

**Girolamo Cardano**

**THE MEANING OF SOLAR  
RETURNS**

from

*De Iudiciis Geniturarum*



## FOREWORD

Girolamo Cardano, doctor, mathematician, philosopher, scientist, is surely one of the most famous Italian astrologers.

He is well known in the traditional astrology world especially for Lilly's translation of chosen Aphorisms selected from *Aphorismorum Astronomicorum segmenta septem* but surely the greatest contribution Cardano gave to astrology was his Comment to Tetrabiblos, written after 1552 when he had the opportunity to read, while was travelling to Scotland - as St. Paul on the road to Damascus - the new version of Ptolemy's book directly translated from Greek by Camerarius.

This work was the apex of the process of the return to Ptolemy's astrology started 100 years before with Pontano's new translation of Centiloquium.

The return to Ptolemy was a return to genethliac astrology and the infinity of possibilities and results a birth chart can show, but it implied a deliverance from all the "Arab fantasies" like "*facies, novenarias, dodecatemorias, horas planetarias*" as Cardano himself wrote in his Comment. In a word, Cardano was not just freeing texts from mistakes of Arab translations, but from hermetism, magic and divination.<sup>1</sup>

*De Iudiciis Geniturarum* was published in 1547 together with *Aphorismorum Astronomicorum segmenta septem*, but more than the latter anticipates the themes we will find in Cardano's works after his *conversion*.

The following pages are about solar returns. Cardano is not very easy to follow, but in these pages there are some main points about importance of Nodes or the meaning of retrogradation and combustion I found very useful and explicative, so I hope the text would be of some use.

Margherita Fiorello

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<sup>1</sup> The translator absolutely disagrees with Cardano.

## THE MEANING OF SOLAR RETURNS

The first thing we should consider about returns is if in a return planets are adverse to their natal positions - even when they are well disposed- the return generally predicts a great danger. An example is when a native has all the planets below the horizon, but they are above the horizon in the return; or when a native have all the planets falling from their houses and in the return they are in their houses; and if all of them are retrograde in a geniture and in the return they are in the highest points of their epicycle.

And worse if they change for the negative. The meaning will be negative even if the planets that in a geniture were below the horizon in the return will be above, and those above in the very moment of birth will be below in the return.

It's more profitable when just a few planets change for the better their influence: in fact it should be a slow process, occurring during several and continuous returns.

On the contrary when a return is very similar to the geniture, predict without any doubt a distinguished result between the ones promised by the geniture; the same if all the promittors and the signficators of the same event should come back to their place.

Secondly, you should know this, the nature of returns follows the nature of the geniture, but in weaker way. For example if in a geniture Mercury and Venus are at the Ascendant, they make the native skilled to quick deals and arts and inclined to stay with people. If this happens in a return - even if in that geniture they are not in the first house but in the sixth house, and Jupiter is in the first house<sup>2</sup> - in that year I will be more skilled in those matters than in the past, not more than others. About this you will find useful the previous chapters about aspects and fixed stars<sup>3</sup> and everything I wrote about nativities.

Thirdly, in the year return, the return of Sun to his place means nothing, because we should take it for granted. Besides, Mercury's one means little because it is common. Venus' one means more, but not very much. Moon's one has a mildly influence, but not so much as superior planets, because of her motion speed. Mars is incisive, and Jupiter more, and Saturn even more.

The most important and wide influence is when the significator is coming back to the place of the promittor and the promittor is there; if the significator is coming back to the promittor's opposition place is less effective; to the square even less, to the trine lesser and lesser, to sextile less. If it is neither in that place or it does not behold it, a minimum influence.

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<sup>2</sup> Cardano is thinking of his own geniture. See next pages.

<sup>3</sup> I already translated this as "*The meaning of fixed stars.*"

A second influence is when the promittor arrives to its own place, and the significator is in opposition, or square, or trine or sextile, or it does not behold the other at all, as in the previous case.

A third one is when the significator is applying to the conjunction with the promittor, or to the opposition, or square, or trine, or sextile, but none of them is in the place of promittor.

A fourth one is when the significator and the promittor are in their places without any aspect, and in that case scarcely they have whatever meaning.

Fifthly, an astrologer will be never perfect if he is not able to integrate stars' prediction with events: in fact for example a man can be hindered to fight in the arena by death, by illness, by being imprisoned, by a prince's act, by the exile, by a journey. So it is opportune considering in every response these six possibilities too: if the native will live, if he will survive, if he will be free from prison or exile, if he will stay in his country, if he will be impeded by other people, princes, judges, parents, relatives, friends and truly, between 40 options, we could scarcely find 10 of them in a return, because one option rejects the other.

About this point you should consider two elements: if the impeding cause is stronger or preceding in time. I will give you an example about this.

In my own geniture the Return which has just begun, is the following <sup>4</sup>:



<sup>4</sup> Cardano was born in Pavia, Italy on 24th Sep 1501. He published and commented his birth chart in several of his works.

The Ascendant is opposite to the Ascendant; Sun, Mercury, Venus and Mars, which were below the horizon, now are above; Moon which was ascending, now is descending. So I judge there will be a great change in my life. <sup>5</sup>

I will consider therefore about life: Moon is at West together with Hyades, of Mars' nature, and Mars, an infortune in respect to the Moon, is beholding her, so I will barely avoid a violent accident caused by a man. And since Mars is in Virgo and Venus is near *Cor Leonis*<sup>6</sup> and she is beholding Moon I will survive, and when I die it will be because of a natural death.

Moreover because Moon signifies status and honours and Mars is beholding her from Virgo, I will fall from some dignity. And so against everybody's hope, I resigned my post of lecturer although this year I performed several tasks for which I should have received many acknowledgments, if people could be grateful or just sympathetic. This because I wanted cash money and they were not able to give me, so it's was my choice, and this is clear because Mars is the Ascendant's ruler.

And because in this geniture Mercury and Jupiter are the material possessions' significators and Venus is the promittor and these three are in trine and in sextile, this year I will start something which will be the cause of not low earnings - I don't understand which way- but as I told, the significator arrived to the promittor's place and Venus behold it by a sextile, for this reason there will be no delusion unless some other discordant event precedes it, especially if to the *Cor Leonis*.

And because Jupiter is at the opposition of Saturn in geniture, I will have a great loss in my possessions, according events depending on Saturn.

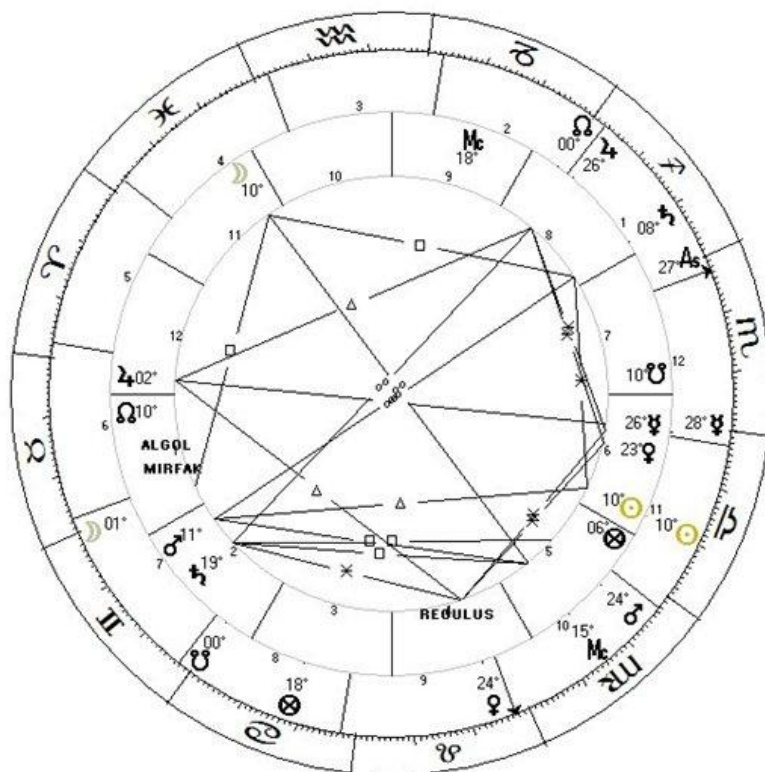
And because Mars beholds Jupiter with a square the loss of money will be greater and because of men, and I will have troubles as never I had before. And I can expect a journey outside my country, because Mars is the Ascendant ruler, peregrine and trine with the Moon. And because Saturn beholds the Sun and receives it, I will be supported by old men and scholars, and honoured.

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<sup>5</sup> In 1545 Cardano published in his *Ars Magna*- one of his most important books- a method to solve cubic and quartic equations. Cardano learned the basic method from another mathematician, Niccolò Tartaglia, who asked Cardano to keep the secret about his own work, but on the contrary Cardano published his improved method without any mention to Tartaglia.

In 1546 Lucia, Cardano's wife, married in 1532, died.

<sup>6</sup> The Heart of Lion, Regulus.



**Inner wheel: birth chart of Girolamo Cardano / Outer wheel: 1545 Return**

When a planet in a geniture is applying to another planet with a negative aspect and this planet does not receive it, the aspect is negative - the meaning is clear- but if it is applying with a positive aspect, without being received, like Moon with Mars here, don't expect any good. But if it is received, it will be like a reconciled enemy. So a powerful trine or a sextile, if not received, could kill or cause the exile. And if in the geniture they are in a positive aspect and in a negative one in the Return, but they are in mutual reception they promise a great good. If they aren't in reception but both are favourable or at least friends they will be even more profitable, but if enemies and not in reception, in that case they will give a damage in their things.

A planet receives another when the promittor is received by the significator, but not the significator by promittor: in fact the first one is always useful, the second increases both the good and the evil.

We wrote that planets can signify in two ways: according their nature, like Sun signifies life and Jupiter wealth, or according rulership: for example if Leo is rising, Jupiter means prison.<sup>7</sup>

About this second point and about the former one we already talked, now it is necessary to explain in a more detailed way the shift in planetary meanings.

<sup>7</sup> Using Equal houses, when Leo rises, Pisces are on the cusp of the eighth house.

Before going on we shall add the meaning of houses and planets, so everybody can guess the meaning of each of them.

*Cor caeli*<sup>8</sup> means glory, judges, honours, mother; the tenth house profession, business, sons and daughters.

The Ascendant: body and soul and whatever deriving from them, for example life; the Descendant: death, open enemies, wife.

The heart of IC: the father, the burial and the glory after death.

The eleventh house: friends and happiness.

The twelfth one: hidden enemies, sadness, prison.

The ninth one: journeys, religion, dignities.

The eighth one: after death events, prison, exile, difficulties in life.

The place of conjunction or opposition: the bond of the soul with the body.<sup>9</sup>

Saturn: prison death, hidden enemies, long diseases, the father.

Jupiter: wealth, law, sons, brothers, judges, friends.

Mars: open enemies, quarrels, acute diseases, talent, travels, brothers.

Sun: life, glory, father, judges.

Venus: wife, mistress, daughters, sisters, mother, pleasure.

Mercury: soul and skill.

Moon: life, wives, mistresses, sisters, soul, body, mother, travels.

We should choose as significator a planet or a place *in mundo* rather than on the ecliptics, but on the contrary a place on the ecliptics rather than a planet's body or a place *in mundo* as promittor.

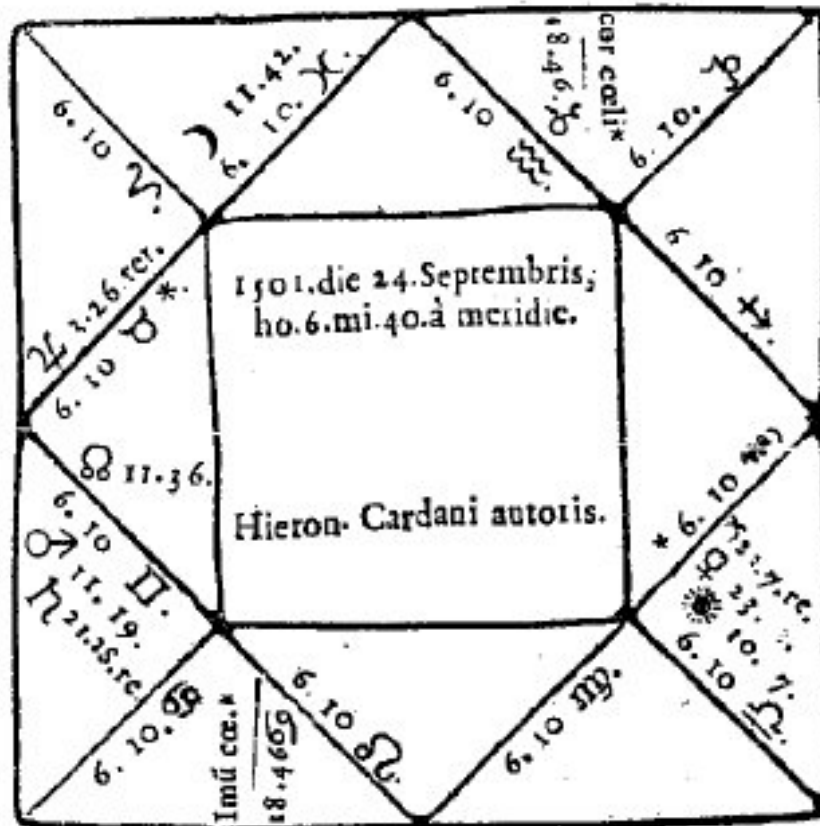
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<sup>8</sup> The Heart of the Sky, Midheaven.

<sup>9</sup> The Sisygy preceding the birth.

For example in our geniture, the XIX: <sup>10</sup>

## XIX.



Moon is significator of life, Saturn is the destroyer. So we shall consider the body of the Moon rather than the 12<sup>th</sup> degree of Pisces, and the four places of Saturn rather than Saturn, for life.

The Head of the Dragon alone has no meaning, but if in conjunction with other planets means an increase and sharpness, and it lessens evils. The Tail increases evils and means losses and restraint.

You should not think that a promittor could kill or act alone; in fact sometimes an effect will be produced in a long time, but it's just the dispositor's ray which can perfect the event.

For example in the XXXIX geniture: <sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> I have taken this chart and the following ones from "De exemplis centum geniturarum."



About this point, you should consider the strength of the significator of life -or whatever else- with the same method I explained about life.

If the significator is strong, nobody could kill but the promittor; if it is ordinary, the dispositor of the place of promittor will kill, or the planet whose place the promittor rules; if very weak, whatever malefic ray from a planet will kill or produce its effects.

And what I wrote about directions is the same for returns; in fact I wrote this thinking of them.

When there is an effective significator, no revolution can deprive of life, unless together with a direction; and the same it's for direction if the return does not allow it. So sudden deaths, losses in properties and exiles especially derive from debilitated significators.

And a significator with a double nature - both destroyer and assistant- the stronger it is the quicker and easier it will act as an assistant, the weaker it is it will act as a destroyer. For example in my geniture the assistant for life is Jupiter and Saturn is the destroyer. And because the Moon avoided Saturn rays, I will not die for one of Moon's directions but for one of the Ascendant, or a negative return or the conjunction with the Head, as Ptolemy states - but neither this is generally true, nor in a great number of times- or because of a star of the same nature of the destroyer, i.e. Saturn, being opposite to Algol's head,<sup>14</sup> i.e. the Gorgon, at 20 degrees Taurus or Perseus' right side,<sup>15</sup> at 25 degrees of the same sign.

About planets, what I wrote about bodies is true for their rays too.

These are the general rules, and nobody can foretell something true without them; now let's see every point. Saturn and Jupiter show fortune and status, Sun dignity and authority, Venus and Mercury contacts with people, Moon actions.

If this planet is applying to Jupiter signifies fair actions; to Saturn exceedingly late, slow, and weak ones; if with the Sun hidden ones; if with Mars hasty ones; if with Venus happy and pleasant; if with Mercury industrious one. If she is swiftly in motion, after starting, she will quick arrive at the result; if slow, she will act slower. So when the Moon in the Return arrives in these places, she will give these effects. In Saturn place a hard-working life and the native inclined to build water pipelines and buildings. If in Jupiter place, wealth and honours, the support of powerful men, and children; if in Mars' one, robbery, travels, efforts and dangers. Seldom the Moon arrives to Saturn's place without making unhappy the soul and increasing risks for life; seldom she arrives at Mars' place without a turning point in life; while when she arrives to the Sun makes things hidden and the native inclined to public interests.

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<sup>14</sup> Algol, beta Per.

<sup>15</sup> Mirfak, alpha Per.

So the soldier will deserve a public salary, the rich will be charged with a public office and the carpenter with the making of the Praetorian desks.

If she arrives at Mercury's place the native will be involved with matters concerning mind, if to Venus' place he will mix with women and he will be happy. If she arrives to her own place she will accomplish what she is promising from the beginning.

For the same reason Mercury coming back to its own place will accomplish most of the things promised from the beginning, and the same for the other planets; but if it arrives to the Sun's place, it makes a great damage, because it fears the combustion very much because of dryness, but not the retrogradation, being accustomed to it.

On the contrary Venus, is very damaged by the retrogradation, because of her orbit, but she fears the combustion less than other planets, because she is wet. So when she is arriving to the Sun, she grants favors and benefits from princes. When Venus is in Saturn's place, the native will be devoted to every sort of pleasures and shameful couplings; when she is in Jupiter's place, the native will enjoy all the most beautiful things and he will get money, when she is in Mars' place he will be lustful and of immoral habits, he will love hunting and fowling; when she is with Mercury, he will enjoy reasoning, and maybe children if his geniture shows this, and even games; with the Moon, the native will like travels, women, business, fishing.

On the other hand, when Mercury will arrive to Venus' place the native will put aside work for women, and useless things too; when it is with Mars, he will apply to hunting and manual works, and games, and robbery, and fighting; when it is in Jupiter's place, for money and honor; when in Saturn's place, for building, stealing, cheating, making poisons; in the place of the Moon, he will be inclined to travels, commerce, women.

Events will be a little more evident when the Moon arrives where two planets are together in a geniture, or whose rays behold each other, or if two planets together in a revolution arrive in a third one's place. For example the mix of Saturn, Jupiter and Moon signifies wisdom and authority in public affairs, if all these planets are well placed- I'm taking it for granted in every case. And if the Moon is going to the place of Jupiter and Mars, she will give intelligence and power in public administration, boldness and quickness. And if she is going to the place of Sun and Jupiter, being well placed to the opposition or the square of that planet, then whatever good promised in geniture, will be in great part accomplished: the native will stay with rich men, will get public positions and money; if with Venus and Saturn he will be prone to deception, and he will receive some legacy maybe because of women or income from land and buildings, and he will incline to pleasures; if Mars and Venus he will be disposed to delicts, to hunting and games. If with Jupiter and Venus, she will give joy, earnings, wisdom, good heart, moderation and every pleasure. So we believe that Antoninus. called Pius, had these planets so placed in his geniture. And in the same way Phocas and Antonius,

Cicero's enemy, had Mars, Moon and Venus like that. And Plato - whatever Firmicus says<sup>16</sup> had his Moon beholding Mercury and Jupiter, blandishing each other, although Jupiter was in Virgo and Mercury in Sagittarius or Pisces. In fact I already taught that all planets, especially Moon and Venus, are damaged in Virgo, but Jupiter - even if so ill-disposed- gives a portentous speech.

Coming back to my guidelines: when Mars, during a return comes back to Sun place, the native will kill or will be killed, in fact this is the meaning of that planet. But if there are no signs of a violent death and if Mars is the dispositor, the native will suffer of fevers till his death; and if both planets are in a Fire sign, together with a malefic star or under unfortunate rays, even from Jupiter, he will suffer fire's damages. Besides, the meaning of every wandering star arriving under the Sun beams, will suffer a not small decrease.

So if in the beginning Jupiter is the ruler of the tenth house, and in a return it will arrive under the Sun beams, during that year there will be a risk for honors and money; but for Venus things - as I already told <sup>17</sup>- the damage is smaller.

When Mars arrives to Jupiter's place, whatever Jupiter signifies in the beginning, it will change for better. If Mars arrives to Venus' place this is a very good hint for things signified by Mars in the geniture, but with an excessive disposition to love pleasures and the native will perform scandalous acts. If it arrives to Mercury's place, the native will willingly play, will be a liar and prone to deception. If it arrives to Saturn's place, his business will be impeded, and he will be lazy and ineffective in his activities. And if it arrives at Moon's place, he will have endless travels and occupations, and a lot to do with women.

If a planet arrives to Mars or Saturn's place, and since the beginning it is not in agreement with them, the things signified will be detrimented, more if the place is in an angle of the geniture, less if it is in the return.

Jupiter, when it comes back to its own place, signifies children where it's possible for age and disposition. On the contrary, if it arrives at Saturn's place, the native will be covetous. If to Mars' place, prone to dissipate and waste. If to Venus's place, the native will enjoy pleasures and joys. If to Mercury's place, he will be wiser and quicker in business, and more at ease with people. To the Moon's place, an increase in children and wealth and handling of assets.

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<sup>16</sup> Mathesis, VI, 30.24. Cardano never had a great opinion about Firmicus.

<sup>17</sup> See page 11.

When Saturn arrives to Jupiter's place rents from land will increase and the native will be happier. When to the Moon's place, being the dispositor of life or the ruler of the Ascendant, the native will hardly avoid damages from a fall, a suffocation, a deadly<sup>18</sup> illness.

If Saturn arrives to Mars' place, the native will be lively, quick tempered, greedy, disposed to evil. If to Venus place he will change and will be like a mad. If to Mercury's place, the native will be hard-working and ingenious, and if already in old age tormented by melancholy.

If planets are with the Dragon Head or Tail, they are more effective than when they return in the place they had in the hour of geniture: generally the Head signifies an increase, the Tail a loss. Upper planets rejoice when they are with the Head and are less damaged when they are with the Tail, the lower ones have less benefits from the Head and are very damaged from the Tail. If the Tail is with the Sun, it means a damage about life and honour.

Lucky people are the ones with planets in similar degrees of the signs, or in conjunction with powerful fixed stars, so it is necessary that when a significator is under their malefic rays, the native will suffer a great damage: in fact the effects of strong causes are well known. In the same way it is not true that fixed stars offer great fortunes with a poor ending: but it's true that who gets a high position from the lowest condition, should have powerful planets, and when those damage, they can't do lightly.

Besides, happy or erudite natives because their planets are in the same degrees, will excel in that field but they will have less in other ones, because their planets let empty other parts of the geniture. So some natives, almost stupid in the beginning, with time will be more intelligent, because planets are scattered by directions or returns.

When planets arrive to the conjunction of the Lights preceding the birth, they act in weaker way than when they arrive at Moon's place.

When the Ascendant arrives to Saturn and Jupiter, or they are in this point in the beginning of the year, the event will be regulated according Saturn and Jupiter' significance and their dispositors and their meaning. The indications of the Ascendant pertain to soul and body, while the ones of MC pertain to position and status.

The Sun in the seventh house means powerful enemies. Saturn in the eighth house signifies sadness for deaths. If Saturn is the ruler of the Ascendant and falls in the twelfth house receiving malefic rays from the Sun, the native will be imprisoned.

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<sup>18</sup> In the Latin text Cardano uses the word "*frigidus*", which means both *deadly* and *cold*. Saturn in fact has a very cold nature, hostile to life.

A planet arriving in an empty point will have the same effect as in the year it was in the same point, and if it has been there since many years, it will go on with its meaning. On the other hand, if it has been there for one or two years, its effects will be deduced from events of the new year.

If a planet arrives to a fixed star which is under the rays of some other planet, it will produce the same effects as the fixed star would be brightened by the planet since the beginning; but just for one year. If it is impossible the good luck can blandish for long time a native with a bad geniture, it is not impossible for some years; but it is easy to understand in this case occurring events are almost compelled. From trends in luck it is possible to give a sure opinion about a geniture. Those benefiting a long time luck suddenly fall in the bad luck and remain in it; they are the natives having since the beginning, from their geniture, both good and bad decrees and both of them in the due time. On the other hand, those haunted by a dark and treacherous fate in the beginning and then happy till their death, are the natives with a good geniture, but the promittors are very far from significators, as in the case of Agathocles.<sup>19</sup>

If the fixed star to which the planet is directing isn't with the rays of this planet, it will be like a shadow. If the ruler of the time disposition or of the general and particular Firdaria is the dispositor of whatever, and it is the only one, an extraordinary evil or good will occur. But seldom the good fortune about honour and wealth will be disclosed before the age of the Sun, from 21 to 49.

When the Moon is fast, she shows a good mind, the ability to choose and to be quick in work. Sun grants honours for the categories of soul, body, and fortune and everything pertaining to its nature.

When planets arrive to their own nodes, they signify a change in life.

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<sup>19</sup> The tyrant of Syracuse.