

The Sign Within Each Sign

by Bil Tierney

This material comes from Bil's book, *The Twelve Faces of Saturn*, published in 1998.

Comments made about the sign under examination should not be read as referring to one's Sun sign. Instead they refer to the essence of the sign itself, i.e. Capricorn-ness, rather than Sun in Capricorn.

For illustration, I will focus only on those three signs that either oppose or square Capricorn. Ideally, the remaining eight signs that sextile, trine, semi-sextile and quincunx any sign will, all together, help flesh out that sign's overall character profile, adding nuances to attitude and behavior. It seems that those signs that form a hard aspect to any focal sign examined explicitly affect how and why that sign operates the way it does.

I find this technique a marvellous way to contemplate sign motivation. All you have to do is put the sign you are interested in on the Ascendant, and then include the signs that follow counter-clockwise in an equal house pattern. Note what sign-to-sign aspect patterns are formed and then try to figure out why these signs are in those specific aspecting positions!

Why is Capricorn what it is?

Part of what makes Capricorn tick is the natural opposition it forms to the water sign Cancer; it is drawn to and yet pulls away from the "touchy-feely" lunar approach to life Cancer represents (attraction vs. repulsion is a typical dynamic found in the opposition pattern itself). Thus, Capricorn is ambivalent about emotionality, especially in its open, assertive expression (cardinal water). Perhaps the Goat tries to prevent vulnerabilities from surfacing and getting in the way of its single-minded ambition to "take over" and master its outer world. By keeping a tight lid on emotional reactions, Capricorn can make practical, hard choices without insecure feelings interfering and making Capricorn waver or give in. But that only reinforces the sign's traditional reputation for appearing hard-nosed or even cold.

And yet . . . though this sign may externally seem tough and crusty – wearing that famous frown – Capricorn is more sensitive, tender, and even sentimental on the inside that casual observers would guess. Its feelings get hurt very quickly, although people rarely get to see that.

Capricorn is also devoted to traditions of the past and unbroken family rituals, plus it has great respect for ancestry and lineage (all actually Cancerian issues). There's thus a lot more watery Cancer lurking in Capricorn than this stiff-upper-lipped earth sign would like to admit. Healthy Capricorn energy means unblocked access to Cancerian energy and all its virtues.

But Capricorn also makes its first (lower/waxing/opening) square to Aries. Squares, until resolved, seem to create perceptual roadblocks, where the two signs in question are sharply

at odds with each other until their initially clashing needs can establish a common ground of interest (unlike the more complementary opposing signs). Of course, the friction that develops can spur us to incorporate the strengths of both signs – yet while we struggle to do this, it's the glaring weaknesses of each sign that seem to be over-emphasized in a frustrated manner.

In this case, what makes Capricorn what it is, is that it is NOT Aries. It flat out rejects almost everything this impetuous fire sign stands for. Aries is too brash, too straightforward, too aggressive, too risk-taking, and even too unprepared in action to fit in with the cautiously designed plans of “I don't reveal my moves prematurely” Capricorn. The Goat excels in careful strategy, not spontaneity; in practical deliberation, not impulsivity. Plus, there's a sense of reserve and an air of quiet dignity in Capricorn that is nearly non-existent in overtly expressive, noise-making Aries. In Capricorn's eyes, Aries is unreliable, not a class act, and doesn't deserve to rule at the top of the social stratum.

Actually, Aries' raw and unbridled self-expression frightens the heck out of Capricorn, but the more the Goat rejects *Aries-ness*, the stiffer and more brittle its personality gets – ole fuddy-duddy! Capricorn needs Aries so that it can let loose more often without feeling shame or guilt. By rejecting Aries, the Goat remains too uptight to take bold chances, too controlled to act quickly enough when unexpected opportunity knocks, and too disciplined to break set patterns and allow for fresh perspectives. Life for Capricorn can grow stale.

Capricorn is also not Libra. What's so wrong with nice, sweet Libra? Maybe Capricorn fears the consequences of being all that sweet and kind to people, who can then turn around and take unfair advantage of the situation. Actually, Libra wants too much equality in relationships to satisfy Capricorn, who would rather be the lead supervisor, the boss who's in full charge of any relationship and who gets to call the shots.

Saturn's sign wants to have the upper hand at all times, while Libra would opt for periodic power role reversals, all in the name of fair play. The Goat worries that such “fair play” could one day mean it will end up on the bottom again, stripped of its supreme authority.

Libra is also too people-oriented for Capricorn, who has less interest in getting all that intimate and chummy. By rejecting Libra, Capricorn gets to ensure adequate social distance while giving the appearance of responsible collective involvement. But it doesn't connect with people as easily and as smoothly as this Venus-ruled air sign.

There's one thing about Libra that Capricorn really can't stand: its exasperating indecisiveness. Capricorn doesn't go for much fence-sitting or wishy-washy response. Although it's not going to commit to action as readily as impulsive Aries, when it does, it's with a solid sense of commitment backed by the determination to see things through.

Libra, meanwhile, is still not too sure whether it will or it won't, or whether it can or it can't. Libra's even willing to pass the buck at a certain point, which Capricorn would never do. And

so, the Goat is firmly decisive and sure-footed when it comes to making its moves, and is less influenced by others in the process.

[Although the foregoing is true, it should be noted that Mars is exalted in Capricorn and Saturn is exalted in Libra. When a planet is exalted, it is exceptionally strong in and it retains that strength throughout the individual's lifetime. This does not mean it is especially positive or negative, however. The Moon, of course, is in its detriment in Capricorn, so it is not allowed to function according to its own nature. – Ed.]