked several of the above key SP boxes in one reading. Pearl has very generously allowed me to use parts of her story to illustrate just how much SPs on their own, before one even begins to add the overlay of current transits, can give a vivid picture of an unfolding life. Here is what I wrote in

my summing-up notes: “A most interesting reading with a remarkable young woman, who despite a very difficult early life and teenage years has managed to turn her life around.”

The two dominant SP features symbolically structuring Pearl’s life’s unfolding are the progressed New Moons and her chart’s ruling planet, Mercury, noting its shifts of sign, as well as its retrograde and direct motion.

Her first progressed New Moon, at 5° Libra in the 6th house, came at age four. (See **Chart 1**, below.) At the same age, progressed Mercury moved from Libra to Scorpio, also in the 6th house. She hit puberty at that unusually early age, and stated that “I was overwhelmed by a power I had no idea how to handle.” She was treated with hormone injections. Unsurprisingly, family, social, and school difficulties arose from this. Family life was turbulent, they moved around a lot, and her parents separated whilst she was growing up.

Pearl’s progressed Mercury went retrograde in Scorpio when she was twelve (chart not shown), a point at which she became “a total nightmare” to herself and her family, getting

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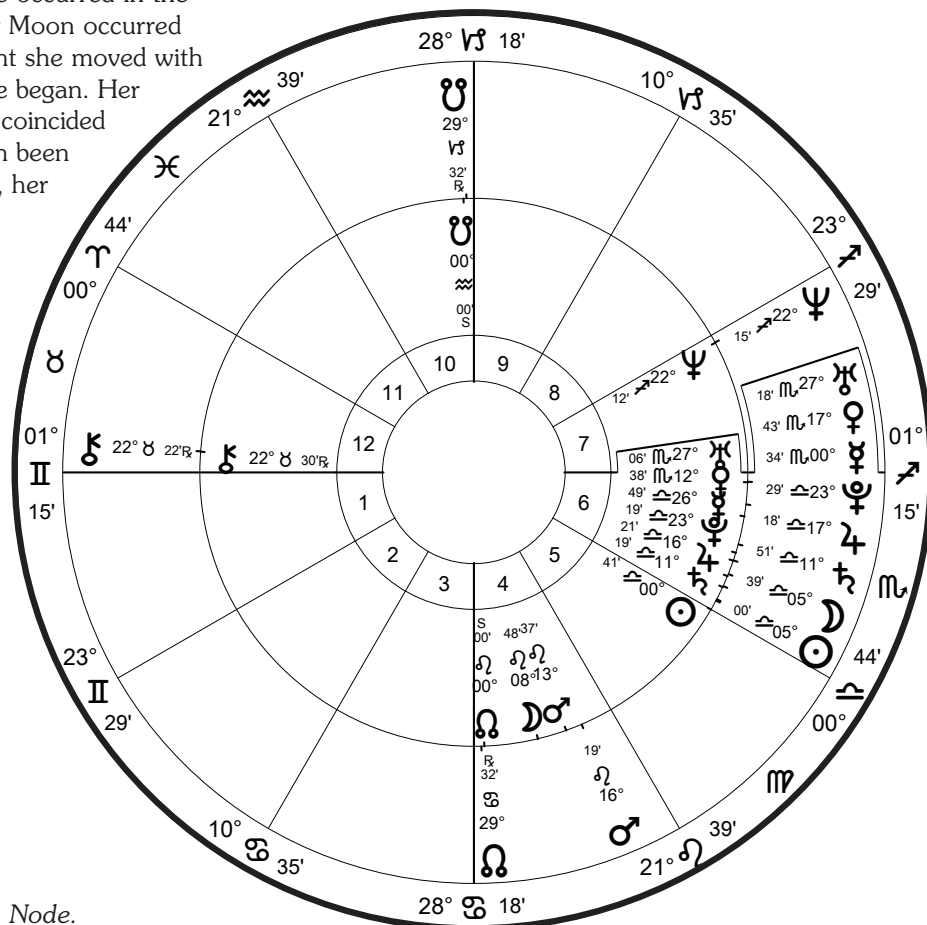


Chart 1: Bi-wheel.

Inner wheel and house cusps: Pearl
Outer wheel: Progressed to age 4

Charts use Placidus houses and the True Node.

into sex, drugs, and all kinds of self-destructive behaviour. She fell in love and had her first serious love affair at 15. On the positive side, she was always drawing and painting and got into music and the arts. Pearl did various jobs after leaving school, then had her daughter at 19. This coincided with her progressed Full Moon and the start of her grounding herself.

Progressed Mercury retrograded back into Libra when Pearl was 21. In her early twenties, she had a crisis involving drugs in which “I nearly died.” From then on, she went from one extreme to the other, turning her life around. She took up yoga, became a vegetarian, and aligned herself with, as she put it, “the guidance of the Divine.” She is a yoga teacher, loves teaching, and being a natural performer, is probably very good at it.

She had also been with the same man since her early 20s, but as she has become more independent and self-motivating, the relationship gradually withered and died. They broke up at the end of 2015, timed with progressed Mercury going direct in Libra, and with her second

progressed New Moon occurring in early Scorpio. Pearl’s progressed Mercury at 18° Libra will be transiting over her natal Pluto–Mercury conjunction (23° and 26° Libra) in the next few years. (See **Chart 2**, below left.)

Pearl feels that she is now in a new life phase but is not as yet clear about the way forward. She wants to develop her business and her writing, so I made various suggestions about how she could go about developing them both, pointing out that New Moons, progressed or otherwise, take place in the dark. Just as the familiar Sun–Moon monthly cycle takes a couple of days for the waxing crescent to appear, so in the 30-year progressed New Moon cycle, it takes a couple of years for the shape of a new life phase to become clear.

Pearl found that knowing about the unfolding of her progressed New Moon and progressed Mercury, as well as the reinforcing information provided by transiting Jupiter’s 11- to 12-year and Saturn’s 29- to 30-year cycles, turned out to be extremely helpful and comforting. It gave her a sense of awe, a feeling of being held in something — a meaningful pattern much, much bigger than herself.

I felt the same. Inevitably, over many years, you become accustomed to astrological symbolism “delivering” consistently. Every so often, however, you are privileged to witness the life of another person in which the symbolic tools we work with — in Pearl’s case, her secondary progressions — speak with such eloquence that it takes your breath away.

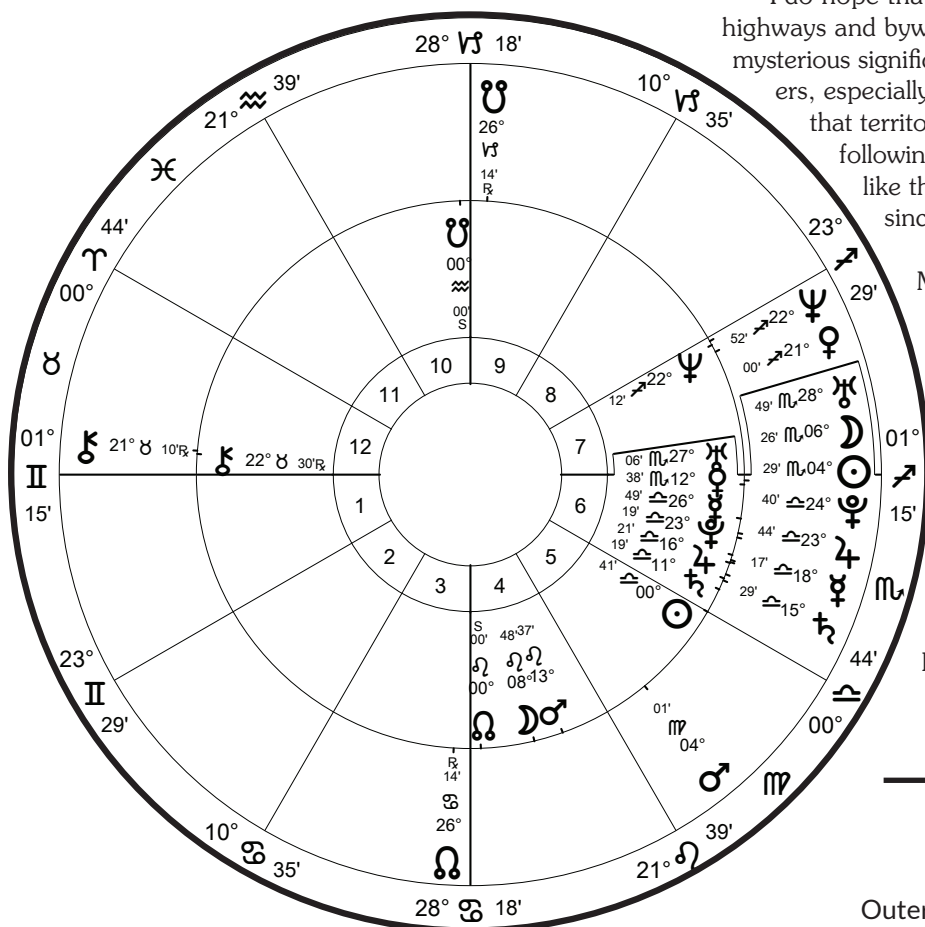
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Conclusion

I do hope that this guided stroll through some of the highways and byways of secondary progressions and their mysterious significance has some effect in stimulating readers, especially those of you who have not yet explored that territory, to consider doing so. You could start by following the shifts of the progressed MC–IC axis; like the progressed Sun, they are easy to plot since they both move at roughly 1° per year.

Consider this: My secondary progressed MC–IC shifted into Cancer–Capricorn, and my Ascendant–Descendant into Libra–Aries, when I was 32. My secondary progressed 1st-house Sun was a mere 2° away from an exact square to my natal 10th-house Uranus at the same time. Did anything change? It certainly did!

I met both my future husband (he has the Sun and Venus in Uranus-ruled Aquarius, how literal is that?!) and astrology that year. In the three years following, I obtained the Faculty of Astrological



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Chart 2: Bi-wheel.

Inner wheel and house cusps: Pearl

Outer wheel: Progressed to December 1, 2015

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Studies Certificate, and we moved house so that I could work from home. I also acquired a half share in two small children (still with me, now grown up, both very Uranian) and a very elderly cat.

Who needs transits?

Chart Data and Sources

“Pearl” is not the client’s real name, and birth data are confidential. Source: “Pearl’s” mother. Rating: A.

Note: “Pearl” read and approved her case study prior to my finalising this article. The other clients briefly quoted have also been given fictitious names, having granted me permission to present brief “clips” of their life stories — apart from “James” whose horoscope and notes were shredded before 2001, when I gave up my practice for several years. My grandparents’ names are their own.

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Conference Calendar

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August 30 – September 3, 2019: NCGR Conference 2019, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. **For info:** URL: <https://www.geocosmic.org/ncgr-conference-2019>

November 22–25, 2019: Annual Sedona Vedic Astrology Conference, Poco Diablo Resort, Sedona, Arizona, USA. **For info:** tel. (928) 282-6595; URL: <https://www.sedonavedicastrology.com/>

January 16–20, 2020: 23rd Federation of Australian Astrologers Conference, “Astrological Crossroads and Conjunctions,” Melbourne, Australia. **For info:** URL: <https://www.faa-inc.org.au/faa-conference-2020/>

September 6–15, 2020: *Save the Date!* ISAR 2020 Conference, Westminster Westin Hotel, Denver, Colorado, USA.

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