

### 3. The Sun–Moon–Ascendant Trio

*Ability is what you're capable of doing.  
Motivation determines what you do.  
Attitude determines how well you do it.*

We can provide horoscope 'readings' that are pertinent, informative and insightful simply by describing the signs of the Sun, Moon and Ascendant. Such an interpretation is perfect for a quick assessment or as an introduction to astrology beyond Sun signs. But the Sun, Moon and Ascendant are more than that. The Big Three in the horoscope describe:

- Our inner identity, life purpose, essence; our ultimate inner mission that we are *born* to pursue, personify and manifest – the Sun.
- Our needs, habitual behaviour, temperament, innate responses, gut reactions; our fundamental *relationship* needs, drives and expectations (personally and professionally) – the Moon.
- Our everyday personality we rely on to socialize and meet and greet; our approach to life and expectations – the Ascendant.

In addition, when introducing a chart to a client, I often include the Midheaven. In fact, I start with the MC, as this says much about the image others have of us before they meet us (Ascendant), or understand our temperament and emotional needs (Moon), or 'what we are in essence' (the Sun).

The main object of isolating the Big Three is to pinpoint what each of the trio means and how these blend and can work with each other. For example, a **male client** of mine has the Sun in Capricorn, the Moon in Scorpio and a Sagittarius Ascendant (below). We might first see his happy-go-lucky, accessible, friendly public face that attempts to meet the world with enthusiasm (Sagittarius Ascendant). That face is also desperate not to be disappointed in people. Hiding behind this public face, we could say that his inner life is intensely and privately felt. Emotional security is cultivated when there's trust, depth and intimacy, and emotional crises and betrayal are anticipated or self-fulfilled (Scorpio Moon). This would be a man who seeks someone who can look beyond his sunny disposition and understand the complexities and depths of his emotions underneath. Finally, looking at his essence (the Sun), he is on a mission to 'be someone' in the eyes of the world, to gain status, authority and respect, and to build and achieve something while working within a structure or establishment (Sun in Capricorn).

If two or more of the Big Three have a planetary link in common, e.g. Sagittarius Ascendant with the Moon conjunct Jupiter, it can sometimes be tricky to differentiate them and see how each appears in the life or character. But when that occurs, we know there is an overtone to the chart, which will make the planet's message stronger. We'll look at this later.

The next step is to look for links between the Big Three. Are they all mutable signs? Is there a majority of Fire signs? For example, if there's a Gemini Moon and a Virgo Ascendant, then there is the beginning of a Mercury overtone. This would be a Mercury-based person at home

and work (Moon) and in outlook/interaction (Ascendant). Both Moon and Ascendant are signifiers for our relationships: the Moon shows the deep needs we have to nurture and be cared for, and what makes us feel safe, while the Ascendant (being part of an axis) says much about who comes into our lives through interaction, expectation and attraction. In **Princess Margaret's** chart (below), we have an almost 'natural chart': with early Aries Rising, most of the planets in their signs will also be in the appropriate natural house (e.g. the Moon in Cancer in the 4th House, the house of Cancer).

#### Behaviour, Character and Personality

The Sun is the centre of the chart and of who we are – the very heart of what we're working towards. But to understand someone's personality and behavioural traits, we must look at their Ascendant and Moon signs (and any planets conjunct or, to a lesser extent, opposite or square). These two are of greater importance than the Sun when considering how people behave, react and interact in life.

#### The Moon: Behaviour

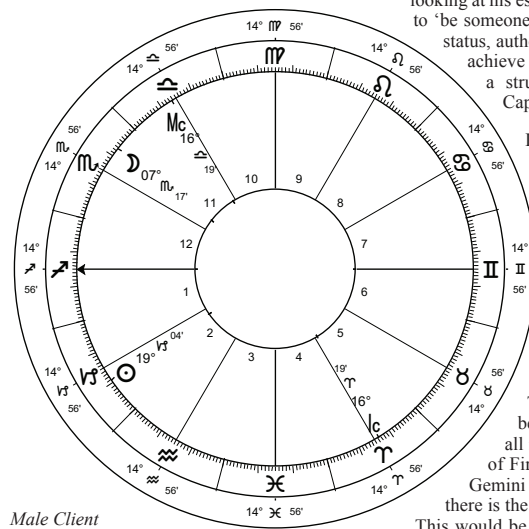
Astrologically, we could define *behaviour* as a collection of instincts formed to create a complex pattern – an interconnected web of habitual responses, particularly with the aim of remaining safe and being looked after. Behaviour is how we *conduct* ('to bring together') ourselves to create a range of responses. This is seen most clearly by the Moon (e.g. the Moon in Virgo learns to be polite and of service in order to be – and feel – needed). Another word that is descriptive of the Moon astrologically is *temperament*, which is often linked to the four elements (the four 'humours' that make up our disposition). But the Moon is a mix of elements of the emotional realm – our emotional *nature*.

#### The Sun: Character

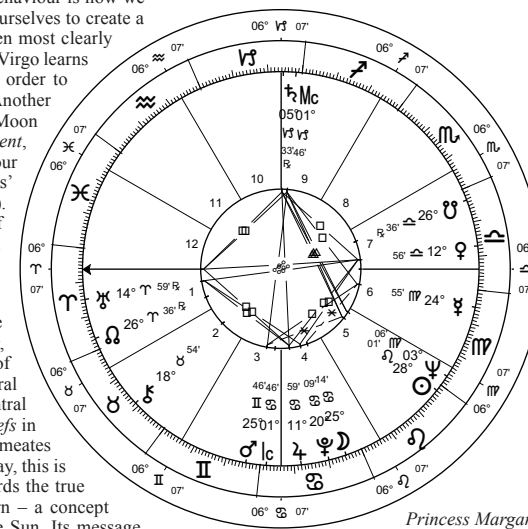
We often hear of the *development of one's character*, perhaps an accumulation of traits, responses and behavioural patterns that becomes the central direction, focus and set of *beliefs* in a person's life. Character permeates our life and our actions. In a way, this is symbolic of our journey towards the true meaning of why we were born – a concept inherent in the message of the Sun. Its message

is not one of adjectives and traits but of *essence* – the Sun in the horoscope embodies a message and an archetype, and by bringing that principle to the fore we can participate in life and start to fulfil some of our potential. It is, perhaps, the embracing of character that leads to a healthy self-esteem and a path of integrity and wholeness. Like grasping the sometimes elusive concept of the Sun, character is more difficult to ascertain in others, too, and it takes time for us to uncover it, and time for it to reveal itself.

The Sun describes how we picture our individual role in life's drama – and how we pursue it – and the ways in which we ascribe meaning to life, e.g. Sun in Sagittarius or Sun-Jupiter: 'Life is a journey to explore'. Our character is a collection of fundamental, integral philosophies that we have gathered over time. The Sun's position shows one's main life purpose and vocation, such as being an 'innovator', 'radical', 'interpreter', rather than a set of personality traits. (Traits, such as stubbornness, flexibility or arrogance, are described by the sign or planet on the Ascendant. The way we deal with life is seen in the modes. What drives our actions and the patterns of our life events is seen in our chart's conjunctions, squares and oppositions.)



Male Client



Princess Margaret