

Working with SOLAR RETURNS



one year in a lifetime

These notes are for the sole use of students in the tutorial on Solar Returns May 15, 2014

Looking forward to our class, Brian Clark

SOLAR RETURNS

Solar Returns are an ancient technique, as attested to by Firmicus Maternus. The technique was also used extensively by the medieval Arab astrologers, although certainly not in the way we use them today. During the 17th Century, William Lilly in *Christian Astrology* and John Gadbury mentioned the technique. However it was Jean Baptiste Morin de Villefranche who wrote more extensively on solar revolutions in *Astrologica Gallica*. In the 20th Century the French astrologer Alexander Volguine developed his system of solar returns from Morin's foundation stones.

Solar Returns began to re-emerge in 20th Century astrology; for instance in *Today's Astrology* (1941) Clement Hay in his article "Business Astrology" used the technique of a business solar return chart for a company. Both sidereal and tropical astrologers began broadly experimenting with this technique again in the later 20th Century; however the modern development of solar return charts did not use the technique of profections as the ancient astrologers had. In fact there were many traditional techniques of timing that were not carried forward into the modern restatement of astrology.ⁱ Simply, the technique of profections was based on bringing the natal 2nd house to the Ascendant for the 2nd year of life; the 3rd house to the ascendant for the 3rd year of life etc. But as solar returns began to become popular again in the last quarter of the 20th Century, different astrologers proposed different methodologies.

THE SUN RETURNING

Since the Sun represents both the vitality and the light of the self, it is an important archetype to honor as it completes its cycle. Festivities associated with the birthday ritualize the return of the Sun to its natal position reminding one of the renewal of their birth right.

The solar return horoscope is a chart constructed for the time the Sun returns to its exact natal position, which will be within 24 hours of the birth time each year. The time the Sun returns to its natal position generally advances about 6 hours each year (remember a year = 365¼ days. The ¼ day extra each year equates to about 6 hours). The solar return chart is the horoscope of the Sun's return, a return to the sense of identity and purpose. The solar return marks another initiation into the experience of the self and the chart will identify important areas of concern for the self (the ego) during the upcoming year. Each solar return chart will represent a year and be in effect from one birthday to the next.

As a return of solar energy, we could use the metaphor of the return of the hero and the heroic process. Therefore the solar return is like the annual rebirth of the hero who reconfirms his or her identity and purposefulness of the self each year. Therefore the Solar return chart not only maps the potentialities of the year, but also restates the soul's intention, the deeper motives behind our life experiences and the unfolding of our individuation process.

The solar return chart is the most commonly used of the planetary return charts. The Solar Return is also the most celebrated return in our culture. The birthday, or celebration of the Sun's annual return, is one of the few rituals still celebrated in our society and one, which

honors and recognizes the renewal of spirit. It recognizes a rebirth and a beginning of an individual's New Year. Therefore the Sun will be the only constant in the solar return chart, always being at the same zodiacal position as our natal Sun.

SOLAR RETURNS for a LIFETIME

While Solar Returns can be used as a secondary chart to examine planetary patterns and possibilities for any particular year, they can first be studied continuously throughout the life span in order to conceptualize the cycles and patterns that are inherent in each solar return from one year to the next. Therefore to begin their study, it is helpful to generate the solar returns for a lifetime or at least the solar returns from your 1st birthday until the present. You can generate these on your Solar Fire program by following these instructions:

Generating Solar Returns for a Lifetime using Solar Fire Gold

Open your natal chart or the chart you wish to generate solar returns for a lifetime

Then under CHART on the top menu

Click on Return and Ingress

Under Date, put your date of birth or the date of birth of the chart in question

Choose Nearest

Choose Natal

The click on Advanced and Ingress

Click Options

Choose Sun

Natal Position Harmonic 1

And under # of returns choose the number of returns you want to generate (for instance 80 or near to the age you are now)

Click OK

The charts appear immediately

To present these charts as snapshots:

Under View on the top menu

Choose Page Topic Index

Choose Multiple Charts

Choose Four Single Wheels (4wheels.pag)

Then you can start printing your charts 4 to a page to view them in sequence.

Once you have all your charts laid out in sequential order from birth, examine the angles and planets to see how they progress from one chart to the next. The following worksheet will help you visualize these movements. Make comments in your notebook about each of these planets and their movement in your Solar Return horoscopes.

Once you have studied each of the planets in the solar return you will be more confident with how to approach each one in any given solar return chart as well as how you will assign priority to each one.

Solar Return Notes by Brian Clark

© AstroSynthesis

www.astrosynthesis.com.au

Point Planet	Annual Movement between Solar Returns	Notes
MC	The MC will advance about three signs (normally 87- 93 degrees) each year. At the age of 33 the solar return mirrors once again the natal angles. However this can also occur earlier at the age of 29.	Check the ages of 29 or 33; 58 or 62 to see which years repeat the natal angles.
☾	The Moon moves forward approximately a trine (mostly greater) every year and follows the elements. It spends on the average 2-3 solar returns in one element and will take 8-10 years to sequentially follow the elements through the zodiac. Due to the Metonic cycle there are 19 positions of the Solar Return Moon and therefore at the age of 19 the Moon in the Solar Return will begin to repeat the sequence of solar return moons for the first 19 years of life beginning with the natal Moon. The Moon also travels counter clockwise through the solar return progressing 0-3 houses each year.	Follow the Moon through the elements and its 19 year repetitive cycle. Remember the Moon will repeat its position every 19 years and there will be an orb of influence.
☼	From one solar return to another the Sun moves about three houses clockwise, highlighting one quadrant each year. On <u>average</u> the Sun spends 10-11 years in angular houses, and then slips back to the succedent houses for 10-11 years. However, this is dependent on the latitude of the solar return.	Check the Sun's movement through the quadrants of the horoscope
☿	Mercury is always within 28 degrees of the Sun and is near its natal position at ages 13, 33 & 46. It is generally retrograde every 6 th solar return.	Check the years ° is in its natal position and the years it goes R.
♀	Venus is always within 48° of the Sun. There are only 8 positions of Venus, which repeat sequentially every 8 years.	Check the years when Venus goes retrograde.
♂	Mars generally follows the elements through the zodiac spending about 3-4 times in an element before it moves on. This is altered in years when Mars is ☾ in the solar return.	Check the years when Mars goes retrograde in the Solar Return.
♃	Jupiter moves approximately one zodiacal sign each solar return moving clockwise about two houses a year.	Check if ♃ has changed direction
♄	Saturn moves an average of about 12 degrees each year in the solar return and will move clockwise throughout the solar return horoscopes about 2-3 houses each year. Note when the planet changes direction in the return chart (from retrograde to direct or direct to retrograde).	Check if Saturn has changed direction in the Solar Return
♅	The movement of Chiron is dependant on its sign – it moves fastest in Libra and slowest in Aries. However it will move through the solar return in a clockwise fashion.	Check if Chiron has changed direction in the Solar Return
♁	Moves about 4 degrees + from one solar return to the next, moving in a clockwise direction, about three houses per year. However this varies year to year; over approximately 14 years Uranus will have tenanted in each house.	Check if Uranus has changed direction in the Solar Return
♆	Moves about 2 degrees of the zodiac between solar returns and will also move approximately 3 houses clockwise.	Check if ♆ has changed direction
♇	Pluto's speed is not regular. During the early part of the 21 st century it moves about 2° forward in the zodiac from solar return to solar return moving in a clockwise direction about three houses although this will vary.	Check if ♇ has changed direction in the Solar Return
♁ ♋	The Lunar nodes retrograde about 18-20 degrees of the zodiac between solar returns. Their movement clockwise through the horoscope is not uniform.	

UNDERSTANDING SOLAR RETURNS

In order to use solar returns effectively, first become familiar with the repetitive cycles, which are an integral aspect of solar return charts. In researching these cycles you will become more astute at differentiating and prioritizing the patterns within a solar return horoscope. One of the best methods in order to acquaint yourself with the solar return cycles is to generate the solar return horoscopes for your lifetime, using your natal birthplace, as we have discussed.

To begin to delineate the solar return chart recognize that it is essentially a horoscope, which has a use-by-date. The context in which you will be studying the chart suggests the atmosphere, themes and spheres of importance in the individual life over the coming year. The solar return chart is operational from one birthday to the next. In a sense it is a 'natal' chart for one year, providing a snapshot of the archetypal patterns that will prevail over the next year. Therefore it can be delineated much the same as a natal chart, remembering to honor its context of one year.

The solar return chart can also be delineated as a stand-alone chart for the year, delineating the relevant aspects of the horoscope. If this is the method that is used then it is often valuable to look at the relocated solar return if the individual has moved from their birthplace. However a more effective method is to use the solar return chart in context with the natal chart. With this method the solar return chart is delineated in context of the natal chart suggesting which natal themes will be emphasized during the coming year. This method is much more comprehensive and holistic. As well it is beneficial to look at the previous solar return, as well as the upcoming solar return, to put the current chart in context of the others noting the appropriate cycles.

Orbs used for aspects in the solar return chart are less than those used in a natal chart. It is also important to ascertain the closest aspects in the solar return and prioritize which aspects are the most important. As a guide only I would recommend the following:

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Recommended Orb for the Solar Return</u>
Conjunction	6 degrees
Opposition	6 degrees
Square	5 degrees
Trine	4 degrees
Sextile	3 degrees

The solar return chart is also a helpful biographical tool. The solar returns for the first years help to add another dimension to understanding the family atmosphere, early conditions, influences and experiences. Solar return charts can be early snapshots for these formative years.

When first reflecting on the solar return, think about what makes this chart unique. Before any interpretation, be aware of any feelings about the shape of the chart, the planetary distribution, etc. First impressions are often very applicable to the 'feeling' of the chart and its potential meaning.

The Solar return chart also exists within the context of the outer planets relationship to each other during any given year. In other words each individual's solar return chart will exist within the atmosphere of the collective planets for that year, their arrangement and inter-relationship. For instance everyone will have Pluto in Capricorn in his or her solar returns from 2008 – 2024. Uranus will start to appear in Aries in solar returns in 2010. During certain years the outer planets inter-aspects stay in orb for the year so everyone will have this planetary arrangement in their solar returns. For instance Pluto is opposite Saturn during 2001/2, Uranus is opposite Saturn in 2008/9 and solar returns during this period will reflect this. Of course when a personal planet or angle is constellated with this aspect then it suggests the individual is challenged to have a more personal relationship with this planetary dynamic. Be aware of the collective background upon which the solar return chart is constructed. It is helpful to be aware of the archetypal backdrop that the individual solar return will play out in.

Delineating a horoscope is personal and the most effective method will be forged out of an individual's experience and intuition. However for the solar return chart there are some pointers, which I have found to be very effective and I would encourage you to examine these when beginning to understand how to effectively use the solar return chart. Following is a 12-step program to help analyze the Solar Return horoscope.

1. The Ascendant

The Ascendant of the solar return chart symbolizes what is rising to the surface of our personality during the coming year. Each year the solar return symbolizes an aspect of the personality, which is in focus or may even be reborn over the course of the year. Like the natal ascendant, the solar return is the engine of the personality that helps to conduct vitality and energy for the individual. Therefore if the sign on the ascendant is incompatible with the natal ascendant it may indicate the need to adjust or compromise one's outlook for the year. If the element on the ascendant is the 'inferior function'ⁱⁱ to the natal rising sign (i.e. water-air or earth-fire) then it is important to consider the ways we expend and use our vital energies during the year. When an element that is unfamiliar to the individual is on the ascendant of the solar return then it could make itself conscious to the individual through their vitality, their well being, and the ways they move out into the world. For instance a fiery ascendant, which is used to moving out into life in a spontaneous headstrong fashion may feel more restrained and challenged when the element of Earth rises in the solar return chart. However that year will also allow them to come to know the value of focus, direction, commitment and purpose in their ventures, allowing them to be more present in what they are doing rather than rushing into the future.

A planet rising is also very important to note since this energy may be something that the individual needs to see and relate with during the coming twelve months. It is part of the personality rising to the surface and it will demand attention and direction for the coming period. If the planet is a 'shadow' planet (one not integrated well into the personality) or an outer planet, then the year will be demanding a confrontation and acceptance with this aspect of the self. This energy will be encountered through their personality and the areas they are reaching out into. The ascendant sign as well as planets near the ascendant will be useful to describe both the helpful and challenging energies, which lay in front of the individual for the year. These are the qualities that

the individual will be projecting out into their environment and qualities of the individual that others will respond to.

After thoroughly examining the solar return ascendant compare this to the natal chart. What house does the solar return ascendant fall in, as this house represents some of the issues that will be upfront during the year. The environment of this house may color and permeate the individual's horizon for the next twelve months. Individuals represented by this natal house (i.e. siblings in the 3rd, workmates in the 6th, friends in the 11th) may play a more prominent role, be more visible or represent a more conscious relationship to the individual.

The ascendant is the most prominent and visible aspect of the solar return horoscope and may even manifest quite shortly after the birthday. The ascendant represents 'birth' and the solar return ascendant may indicate conditions and the atmosphere at the time the New Year dawns. Planets near the ascendant may manifest shortly after the birthday. Become aware of the local time of your solar return and note the conditions, moods, experiences and events, which occur near the time of the Sun's return. These could symbolize a complex that unfolds over the course of the year.

2. The Midheaven

The MC in the solar return suggests the goal posts for the upcoming year; what is important to achieve as well as what is important to consider in our career. The meridian axis is like the spinal column of the horoscope, which holds the ability to be successful and fulfilled in the external world by being centered and grounded in the internal world. While the MC represents the conditions of our external world it also suggests the development of autonomy and authority, a maturation of the self in relation to the world. Therefore the MC also can symbolize our relationship with authority. In the early solar returns (probably from birth – adolescence) the MC probably signifies the rules, expectations, direction and goals of the parental authority. In the adult solar returns it would represent more the striving for our own internal authority and excellence as well as those external authority figures who still exert control or power over our worldly environment. As an axis which symbolizes the familial atmosphere (as opposite the IC), it is also important to note any potential shifts in the familial hierarchy when the MC is highlighted in the solar return. The MC for the year also suggests the need to consider career options and opportunities. If the solar return MC is strongly highlighted (angular planets, strong aspects to the MC) then it is important to be alerted to the potentiality of vocational issues.

As with the ascendant, it is important to note the element on the solar return MC in contrast to the natal chart. Years when an incompatible sign is on the MC may be years when there are new elements challenging the individual in their direction. In what house in the natal chart does the MC fall? The nature of this natal house could play a more prominent role in the individual's direction and vocational goals during the year. If a natal planet is now conjunct the solar return MC then it is important to recognize that this archetypal pattern may be played out in more of a public arena, perhaps through career or personal goals.

Planets near the MC will signify what is brought to public attention during the year. These planets will seek to be expressed through the vocational goals. It is these angular planets, which seek to achieve and be acknowledged during the year. An outer planet, including Saturn, conjunct the MC signifies an important year in terms of the individual's direction in the world. For a younger person this could manifest through their education and schooling, while for an adult it would probably signify career opportunities and changes. A planet conjunct the MC demands to be utilized in the vocation during the coming year and needs conscious attention directed towards it.

While the solar return chart can be used as a stand-alone chart, it is more revealing when used in context of other solar returns and the current transits and progressions to the natal chart. If there is a major transit or progression to the MC in the natal horoscope, then the solar return MC will be able to be seen in the context of this development. The solar return chart will then add perspective and detail to what has already been implied through the natal horoscope's transits or directions.

3. Angular Planets

The nature of a planet is emphasized when it is on an angle. Its archetypal nature is now strongly focused in a particular sphere of experience. In a solar return horoscope an angular planet often signifies an important energy to consider for the upcoming year. The angle on which it is placed helps to delineate in what environment it may manifest. Consider an angular planet like a red flag, which demands our attention and suggests we slow down and be more consciously aware of its nature and its impact upon our lives.

In the solar return an angular planet has top priority when considering the atmosphere or 'feeling' of the year. An outer planet on an angle has more immediate impact since it represents something larger and outside the known boundaries of the self is now exerting its influence. This is generally experienced as a feeling of being out of control, overwhelmed or inspired. An angular outer planet suggests the need to let go of preconceptions and control mechanisms and 'go with it'. Something new and outside the peripheral awareness is potentially able to manifest during the year. It is also important to note that the repercussions of an outer planet on an angle can reverberate for many years after; in other words the year may only be the opening or beginning of experiencing this new aspect of the self. When the social planets, Jupiter or Saturn, are angular then there is a need to be conscious of social and educational developments in the angular arena. There are new opportunities to become educated and conscious in these areas coupled with an impetus to reach beyond the familial and social limits, as we have known them. When an inner planet is angular it suggests a more personal encounter with this aspect of the self during the year. For instance an angular Moon suggests being conscious of the need to be emotionally secure in that area of the life. The Moon will generally manifest through the urge to settle (change home, even place), the moods (feelings, impulses) or the body (weight shifts, symptoms). However all Lunar manifestations will be a personal striving for security and nurturance. Consider the nature of the inner planet and what it suggests for the year when it is angular.

The angle the planet is on will suggest the area of the life where the energy is focused. Differentiate each angle separately (i.e. delineate the IC separately, not as opposite the MC; delineate the Descendant separately, not as opposite the Ascendant). Planets on the IC suggest that the archetypal nature of the planet wants to be focused on the deepest realms of inner security. It could also manifest through changes in the family of origin, the home or living conditions. The IC also represents our foundation stone, the touchstone of early conditioning and familial patterns. Therefore a planet, especially an outer planets, on the IC could signal revelations or changes in the way we have felt about our family of origin or shifts in the way we experience our family. For younger people this suggests the nature of the relationships we form within our familial circle, how secure we are, and also how we separate and form alliances outside the family. For adults the solar return IC suggests our family of choice and how we may repeat or become aware of the patterns from childhood that now influence our own parenting. Planets on the IC in the solar return suggest the need to ground and familiarize ourselves with these energies in the upcoming year in order to feel more centered and grounded. When planets are on the meridian of the horoscope the private and the public self need to be recognized, differentiate and honored. When this axis is tenanted it is necessary to be aware of balancing the needs of the inner self for privacy and solitude with the urge to be fulfilled and successful in the world; the spheres of home and career both need attention and the task is how we manage to appease both.

Planets on the descendant focus their archetypal nature on the arena of relationships. Angular planets here suggest developments in the sphere of equal relationships whether personal or professional. Psychologically it also suggests we are becoming more aware of this energy in ourselves. Planets on the descendant suggest a growing awareness of patterns in our relationships and how we unconsciously contribute to their repetition. Planets on the horizon of the solar return suggest the themes of self and other during the year become important and the planet's nature gives us the clue as to how this could manifest.

4. Transits to the Natal Sun

It is the Sun which is the central focus of the solar return chart, and therefore its zodiacal position is fixed each year by longitude. The house position changes each year and moves through the quadrants stressing one quadrant of experience each year. Its house position is important to note as the area where consciousness is directed and an important sphere to identify during the year. In this area the identity is challenged to develop.

Since the Sun is fixed in longitude and the movement of the outer planets is very gradual, any transit of an outer planet to the Sun will appear over a succession of solar return charts as demonstrated with the charts of JFK, Jr. Therefore Uranus, Neptune or Pluto transits to the Sun will be highlighted in successive solar return charts and this elongates the period they are in effect. As an example think of the transiting outer planets conjunct the Sun. Using the orb recommended for this aspect of 6 degrees (in solar returns), the table below suggest how many solar returns this aspect will successively occur in.

Transiting Planet Conjunct the Sun (Orb of 6 degrees)	Maximum # of Solar Returns in which the aspect may recur
Uranus	4
Neptune	7
Pluto	7

The solar return chart helps to delineate where the important transformation may be taking place during any particular year of the transit. The house position of the Sun and its transiting planet give us clues as to important areas to consider. When examining important aspects to the Sun from the outer planets remember to place them in the context of the transit and the dynamic transforming process the individual is undertaking.

5. The Moon

The Moon gathers the nuances of personal experience and weaves these feelings, innuendos, perceptions, dreams, and impressions into memory. The Moon represents the feeling memory and is the mechanism through which the feeling life of the environment, especially the familial sphere, is imprinted upon the individual. Literally the solar return Moon will most likely manifest in the area of personal security (the home, living conditions, residency), changes in emotional relationships (familial and close personal attachments) and through the feelings (moods, sense of contentment, emotional security and safety). Therefore the solar return Moon along with the progressed Moon reflects and records the emotional development and maturation of the individual.

We have already noted the repetitive and ordered cycle of the Moon in solar return charts. Its movement through the houses and the elements indicates its annual growth, and its 19-year pattern helps to identify the repetition of cycles. First, note the age of the individual and the previous ages where the Moon would have been in the same sector. For instance if the individual is 39 years old then the solar return Moon would be in the same sector as it was 19 years previously at age 20 and 19 years before that at age 1. This allows you to immediately relate the emotional developments of the year with those of previous years in order to connect the threads and memories, which may be influencing the feelings during the year. Remember to think in this 19-year pattern when addressing the solar return Moon. The Lunation phase will also be repeating (unless near a cusp) and the Nodes will also have returned about 5 months before the birthday and be about 8-10 degrees from the natal nodal axis.

The Moon also follows the elements in succession through the solar returns and therefore it is important to note what element the Moon is in. Is the element compatible with the natal Moon? If not then this could suggest the need to be more emotionally aware during the year and to recognize that one's instinctive methods of seeking security and shelter may not be effective. Did the element shift from the last solar return? If the sequence of the elements has changed from the last solar return then this could suggest new emotional developments during the year. It is important to remember that the Moon accumulates experience and therefore its use in the solar return chart should be in context of its movement from one return to the next. What

does the elemental nature of the Moon during the year suggest? Note the sign position of the Moon to refine the quality of the lunar experience in the year.

The house position of the Moon will indicate the emotional terrain for the year. In the solar return chart it will focus on an area of experience and its house position could indicate the following:

- The area of life in which we may be emotionally sensitive and feel vulnerable during the upcoming year
- This is the sphere of our experience which will be acutely responsive to impressions, dreams, and feelings, and is the area we need our feelings to be in touch with
- The house of the Moon suggests the environment during the year where we need to feel secure and settled.
- The area of life preoccupying our thoughts and feelings, and the sphere of life where we feel more emotionally engaged
- The people in our lives we need to be more emotionally connected to, or the arenas of our lives we need to be more engaged with or responsive to
- An area where we may be aware of new psychological and emotional developments
- The area of our lives where we need to be more conscious of our attitudes, instincts, feelings, motives and responses
- An area of our life demanding more of our emotional focus and attention
- The area of our life we need to be nurtured by
- An area of our life where we may recognize habitual behavior and feel the need to change these outdated emotional patterns

Aspects to the Moon are also very important to address, as these aspects will help to delineate the emotional climate of the year. Planets aspecting the Moon will need to be emotionally recognized and acknowledged. Years when the outer planets are strongly aspecting the Moon (i.e. conjuncting, opposing or squaring the Moon or in a very close orb of the Moon) will be years when the habitual routines and emotional security will be challenged. The aspect is an energetic force exerted by the other planet and needs to be consciously brought into the sphere of the Moon.

Compare the solar return Moon to the natal Moon. What house is it occupying in the natal chart? This may be an area which needs reflection. Are there any aspects to the natal planets? If so it is important to recognize that these aspects of the personality may be undergoing emotional examination in the coming year.

6. Lunation Phase

The Sun is fixed in its zodiacal position in each solar return horoscope and the Moon has 19 positions over 19 years. Because of these two factors the lunation phase of the Moon will also follow a 19-year pattern in solar return horoscopes stressing this cycle.

Each phase is important to consider for the year. Place the phase of the solar return lunation in context with the progressed lunation phase. Each progressed lunation phase lasts 3 – 4 years, and the solar return lunation phase in this context could help to differentiate each year of the current progressed phase.

The Waxing Phases of the Lunation Cycle

Solar Return Lunation Phase	Prevailing Climate Of the Year
New Moon	Is this a year of beginnings? Do you sense or feel that there is a subtle change of direction? A New Moon suggests following your hunches, trusting the instincts and spontaneously responding to the opportunities, which are presented during the year.
Crescent	Is this a year of adjustments? Do you need to recognize attitudes and values from the past, which are no longer appropriate? Is this a year to struggle to change the patterns from the past that still holds you back? The Crescent Moon suggests that this is the year of exorcising some of the ghosts from the past, which still haunt you.
First Quarter	Is this a year of change and a year to take risks? Do you feel the necessity to act even though you are not clear on the goal? Do you feel restless and yearn to act impulsively? The First Quarter lunation phase suggest that this is a year when it is necessary to act and change even if the goalposts are not in sight or your plans have not been well thought through.
Gibbous	Is this a year to plan and focus yourself on the tasks ahead of you? Do you need to be more restrained and committed to the process you are involved with? Do you feel the need to be more prepared and educated? The Gibbous phase suggests to be more prepared by gathering the appropriate information, techniques and tools.

The Lunation phase represents the overall mood of the year and suggests an important aspect of the year to consider. For instance each phase could suggest something different about the overall climate of the year.

The Lunation Cycle can be used effectively in the Solar Returns to be able to give an overall perspective on the year, and to question your motives, goals and values of the coming year. In a way the lunation phases can help in making the resolutions for the year and being conscious of what the larger issues of life are during the course of the year.

The Waning Phases of the Lunation Cycle

Full Moon	Is this a year of realization and reflection? Do you feel the need to be more in touch with yourself, to understand and reflect more on the nature of who you are? The Full Moon phases suggest a culmination of what you have been working towards as well as a clearer reflection of who you are and where you are heading.
Disseminating	Is this a year to put yourself forward, spread your ideas, and be more authoritative about your beliefs? Do you feel the need to be more socially active or influential? The Disseminating phase is the time of the cycle to distribute the talents and outcome of what you are working on. It is a highly creative year and one to exert influence on the individuals and environment surrounding you.
Last Quarter	Is this a year when you need to re-examine your values? Re-assess your goals? Re-address your lifestyle? Do you feel more inner-motivated rather than outer-focused? Is it important for you to take stock of what is happening in your life and re-examine where you are? The Last Quarter phase is a time of reorientation and questioning. It is a year of introspection and assessment.
Balsamic	Is this a year of endings? Do you feel it is a time to let go of what is not working? Do you feel the need for retreat in order to be in touch with the deeper aspects of your self? Is it a time of dreams and visions? The Balsamic phase suggests an ending of some attachment in your life and the necessity to find time to be able to gestate the new potentials which are being seeded in your life. It is a time when the deepest levels of the psyche are experienced through dreams and impressions.

7. The Planets (and Lunar Nodes)

Each planet of the solar return chart needs to be considered on its own merit – its sign and house position, aspects, cycle and any other important considerations (retrogradation, intercepted etc.). Examine each planet in the solar return chart. Remember that the sign of the social and outer planets are not important personally as each individual will have these in their solar return. These represent collective energies for the year. Similarly any major aspects between outer planets will be part of the landscape of the year and therefore in each solar return. What is important to note is the house position, as this personalizes the experience of the outer planets and suggest where the energies may be focused? Since there is so much to consider in the solar return I would prioritize the planets if they were angular or had numerous aspects to

them. Also be aware of their cycles and how the planets change from one solar return to the next.

As well it needs to be examined in reference to the natal chart. I suggest comparing the solar return planet to its natal counterpart and the natal horoscope in the following fashion:

- What house does the solar return planet fall in the natal chart? This house may indicate the area where some of the issues pertaining to the solar return planet may arise
- Compare the element of the solar return inner planet to its element in the natal chart. Is this a compatible or incompatible element? If the element is incompatible then the function of this energy may be more challenged during the year. I would only compare the inner planets as the social or outer planets sign placement is not important in the solar return chart since it applies to *every* solar return for the year.
- Does the solar return planet make any powerful aspects to natal planets? I would only consider stronger aspects here. If so then there may be a need to recognize that these energies may need to cooperate and be conscious of each other during the year in order to operate effectively. Be especially aware if the solar return planet falls on a natal angle, as then it will highlight the need to address the archetypal nature of the solar return planet.

In considering each of the planet's energies in the solar return it might be helpful to address each planet's needs for the coming year. Once you have examined the nature of the planet in the solar return chart as well as how it affects the natal chart then question its role during the coming year. The inner planets of course are more personal in nature and these are the ones to consider more independently.

Sun what do I need to identify and become conscious of in the coming year?

Moon where do I need to find shelter and nurturing? How can I feel more secure with those I am attached to?

Mercury what do I need to communicate and learn this year?

Venus what is important for me to value and appreciate? What patterns of relating do I need to become more conscious of during the coming year?

Mars what do I need to explore and go after during the year? Where could I be more independent and adventuresome?

8. Aspect Patterns

Major aspect patterns are a prime consideration in horoscope delineation. In a solar return horoscope a major aspect pattern is a prominent feature of the yearly horoscope and therefore will suggest important developments over the upcoming year. It is important to consider the nature of the planets involved and the houses they occupy and rule.

Apply the same procedure as you would in delineating aspect patterns in a natal chart except remember that the aspect is seen in context of the upcoming year. If two or more of the planets involved are outer planets then remember that most individuals throughout the year will have these planets in the same aspect in their solar return. When these are in aspect to an inner planet this suggests how the individual may deal personally with these collective energies. Consider a major aspect pattern a priority of the solar return delineation.

9. Chart Shapes

The chart shape is a visual snapshot of the way an individual's energy during the year could be expressed, channeled or dispersed. Take note of the shape and distribution of the planetary energies. If the majority of the planets are above the horizon then the year may be influenced more by the outer world and its events. In contrast if the majority of the planets were below the horizon then the individual might be more subjective and introspective for the year, feeling more inner orientated than outer directed. If most of the planetary energies were focused on the Eastern hemisphere then the individual may want to act more on their own, making choices and taking action independently. If the majority of planets are on the Western side of the chart, then this could present the opposite perspective: the individual could feel they are so involved their choices and actions are entwined with others. Their experience throughout the year could feel enmeshed with others'.

The visual shape of the chart is a dynamic clue to delineating how the planetary energy may be distributed and expressed during the coming year. Using Marc Edmund Jones' seven horoscope shapes, which he described in his book *The Guide to Horoscope Interpretation* (1941), we could speculate how we may expend our energies during the year as follows:

i. The Splash occurs when the planets are evenly distributed around the horoscope, generally with one planet in each house, therefore with two empty houses. During the year there may be a wide horizon with many varied experiences, many different interests and a potential ability to relate to many things. Caution is needed so the individual does not scatter their resources all over the place by rushing off in many directions without firm goals or commitments. However through the multiplicity of experiences new interests and activities will be enjoyed.

ii. The Bundle is when all the planets are located within a trine; therefore one third of the horoscope is emphasized while two thirds of the horoscope will have no planets. In some cases this will emphasize a specific quadrant of the chart and generally there will be a stellium within the bundle. The energetic level for the year needs to be focused and concentrated. With this commitment the individual will feel powerful and intense. During the year there may be an opportunity to make something successful out of a difficult beginning or by using raw materials which are at hand. The cautionary note is to be conscious of the potential for obsession, a high self-interest or narrowness of vision.

iii. The Locomotive is opposite to the bundle as one third of the horoscope is unoccupied. Jones termed the planet that was leading the other planets in the clockwise direction the 'leading planet', suggesting it was the one that initiated the psychic energy and encouraged movement and motivated the other planetary energies. During the year the individual could become self-motivated and be a driving force once they get started. Once the energy moves there is a dynamic drive and power. Take note of the 'leading planet' as an indication of what it may be that initiates drive and willpower.

iv. In the Bowl all the planets are contained within 180 degrees, or one half of the horoscope. This concentrates the planetary energies on one or two hemispheres of the horoscope. The year may feel more contained and focused. It is important to recognize that some aspects of the individual's experience may feel empty or lacking energy. The year contrasts the ability to hold and contain experiences as opposed to what is left uncontained and difficult to deal with. The cautionary note is to recognize during the year that the individual may need to accept feelings of division between two distinct sides of themselves or a separation between themselves and others.

v. The Bucket is either a bundle or bowl pattern with one planet or tight conjunction of planets on the opposite side of the horoscope to the remaining planets. The opposing planet or 'handle' acts as a spokesperson or a release for the conflagration of energies represented by the other planets. During the year the singular planet may be the driving force, becoming the guide or vehicle of expression, or inspiration to the other energies. Equally the stress of the intense focus could weaken this aspect of the individual (represented by the handle) and it could collapse under the pressure or be introjected, creating a sense of agitation or inability to express the energy. It is important to be conscious of the important role this planet (or stellium) plays in expressing the self during the course of the year.

vi. The Seesaw has two or more planets opposing the rest of the planets across two sides of the horoscope, with ideally two empty squares (or not less than a sextile) that separate the planetary groups. The chart has two symmetrical groups of planets opposing one another. The year may have less definition and the urge to balance and reconcile opposing parts of the life may be a priority. The ability to move back and forth between two opposing views or beliefs may preoccupy the individual. At times this could lead to a sense of ambivalence or uncertainty, but when used constructively there is a sense of considering both points of view before moving ahead into action. During the year the theme may be one of resolution of conflict and reconciliation. It is important to be conscious of not becoming engulfed in conflict during the course of the year.

vii. The Splay is the most difficult pattern to recognize. It is characterized by the tripod: three corners seem to anchor the chart. The chart is not as evenly spaced as the splash and has 'spokes' that act to ground the scattered energy. The year may be characterized by the ability to ground and harness disparate energies. During the year the energy needs to be focused and directed so the individual does not feel confused or misguided.

10. Elements and Modes

Similar to natal chart interpretation it is important to notice the balance of elements and modalities in the solar return chart for the year. Note imbalances of the elements and modes as well as any element that is 'missing' (lacking any planet in this element). This would be important to be conscious of in the coming year. The missing element could be projected onto an object or other individuals in our environment endowing others in our lives with the qualities that we feel we are missing at this time. The lacking element is persistent, demanding that we relate to it, if not in ourselves, then through others. This missing function often appears in the guise of our partners, our bosses, our parents, our children or other significant relationships. Note which element it is imperative to be conscious of during the year and be aware of the myriad of ways this could manifest itself. Imbalances of elements or modalities in a particular solar return will find their own avenue of expression; therefore it is important to be aware of these imbalances represented in the horoscope.

11. Retrograde Planets

Retrograde planets are naturally subjective as well as reflective. They act instinctively, responding to what appears to be taking place in the environment. Since retrograde planets are in a defined relationship to the Sun (in the opposite sector to the Sun), they have an important role in the shaping of personal identity, the formation of ego strength and the discovery of the Self. A retrograde planet also has the ability to be more internally focused, is naturally more subjective, and has greater potential to be internally, rather than externally orientated. With the planet in the sector opposite the Sun, it is able to be reflective about its role in Ego consciousness. Because of its relationship to the Sun (the conscious identity or ego) it often acts as a rebel or is marginal to what is perceived to be acceptable or the norm. Therefore a planet in retrograde is intensified; the experience of the planet is more subjective. Note any planet which is in retrograde.

In the solar return horoscope be aware of the cycle of the retrograde planet as well as its frequency. For instance Mercury is generally retrograde once in six years; Venus once in eight years while the outer planets are retrograde over a succession of solar returns. Knowing the frequency of the retrograde planet helps to prioritize its importance. For instance years when Mercury is retrograde will be significant since it only occurs every six years. This suggests the pattern of communicating, learning and processing information is altered during this year. It suggests changes in the Mercurial function and a potentially deeper insight into these pattern occurring. Years when Venus is retrograde could signal a different perspective or approach to relating or a more intense scrutiny of one's values. It is important to note when the inner planets are retrograde since this is infrequent and the personal issues represented by the planet will be intensified. With the outer planets be cognizant of their change of direction from one solar return to the next. Noting the retrograde planets and their cycles in the solar return adds to the delineation of the planetary focus and expression during the coming year.

12. Intercepted Signs

If an intercepted polarity occurs in a solar return horoscope then we are alerted to a quality, which potentially may be blocked or difficult to access during the year. The house polarity is important to note as well, since this could represent where the blockage manifests. Likewise it is important to recognize the two house polarities where the duplication takes places. During the year it may be difficult to differentiate the houses, which have the identical sign on the cusp, from one another. Note the intercepted polarity and become aware of energies which seek expression yet may feel inhibited or denied. Note the rulers of these intercepted signs and their placement in the horoscope. How do they contribute to expressing these energies? Become aware of the areas during the year where there may be confusion or enmeshment due to the same sign being on the cusp. An interception in a solar return chart is an important consideration when recognizing areas in the upcoming year which demand attention and need more conscious focus.

The solar return horoscope is an extremely useful addition to working with transits and progressions to ascertain upcoming trends as well as the emotional and psychological landscape of the upcoming year. However it is also an important chart on its own which when seen in context of the whole life shows the maturation and development of the individual throughout their lifetime. The cycles that renew themselves through the solar return charts are reminders of the majesty and awe of cosmic order. It reminds us also to celebrate the rebirth of the solar hero each year, and to renew our commitment to the development of the self.

SOLAR RETURN WORKSHEETS

Following are two solar return worksheets which I hope are of value:

SOLAR RETURN WORKSHEET I

Make notes on the following in the current Solar Return to the Natal Chart

Solar Return Planet	Current Solar Return	Comments
The Ascendant		
The MC		
Angular Planets		
Transits to the Natal Sun		
The Moon		
The Lunation Cycle		
The Planets and Lunar Nodes	<i>See worksheet II</i>	
Aspect Patterns		
Chart Shapes		
Elements and Modes		
Retrograde Planets		
Intercepted Signs		

SOLAR RETURN WORKSHEET II

Compare the planetary placements in the current Solar Return to the Natal Chart

Solar Return Planet	Degree/Sign & House in SR Chart	Major Aspects in SR Chart	SR Planetary Aspects to the Natal Chart	Comments
Sun			<i>The Sun is at its natal position so repeats the natal aspects</i>	
Moon				
Mercury				
Venus				
Mars				
Jupiter				
Saturn				
Chiron				
Uranus				
Neptune				
Pluto				
North Node				

MC				
Ascendant				
Vertex				

Solar Returns

In developing your own ways of working with the Solar Return horoscope you first need to have your own opinion about the particular variances in return charts, due to the question of timing and location. For instance, will you use a chart cast for the natal birthplace or the relocated address?

In Solar Return horoscopes, the planets can have a different flavor from the natal chart as they are considered in the context of that year, not the lifetime. We can reflect on the planetary energies in the same way we do natively; however, in the solar return chart they are more transient, as they are symbolic of that year. It is also important to consider the planet from the perspective of their annual cycle in the solar return. To begin your explorations you might want to use a checklist to help generate some ideas and feelings about what the chart may be representing for the year as follows:

The Ascendant

- ✓ How does the Solar Return Ascendant support or challenge the Natal Ascendant?
- ✓ What is rising on the horizon of the year? What natal house is coming to the ascendant? Are there natal planets conjunct the solar return ascendant?

The Midheaven

- ✓ How does the Solar Return MC support or challenge the Natal MC?
- ✓ Metaphorically, what is culminating on the meridian of the year? What natal house is coming to the MC? Are there any natal planets conjunct the solar return MC?

Angular Planets

- ✓ Do any planets come to the angle in this solar return? If so what might they signify/ How are they placed in the natal chart and how are they supported or not in the Solar Return chart?

The Moon

- ✓ Note the element of the Moon.
- ✓ What sign is it in? Is this compatible with the natal chart?
- ✓ What house is it in? Where is the focus of security and safety this year?
- ✓ What aspects are being made and how does this change the landscape of domestic and emotional security this year?

The Luration Phase

- ✓ What is the luration phase and what mood does it symbolize for the year? How different is this to the secondary progressed luration phase?

Transits to the Natal Sun

- ✓ Transits to the Sun from an outer planet reflect the ongoing transit and will be in effect for a number of solar returns. How does the SR chart give meaning to the transit?

- ✓ What house does the Sun occupy this year? Are you more identified with this area of experience during the year?

The Planets

- ✓ Study each planet individually. Take note of its cycle in the solar return and note if an important cycle is being repeated during the year.
- ✓ Look at the planetary aspects and ascertain the important planetary dialogues for the year.
- ✓ Where does this planet fall in the natal chart? Does its house and/or sign position challenge or support the natal position?
- ✓ Note any planets returning near to their natal position.

Other Focuses in the SR chart

- Aspect Patterns
- Chart Shapes
- Retrograde Planets
- Intercepted Signs
- The Balance of Elements and Modes

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bell, Lynn. *Cycles of Light Exploring the Mysteries of Solar Returns*, CPA, London: 2005.

Clark, Brian. *Dynamic Solar Returns*, Astro*Synthesis (Melbourne: 2002).

Eshelman, James. *Interpreting Solar Returns*, ACS Publications, San Diego, CA: 1986

Harding, Michael & Harvey, Charles. *Working with Astrology*, Arkana, London: 1990.

Kirby, Babs and Stubbs, Janey. *Interpreting Solar and Lunar Returns, a Psychological Approach*, Element Books, Dorset: 1990.

Merriman, Raymond. *The Solar Return Book of Prediction*, Seek It Publications, Birmingham, MI: 1977.

Shea, Mary. *Planets in Solar Returns*, ASC Publications, San Diego: 1992.

ⁱ For further amplification on this process please refer to Demetra George, *Astrology and the Authentic Self*, Ibis Press, 2008, 221-229.

ⁱⁱ For a complete examination of the elements in this way see Brian Clark, *The Four Elements, Psychological Type and Astrology*, Astro*Synthesis (Melbourne: 2009).