

# Archetypal Historiography

## *A New Historical Approach*

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*In the opening paper of this second section, Rod O'Neal provides an introduction to archetypal historiography—a new approach to the study of history and culture based on planetary correlations with archetypal themes in human experience. By previewing the articles to follow, each of which is illustrative of the kind of analysis to be included in this section of Archai, O'Neal identifies three distinct but related approaches to this kind of research.*

What is history? The answer to this apparently simple question is both complex and elusive. As the philosopher of history Herbert Butterfield has described the historian's dilemma, "We may look around for the past, but it is nowhere to be seen."<sup>1</sup> Yet despite history's ephemeral and intangible nature, the careful and accurate reconstruction of historical periods is recognized today as not only possible but valuable, yielding consequential insight into the past and thereby illuminating both the present and the future. Although an awareness of the past and the need to chronicle major events has been present to varying extents in most civilizations, the development of the kind of historical consciousness that we recognize today as "history" is relatively recent. As Butterfield points out, "Only after immensely long periods, and under the pressure of strange compulsions, did it come to be realized that a past once forgotten could be recovered to a considerable degree by research."<sup>2</sup> That realization first emerged in Western Europe during the Italian Renaissance, developing into its full form only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

Some two centuries later, after much research and the development of increasingly sophisticated historical techniques and theory, historians now recognize that what is recovered of a particular historical era, culture, or event depends largely on the specific focus and theoretical framework of the historian: Different frameworks generate different questions to ask of the material used to reconstruct a particular facet of history. As a result of such theoretical differences, an entire range of well-defined fields of inquiry has emerged since the late eighteenth and early

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1. Herbert Butterfield, "Historiography," in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Philip P. Wiener, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 464.

2. Butterfield, "Historiography," 464.

3. For an overview of these developments, see Butterfield's "Historiography," 464–498; For an influential, more detailed examination of the development of historical consciousness from ancient Greece to the twentieth century, see R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, rev. ed., edited by Jan van der Dussen (London: Oxford University Press, 1994).

nineteenth centuries, from the earlier, more traditional fields of political, economic, and ecclesiastical history to more recent, specialized fields like Marxist, sociological, or cultural history. Each of these diverse approaches, also known as historiographies, has yielded invaluable new insights into specific aspects not only of particular epochs, cultures, or movements but also of the processes by which ideas, events, movements, and cultures emerge, complexly interact, and evolve as one historical period gradually gives way to the next.<sup>4</sup> Precisely such a new type of historiography, offering an unprecedented perspective for evaluating history, historical processes, and cultural phenomena is what this second section of *Archai*, Archetypal Analysis of Culture and History, is intended to introduce to the larger scholarly community.

In *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*, Richard Tarnas offers an extensive body of evidence that persuasively demonstrates that many aspects of human cultural history present complex patterns of phenomena that consistently correlate with the general timing of particular planetary alignments as well as with the specific archetypal themes associated with those alignments by astrological researchers.<sup>5</sup> For example, historical periods when Saturn and Pluto have formed particular geometric aspects such as the conjunction, opposition, or square (the quadrature aspects) present a range of phenomena with characteristic themes that are consonant with a dynamic mutual activation of the archetypal principles associated with Saturn and Pluto, including periods marked by intense conflict, an aura of moral gravity, conservative entrenchment and empowerment, the rise of religious and political fundamentalism, and an increased tendency to make black-and-white moral judgments along highly polarized lines of good and evil.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, historical periods when Saturn and Neptune have formed quadrature alignments display a distinctly different set of characteristic themes, including a pervasive sense of cultural and personal disillusionment, skepticism, and malaise, and intensified cultural debates concerned with the dialectic between reason and faith.<sup>7</sup> Not only can historical periods be differentiated in this way, but specific streams of thought within Western culture also seem to crest in major waves that display an archetypal coherence and synchrony with the cycles of specific planetary pairs. Philosophical idealism and Platonism, for example, present a cyclic pattern of emergence into cultural prominence that correlates with periods when Uranus and Neptune have formed specific

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4. I am using the term *historiography* in one of its many senses to distinguish one historical approach from others.

5. Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006). This paragraph, and the following four, are modified from Rod O'Neal, "Seasons of Agony and Grace: An Archetypal History of New England Puritanism" (PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 2008), 6–12.

6. The most recent quadrature alignment of Saturn and Pluto was the opposition that was operative (within the usual orb of 15 degrees) from June 2000 through April 2004. For a detailed presentation of historical correlations with the Saturn-Pluto archetypal complex, including this most recent opposition, see Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 207–288.

7. The most recent quadrature alignment of Saturn and Neptune was the opposition that was operative from November 2004 through August of 2008. For more on historical correlations with the Saturn-Neptune archetypal complex, see Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 469–478.

alignments.<sup>8</sup> On a broader collective scale, these same alignments consistently coincide with periods of major spiritual awakenings and the births of new religions. Moreover, Tarnas and many others have discerned similar patterns of correlations between significant phenomena in the biographies of prominent individuals and the archetypal complexes associated with planetary configurations in their natal charts or that are constellated during personal planetary transits.

Such patterns of correlations present a vision of human biography and culture, historical periods, streams of thought, and the evolution of ideas that contradicts prevailing concepts of a disenchanted cosmos. Near the end of *Cosmos and Psyche*, referring to the overall body of evidence from his own research and that of many others, Tarnas concludes,

The current body of accumulated data makes it difficult to sustain the modern assumption that the universe as a whole is best understood as a blind, mechanistic phenomenon of ultimately random processes with which human consciousness is fundamentally incoherent. . . . The evidence suggests rather that the cosmos is intrinsically meaningful to and coherent with human consciousness . . . that the cosmos as a living whole appears to be informed by some kind of pervasive creative intelligence—an intelligence . . . of scarcely conceivable power, complexity, and aesthetic subtlety, yet one with which human intelligence is intimately connected, and in which it can consciously participate.<sup>9</sup>

The implications of this body of evidence, therefore, are highly consequential, rendering further research and exploration eminently worthwhile, possibly of great significance. If such a vision of human cultural history and biography is valid, it should be possible to demonstrate that the defining characteristics of specific historical movements, cultural periods, and individual lives not previously researched from this perspective do indeed present recognizable patterns of significant correlations with the general timing of particular planetary alignments and the specific archetypal themes associated with those alignments. The primary goal of this section of *Archai* is therefore twofold: first, to provide detailed historical and archetypal analysis of the major events and characteristic themes of historical movements, cultural phenomena, and personal biographies; and second, to explore how discernible themes in history appear to be correlated with the archetypal meanings associated with corresponding planetary alignments in the astrological tradition. Beyond this, the vision of history, culture, and biography revealed through such archetypal astrological analysis has theoretical implications that will be explored in greater depth within the first section of *Archai*.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 355–408. See, for example, the section “Romanticism, Imaginative Genius, and Cosmic Epiphany,” 382–400. Examples of major Platonic revivals include the Renaissance Platonism of Florence led by Ficino, the Cambridge Platonists of the mid-seventeenth century in England, and the emergence of Romanticism and German Idealism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

9. Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 489.

10. For an introduction to the theoretical aims of the journal, see Keiron Le Grice, “The Birth of a New Discipline,” *Archai: The Journal of Archetypal Cosmology* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2009): 2–22.

I have elsewhere referred to these types of detailed historical studies as archetypal historiography, meaning a particular historical methodology grounded in the approach, essential parameters, and conventions established by the empirical research of Tarnas.<sup>11</sup> By employing the term *historiography*, I mean a particular approach or theoretical framework that can be used to understand and write about history, in the same way that Marxist historiography has been used as a particular historical approach focused on the role that social class and economic constraints have played in determining the course of history, thereby illuminating the history of the working class and oppressed peoples; or in the same way that psychohistory has been used to enlarge our understanding of historical forces by shedding light on the role played by the psychological motivations of both individuals and social groups. These are but two examples of the many types of historiography and the valuable insights such diverse theoretical approaches have yielded for our understanding of the past and its implications for the present and the future. Like other historical approaches, archetypal historiography offers unique insight into specific aspects of history, perhaps most obviously into the overarching thematic patterns and timing of historical phenomena. What sets archetypal historiography apart as unique is the insight that the themes, events, and cycles of history appear to be correlated with the planetary order in the solar system, suggesting some kind of objective pattern of meaning informing the unfolding course of human culture.

Simply described, archetypal historiography as a methodology combines two primary modes of inquiry: historical research and archetypal analysis of correlations based on archetypal astrology. Archetypal historiography is grounded first and foremost in careful historical research marked by concern for accuracy and attention to detail, as well as by a multidisciplinary approach that includes a wide range of fields such as philosophy, depth psychology, cultural history, psychohistory, psychobiography, and analysis of the arts. The primary goal of this research is to attain a nuanced appreciation for the rich complexity of cultural periods and individual lives and the fluid interdependence of various streams of thought, movements, and historical trends. Archetypal historiography's second mode of inquiry, the archetypal analysis of astrological correlations, is marked by the careful discernment of themes, qualities, and impulses presented by specific historical phenomena and the exploration of how these correlate with archetypal themes typically associated with concurrent planetary alignments in astrology. This type of archetypal analysis is characterized by a formal rigor, requiring adherence to an established set of procedural guidelines, and by an archetypal awareness that combines multiple ways of knowing—rational, intuitive, imaginative, somatic, emotional.<sup>12</sup> As this kind of research progresses, these two distinct but simultaneous modes—historical research and archetypal analysis—inflect and inform each other in what may most simply be described as a recursive, expanding, and deepening hermeneutic circle. The archetypal themes associated with the planetary cycles continue to

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11. O'Neal, "Seasons of Agony and Grace," PhD diss., 8.

12. For the specific parameters and other methodological details used in assessing the correlations of archetypal astrology, see Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, in general and 71–138 in particular.

deepen and broaden our understanding of historical events even as the themes revealed by detailed historical research continue to expand our understanding of those archetypal complexes.

Strictly speaking, the term *archetypal historiography* applies to studies involving the analysis of historical phenomena, such as socio-political developments, philosophical movements, and literary and artistic trends. Broadly conceived, however, the methodology and aims of archetypal historiography can also be applied more generally to other related fields of study, such as biography and the analysis of culture and specific works of art, which contribute in important ways to shaping history and our understanding of it. Building on the research presented by Tarnas in *Cosmos and Psyche*, the articles in this section of the premier issue of *Archai* illustrate three distinctly different applications of this more general understanding of archetypal historiography. The first article is focused on the phenomena presented by a single historical movement; the second article is centered on the creative work of a single individual; and the third on the various ways in which a single archetypal complex can be discerned in the lives and works of many individuals. A brief examination of some of the highlights of each of these essays may serve to illustrate both similarities and differences among these three types of analysis, as well as reveal some of the significant types of insights that can be gleaned through the lens of archetypal astrology.

The first essay, based on my doctoral dissertation, “Seasons of Agony and Grace: An Archetypal History of New England Puritanism,” is part one of a three-part series in a detailed case study of the Puritan movement, focusing particularly on the phenomena surrounding the origins of this movement in the events of the early Reformation and its emergence in Elizabethan England.<sup>13</sup> This study presents evidence that the major events, characteristics, and impulses of the nascent Puritan movement clearly reflect the archetypal themes typically associated with major alignments of two outer-planetary cycles, Saturn-Pluto and Uranus-Neptune, which had both formed opposition alignments during the period when Puritanism as a separate movement emerged out of the Elizabethan Settlement during the 1560s. As I summarize one aspect of this remarkable set of correlations,

The archetypal dynamism that exists between these two complexes represents quite well a key tension in the Puritan makeup: an almost irresolvable conflict between simultaneous impulses for, on the one hand, an optimistic search for religious awakening and spiritual liberation (Uranus-Neptune) and, on the other hand, a pessimistic fatalism grounded in the doctrines of human depravity and predestination (Saturn-Pluto).<sup>14</sup>

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13. Part one is a modified extract from chapters 1–3 of O’Neal, “Seasons of Agony and Grace,” PhD diss., 1–83. Part two will focus on the founding of and developments within the New England colonies and the simultaneous role of Puritanism in the English Civil Wars. Part three will examine the transformation and fragmentation of Puritanism during the Great Awakening.

14. O’Neal, “Seasons of Agony and Grace,” *Archai: The Journal of Archetypal Cosmology* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2009): 96.

Moreover, the timing of these major events occurred in remarkable synchrony with the occurrence of these same alignments. And as the subsequent two parts of this case study will demonstrate, whenever these same planetary pairs simultaneously moved into major alignment, the Puritan movement moved into cultural prominence, expressing much of the same or very similar thematic content in keeping with the archetypal complexes associated with those alignments. Such an archetypal history, I believe, therefore offers important insights into the archetypal nature of the psychosocial dynamics at the heart of this highly significant historical movement as well as into the general timing of these events as indicated by empirical correlations with specific planetary alignments.<sup>15</sup>

In the next article, “A Last Chance Power Drive: An Archetypal Analysis of Bruce Springsteen’s Song Lyrics,” by Keiron Le Grice, the focus shifts to the creative works of a single individual. This essay is the first in a two-part series exploring how major themes found in Bruce Springsteen’s music reflect the archetypal themes associated with particular planetary configurations in his natal chart. The first essay is focused on a single configuration involving Pluto, Mars, and Venus, particularly the ways in which themes typically associated with Pluto color the expression of this three-fold archetypal complex. Describing this approach to biography and the analysis of art as an “extension of Jungian depth psychological approaches to the analysis of an artist’s personality, life, and works,” Le Grice presents a wealth of evidence that the combination of these three archetypal principles are consistently evident in Springsteen’s song lyrics throughout his musical career.<sup>16</sup> By examining Springsteen’s language, his use of imagery and metaphor, the motivations and feelings of the characters portrayed in his songs, and how “the expression of the Pluto archetype changes over time,” Le Grice is able to group Springsteen’s albums into four phases, representing a developmental arc in his musical career. Le Grice describes the early phases of that arc as “a romantic odyssey, a personal journey of creative transformation and individuation, driven and guided by the evolutionary dynamic associated with the Pluto archetype.”<sup>17</sup> Such an archetypal exploration deepens our understanding of Springsteen’s music, opening windows onto a deeper appreciation of the psychological complexes at work in his life and the resonances many of us feel with his music. Moreover, in Le Grice’s concluding words, the specific focus on the psychodynamics of a particular archetype, in this case Pluto, also gives significant insight into the “evolutionary significance of the [Pluto] archetype in human experience,” illustrating “an

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15. Although such insights are apparent for a great many phenomena throughout the three-part series, another significant contribution is the unique understanding such an archetypal analysis offers concerning the periodic nature of major cultural events known as great awakenings, for which historians have offered a number of conflicting and unsatisfactory theories. These specific issues and insights will be presented in a subsequent part of this series of essays.

16. Keiron Le Grice, “A Last Chance Power Drive: An Archetypal Analysis of Bruce Springsteen’s Song Lyrics (Part I),” *Archai: The Journal of Archetypal Cosmology* 1, no.1 (Spring 2008): 112–113.

17. Le Grice, “Last Chance Power Drive,” 114–115.

underlying developmental trajectory often apparent in the lives of people who deeply engage the dimension of experience associated with Pluto.”<sup>18</sup>

In the final article, “The Ideal and the Real: Saturn-Neptune,” by Richard Tarnas, the focus shifts yet again to an analysis of correlations involving a single archetypal complex, Saturn-Neptune. The first essay of this two-part series is focused especially on biographical correlations, or in Tarnas’s words, “the remarkably diverse range of ways in which a specific archetypal complex associated with natal alignments involving two planets, in this case Saturn and Neptune, could express itself in various individuals born with those particular planets in major aspect.”<sup>19</sup> Tarnas begins by establishing a foundation of typical themes associated with the Saturn-Neptune complex found in the lives of William Blake, Oscar Wilde, and James Hillman. He then explores how other essential archetypal polarities of that complex are discernible in the lives of a sustained sequence of prominent individuals who are significant proponents of metaphysical skepticism. This remarkable sequence of individuals includes Machiavelli, Bacon, Descartes, Hume, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Russell, and Foucault—all of them born, and many also producing foundational works of metaphysical skepticism, during major Saturn-Neptune alignments. By such an archetypal analysis, Tarnas is able to “trace a developing continuum of increasing philosophical disenchantment that has deeply shaped the modern world view” and that is in remarkable synchrony and archetypal resonance with dynamic alignments of this single planetary cycle.<sup>20</sup> In much the same way, Tarnas identifies a different set of Saturn-Neptune themes that he collectively refers to as “melancholic Romanticism” in the lives of another wide range of individuals.<sup>21</sup> And he finds yet another set of important Saturn-Neptune themes readily discernible in the lives of such important religious and political figures as Lincoln, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, which, among other significant insights, does much to explain why such figures are so intimately bound together in the collective imagination.

As these few summary examples indicate, Tarnas’s approach in this essay illuminates important ways in which significant streams of thought like metaphysical skepticism, specific forms of Romanticism, and certain kinds of political and religious philosophies emerge and re-emerge into historical prominence through prominent individuals in close synchrony with a particular planetary cycle and how these developments are richly consonant with the archetypal principles closely associated with those alignments. Corroborating the larger body of research presented in *Cosmos and Psyche* and in the other essays of this issue of *Archai*, biographical, cultural, and historical patterns appear to be consistently correlated in both their timing and their thematic content with these planetary alignments.

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18. Le Grice, “Last Chance Power Drive,” 133–134.

19. Richard Tarnas, “The Ideal and the Real: Saturn-Neptune,” *Archai: The Journal of Archetypal Cosmology* 1, no.1 (Spring 2008): 137.

20. Tarnas, “Ideal and Real,” 143.

21. Tarnas, “Ideal and Real,” 144.

In addition to supporting *Archai's* research goals, these three articles also serve as illustrative examples of the general methodology of archetypal historiography, suggesting at least three distinct ways of applying astrological archetypal analysis to different areas of culture and history. As representative examples of the type of analysis undertaken by a community of scholars in the field over the last thirty years, these approaches present possible models for further studies involving the combination of historical research and archetypal analysis of astrological correlations focused on specific subjects. My hope is that these illustrative examples will stimulate a great deal of future research, in which the generalized methodology described here is applied in specific ways to the particular phenomena under study. I am convinced that archetypal historiography and its related approaches provide important and unique insights into the events, timing, and processes of history. They do so by an unusual capacity to identify and trace specific themes found in historical, cultural, and biographical phenomena through an intricate web of interrelationships and a series of unfolding stages, as a result of tracking the shifting alignments of the planets over time.



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