

Overcoming Heron's Critique of Tarnas: The SPAR Model

Aleix Mercadé¹
astrologiaexperimental.com
 Barcelona, España

Abstract:

This article draws upon John Heron's severe critique of Richard Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche* to propose a scientific reconstruction of astrology, redefined here as Psychoastronomy. It presents the SPAR Model (System of Processing, Adaptation, and Resonance), a theoretical framework that abandons metaphysical essentialism to postulate a "Naturalistic Turn": archetypes are not divine entities, but adaptive biological functions (such as defense or structuring) that have evolved within the human species. Under this prism, the solar system acts as an exogenous pacemaker (*zeitgeber*) that synchronizes these internal functional cycles through mechanisms of gravimetric resonance—a hypothesis backed by recent evidence in chronobiology regarding human capacity to couple with non-luminous orbital cycles. The text addresses the discipline's classic epistemological weaknesses—the Problem of Indistinguishability between cosmic cause and context, the bias of the Eminence Effect, and the ambiguity of symbolic language—proposing solutions based on contextual psychology and Relational Frame Theory (RFT). Finally, the model is operationalized through falsifiable methodological proposals: from double-blind discriminant validity experiments ("The Bridge") to historical and semantic Big Data analysis. The objective is to transition from divination to a scalar chronobiology, where astrology is understood as the study of synchronization between celestial oscillators and terrestrial behavior.

Keywords:

Psychoastronomy, SPAR Model, Richard Tarnas, John Heron, Astrological Epistemology, Forer Effect, Indistinguishability Problem, Synchronization.

0. Introduction

John Heron's critique of Richard Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche* stimulates debate and appeals to the critical spirit, which I find enthusiastic. However, astrology professionals rarely question their practice, let alone their foundations. In any case, I will take advantage

of this (devastating?) critique to propose a reasonably optimistic reconstruction.

I have previously commented on how I classify different astrologies: traditional (admittedly simplifying its richness and variety unfairly), psychological, and archetypal (I find these last two very similar). To these, I added another perspective I termed "integral," for

lack of a better name. Currently, I would like to call astrology directly "Psychoastronomy." Anything but "astrology," as every day I feel further removed from the habitual way of feeling, understanding, and practicing it.

To begin with, I would define Psychoastronomy as the discipline that studies the correlation between Orbital Frequency Cycles (tempo) and Psychological Adaptation Cycles (function). One of the premises would be that the solar system acts as a complex clock that marks the activation times of different universal human needs (naturalized archetypes). This is why I call the architecture on which I base myself SPAR: System of Processing, Adaptation, and Resonance. I believe it is a name that summarizes many of my perspectives well.

I will try not to repeat myself regarding ideas already developed in previous writings or lectures, attempting instead to work on forming a more robust astrological model (yes, I won't call it "psychoastronomical" here because it feels forced). And, just to clarify: in science, a model proves nothing; it is merely a way to enter into an understanding of a reality. From there, I will derive falsifiable hypotheses, which, now indeed, bring us closer to doing real science. Should we be able to verify said hypotheses, we would be closer to having some astrological theory, which would be the most valuable outcome.

As I usually say, I believe it is not possible to defend the practice of an astrology without accepting the rules of the game of science. It is true that it is important to be open to that unmeasurable universe, as well as to understand reality from a place different from that accustomed by science; but when it comes to speaking of knowledge, asserting with certain levels of certainty, making predictions, etc., we need guarantees. Intuition is not a guarantee for speaking about objective reality—as current evidence indicates—due to the large number of subjective biases and the high

probability of committing errors in the knowledge production process.

I do not sympathize—and I am this unsympathetic about it—with many of the criticisms that science receives from the astrological community, since, for me, they demonstrate little or null knowledge about how science works, its scope, and its adaptability. Anyway, I will not dedicate more time to defending that form of knowledge, so valuable, which is science. What is clear is that, with whoever rejects it, we will not understand each other.

1. Heron's Critique of Tarnas

John Heron criticizes one of the works that has contributed most to restoring astrology's academic value. Honestly, I subscribe to the majority of his criticisms, although I would qualify many of them considerably. Then there is a small group of criticisms with which I radically disagree, though this is less substantial or relevant.

From what I understand of Heron's critique, in summary (simplifying enormously), he argues that astrology is enclosed within a set of rigid rules and its "truth" does not lie in its ability to explain reality, but in certain cognitive traps that generate an illusion of truth. Take that. Devastating.

It is a stance that reading neutrally requires great courage and tolerance for discomfort. As an astrologer, I acknowledge that his critique is emotionally very harsh; it can feel like an attack on something precious and personal. I am fortunate to have been doubting and questioning astrology since I started studying it at age 21, some... 21 years ago! (How old am I?). I am immunized against the impact of these criticisms and, in fact, I regularly participate in them. Critical spirit makes us free and allows for the creation of one's own understanding, which guarantees no truth, but is a requisite nonetheless. Subsequently, one must gather reliable data, possess quality

information (and understanding), understand methodology, know how to analyze data, etc.

In order to create an emotional and intellectual armor to protect my dear and brave readers slightly, I will start by criticizing the critic. Although the author of the critique, John Heron, calls for a "careful analysis," his starting point is a visceral reaction (using concepts like "oppressive," "intoxicating"). I think this may blind him at moments, although his critique, in general, seems very necessary to me.

The issue is that the author is not impartial, and his worldview might make it impossible to comprehend the astrological phenomenon. This is because he clearly values human complexity and freedom above macrocosmic order systems, which biases his analysis toward the rejection of any structured pattern in history (what Tarnas analyzes), regardless of its possible statistical correlation. Of course, I am also human and will have my biases. In fact, I will not engage in an exercise of flexibility or openness to different astrological perspectives (and non-astrological ones), but rather propose a model based on a critique of something already known.

2. The Two Layers: The Environment and The Astrological

Getting into the substance, the SPAR model avoids reductionism and astrological determinism. This is because, when understanding human reality, the astrological would form part of a much more complex system.

Heron points out that, although Tarnas speaks of "freedom," the fact that the archetype (the symbol) is imposed by the planetary calendar or clock reduces the human being to a reactor. The problem lies in understanding the psyche as completely (and this "completely" is important here) coupled to that clock, whereby behavior ceases to be a function of the immediate context and personal learning

history, becoming instead a function of a pre-established astronomical geometry (and/or energy). And I do not accept this.

The SPAR model opens up to the idea that, while there is a background of synchrony to a deep astronomical geometry (the astrological), we are simultaneously subject to the contingencies of the immediate context. Thus, it is not a question of choosing between Skinner and the Cosmos, but understanding them as layers of reality:

- A first layer would be the immediate contingencies. Behavior continues to be regulated by its consequences in the immediate environment and by learning history. If there is hunger, there is social revolt. That is what primarily controls the behavior that occurs.
- A second layer would be the deep astronomical geometry. The astrological would be the gradient or the curvature of that playing field. It does not force the piece to move, but makes "rolling to one side" energetically cheaper than "rolling to the other".

To illustrate this with a nautical metaphor: imagine that life is sailing a sailboat. Personal agency (the individual) handles the helm and decides the destination; the context (socioeconomic) is the state of the boat and the skill of the crew. What is the astrological then? It is the wind direction and the current. A favorable transit is a tailwind: it does not 'create' the voyage, but reduces (to what extent? I don't know) the energetic cost of advancing. A tense transit is a headwind: it does not prevent progress (if one has a good boat and will), but it demands a much higher metabolic and psychological expenditure to cover the same distance. The fatal error of determinism is believing the wind steers the boat; the error of radical skepticism is believing one can sail while ignoring fluid physics.

We all know the saying "the stars incline but do not compel". In this sense, what I say should be easily accepted. However, in practice, most astrology professionals reduce all explanation to the astrological and deny non-astrological variables (even chance), making them susceptible to illusory correlation bias, apophenia, etc. The nuance here is that most astrologers tend to understand that the second layer (the astrological) would be the "true" cause of what happens. I, on the other hand, endow the immediate environment with a high degree of independent causal power, while acknowledging that the astronomical creates tendencies that can be critical and significant at certain moments.

In any case, in this model (SPAR), freedom (agency) resides in how the subject navigates those contingencies, sensing that the "structural climate" favors certain processes. It is a "psychology of time" rather than a prediction of events. Just as a rainy day facilitates the behavior of "staying home" and hinders "going to the beach" (without forcing either), a planetary configuration would facilitate a specific "gradient" in the social fabric. The causal weight would remain in the organism-environment interaction, but the "ease" for certain environmental events to occur would be modulated by this external factor.

To refine this interaction between layers of reality, it is precise to import and nuance the concept of "enacted psychocosmic configuration" used by Heron. The term "enacted" is from the Theory of Enaction driven by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch in cognitive sciences. Heron uses this concept to criticize Tarnas's mechanism, suggesting that the meaning of a transit is not carved in planetary stone, but emerges creatively when an "awake" human being relates to it. Heron uses the musical metaphor: the score is not the music; the music is *enacted* the moment the musician interprets the pattern.

However, from my contextual-behavioral perspective, I must apply a corrective nuance to Heron's interpretation. His vision risks suggesting an almost omnipotent deliberate freedom, where the subject "creates" meaning at will. I do not fully share that voluntarist vision. I prefer to understand enaction as a biological and behavioral Structural Coupling (I will speak about this later). It is not that we "invent" the meaning of the transit deliberately, but that meaning emerges from the inevitable friction between our structure (biology, learning history, dispositional variables) and the astrological environment (the transit).

Following the musical metaphor, I do not see the subject as an absolutely free improviser, but as a resonance box with a specific shape determined by their history. The transit would be the "general music" or external frequency striking the box; the resulting sound (behavior or experience) is not chosen freely, but is the physical consequence of that resonance. Therefore, the "freedom" Heron speaks of is, in reality, behavioral variability: under the same tension transit, my learning history will determine if I resonate with anxiety or constructive action, but that response remains a function of my prior structure, not a creation *ex nihilo*. And from accepting this, of course we can explore how to open the behavioral repertoire through human creativity, but in a more restrictive mode than Heron's perspective.

3. The Cosmos-Context-Individual Relation and the Indistinguishability Problem

One of the major problems with my perspective is what I call the Indistinguishability Problem, which indicates that it remains extremely difficult to distinguish whether a person enters an economic crisis due to their "attunement" with a transit or, simply, due to the accumulation of contextual socioeconomic contingencies. We will reflect on this further, as it is as central as the model itself.

But let's continue understanding the SPAR model. John Heron, in his critique of Tarnas, uses classical Popperian logic: if a universal theory asserts that "A correlates with B," a single case of "A without B" should invalidate the theory. However, this logic would not apply in the case of astrology when dealing with a phenomenon that is not linear, but multicausal and conditioned. In my opinion, this indicates how little Heron was able to deepen his understanding of the systemic complexity of the astrological.

In the SPAR model, with elements recalling the Diathesis-Stress model in psychology, we should speak of the fact that, for a transit to manifest (this logic would also apply to astrological traits in the individual birth chart), certain conditions must be met. For example, imagine a person in a relationship experiencing a transit of Uranus over their natal Venus ("a Uranus-Venus transit"). Many astrologers tend to predict breakups or crises, ignoring that the prior state of the relationship acts as a moderating variable. If the relationship is solid (context), the "transit" might not manifest behaviorally or do so differently (creativity within the couple, for example). Put another way, the Uranian transit would facilitate environmental conditions. Suddenly, more options for third parties appear, news about breaking free from ties is published, or the social environment begins to value autonomy more than commitment.

All this, by the way, could be studied qualitatively and quantitatively; let us not fail to pay attention to the question of whether the astrological could be measured in some way.

Thus, in this transit and under these environmental conditions, if the relationship was already in crisis, the subject finds "open doors" (environmental facilitation) to exit it that were not there before. As a result, the breakup occurs due to a combination of prior vulnerability and the door opened by the environment.

To visualize this, let's think of the topography of a terrain. Classical mechanistic causality would be like pushing a billiard ball: I apply a force and the ball moves. The SPAR model, however, proposes a field causality: the astrological transit does not push the ball, but tilts the floor. If the floor tilts to the left (Uranus facilitating rupture), rolling to the left requires less energy ("it is behaviorally cheaper") than rolling to the right (maintaining stability). The person can roll to the right (agency), but will do so with greater resistance and effort. Therefore, the transit does not dictate the event, but radically alters the statistical probability of behavior by modifying the "energetic economy" of the environment.

The Indistinguishability Problem would lie here, and Heron's Popperian critique as well. By introducing the idea that "favorable conditions are needed," astrological theory becomes much harder to falsify. If every time a transit doesn't work we say "conditions weren't right," we fall into circular reasoning that protects belief against negative evidence. This is one of the habitual criticisms of pseudosciences: the capacity to explain the failure of prediction without questioning the system. That is why I consider that we need real falsifiable hypotheses to be derived from all this.

Recapping, Tarnas's stance seems to imply that the transit is the "seed" that defines the plant. Heron's critique is that many seeds do not germinate, so the seed is unreliable. My stance is that the seed only germinates if the terrain (human/historical context) is fertile for that type of plant. The scientific question remains relevant: if the terrain is already fertile, would something germinate anyway even if there were no astrological seed?

From contextual psychology and the philosophy of science, if the astrological facilitated environmental conditions (a Uranus transit facilitating a crisis climate), we would be facing a model of reciprocal determinism or a field theory. The transit would not "cause"

the behavior, but would alter the reinforcing value of certain consequences in the environment (acting as a global Establishing Operation). That is, certain cosmic configurations would facilitate "niches" of opportunity where specific behaviors (e.g., innovation, conflict) would encounter less environmental resistance. The environment and the individual would move under the same rhythmic "score," where the surrounding becomes more permeable to certain human actions. A Uranus-Pluto transit does not "force" a social revolution. Instead, it facilitates an environment where "stability" loses its reinforcing value and "disruptive change" acquires massive reinforcement potency. Consequently, the individual is not "possessed" by the archetype, but finds themselves in a world where innovating is more economic/easy/rewarded than usual.

The Indistinguishability Problem

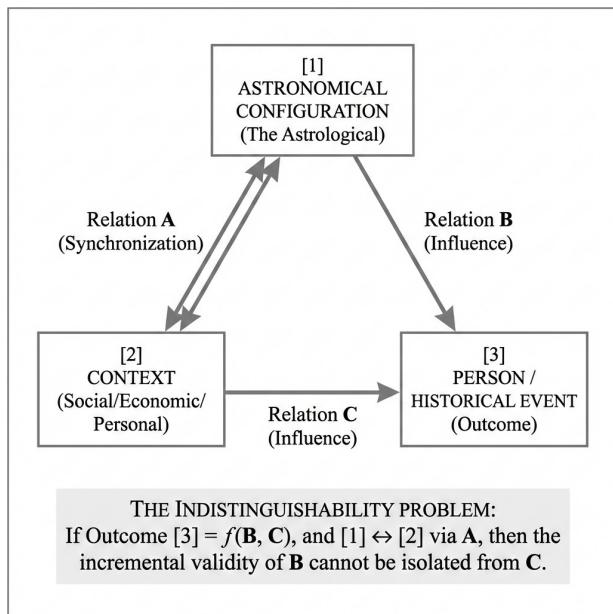


Diagram 1: The Indistinguishability Problem

Let's return to the main problem based on the conceptual scheme (Diagram 1). Imagine a triangle of relationships:

1. Astronomical Configuration (The Astrological)
2. Context (Social/Economic/Personal)

3. Person/Historical Event

Relationships (sides of the triangle) exist between them:

- Relation A: Between Astronomy and Context.
- Relation B: Between Astronomy and Person.
- Relation C: Between Context and Person.

In statistics and psychometrics, we speak of incremental validity to determine if a new variable (astrology) adds predictive power once known variables (sociopolitical, economic, psychological) have been controlled. If the person or event (3) behaves, according to my model, as a function of the astrological (Relation B) and the context (Relation C), in addition to other dispositional variables (such as genetics), how can we differentiate the astrological from the context if we also accept that the astrological is synchronized with the personal-socio-economic context (Relation A)?

That is, the person (3) is supposedly influenced by 1 (astrology) and we know for sure by 2 (context). But by accepting Relation A (cosmos-context synchrony), how do we differentiate if I break up with my partner due to a Uranus transit direct to my psyche (B) or because a Uranus transit has created environmental conditions (A) that caused said breakup in my person (C)?

It is clear that Relation C (context affects us) is real and scientifically proven. But, how do we ensure the reality of A (cosmos-context synchrony) or B (cosmos-person synchrony), especially when both necessarily occur at the same time? How do we differentiate an environment "facilitated by Uranus" (A) from an environment "facilitated by an economic crisis" (2)? That is, how do we know that the socioeconomic context is synchronized with the astronomical configuration and is not an

independent process that has been brewed by its own processes? And the same with B: How do we know that an astrological configuration relates to the individual without it being the Context (2) assuming the entire causal load?

Thus, recapping so far, by not having a known physical mediation mechanism between the cosmos and the human, the astrological hypothesis (and the explained model) risks being an "explanatory wildcard": if the event occurs, we say the environment facilitated it through cosmic synchrony; if it doesn't occur, we say the subject didn't take advantage of the cosmos's facilitation. This enormously hinders rigorous analysis.

It is likely that Tarnas, faced with all these issues, takes refuge in Jung's idea of synchronicity (acausal correlation). However, Heron criticizes him—and I could not agree more—for the fact that, in attempting to produce "scientific" history in *Cosmos and Psyche*, Tarnas unwittingly steps into the realm of causality (a comment I would extend to how astrologers habitually make assertions in contrastable terms), where his statistical evidence is weak.

4. The Eminence Effect

Deepening into this statistical weakness, it is vital to address what we might call the "Eminence Effect" (the observation of a greater apparent astrological effect in excellent people) as a critical selection bias, just as Heron indicates.

From the perspective of functional analysis, basing the validation of a universal theory exclusively on the study of "great men" (as Tarnas does) is methodologically equivalent to validating a therapeutic protocol by analyzing only extreme clinical success cases. By doing so, the natural variability of the general population is ignored, and an illusory correlation is built, sustained by the visibility of historical data rather than its actual frequency of appearance. This dangerously

resembles survivorship bias: we look at history's "winners" and assume their characteristics (transits) are the cause of their success, ignoring all those with the same transits who did not make it into history.

However, this critique does not imply discarding the concept, but redefining eminence as a "Maximum Phenotype". Recovering our biological metaphor, the birth chart would act as the genotype (inherited potential or latent structure) and the biography as the phenotype (actual expression in interaction with the environment). Just as a behavioral skill does not develop if the context does not offer adequate reinforcement contingencies, eminence would simply be the atypical case where the context has allowed the maximum expression of that latent configuration; it is the seed that found perfect conditions to reach its full arboreal form.

To refine this distinction—and in line with the section we will see on multi-referentiality—I propose using the concept of Reaction Range from behavioral genetics. This principle establishes that the genotype does not determine a fixed trait, but a range of possibilities (a ceiling and a floor). The environment determines where the individual falls within that range. Translated to the SPAR model: the birth chart establishes the "style" and potential range of experience (the *how*), but the socioeconomic and personal context determines the magnitude of the event (the *how much*). This explains why "astral twins" can have lives different in magnitude (one is a national revolutionary, the other revolutionizes their neighborhood community), but identical in function and structure.

However, it is crucial to understand that maximum excellence is not needed for an astrological effect to exist, just as one does not need to be Einstein to manifest a "genius archetype" or innovation. A baker innovating in their local technique is manifesting the same behavioral or symbolic function, albeit at a different scale.

The problem with the traditional historical approach is that, by filtering only for eminence, it confuses the magnitude of the event with the presence of the process, ignoring the gradients of manifestation occurring in daily life. If we only study tsunamis, we will never understand the mechanics of waves, which is the same physics at a different scale.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning an alternative hypothesis: who knows, it might be discovered that the historical "eminence" Tarnas spoke of was, simply, a high individual sensitivity (biological or psychological) to the human being's coupling with the cosmic. That is, that "great men" not only had great transits, but were "better antennas" for capturing and enacting that background signal.

5. Abstraction and Generalities

In this delicate situation, I want to introduce another major problem, intimately related to the root of indistinguishability: the problem of abstraction and generalities. It is probably the epistemological core where everything is at stake. We will delve into it gradually, although for the most rigorous and curious, I recommend [this writing from 2012](#) (how time flies...). This will facilitate the understanding of the challenge of how to contrast and falsify astrological symbolism.

Well then, Heron complains about the "stretching" that Tarnas forces with the archetypes. He also reduces astrology to "arbitrary divination" that works by pure projection and mentions morphic resonance (by Rupert Sheldrake) as an explanatory alternative to the astrological one, in which he suggests that culture repeats itself through historical and symbolic inertia, not through a cosmic impulse.

From my understanding, I would not agree with this last thesis as a total explanation, although it is interesting to warn about the first thing he mentioned: the Problem of Conceptual

Stretching. By "stretching" the meaning of an archetype to fit a historical event while ignoring other factors (astrological or sociopolitical), Tarnas may fall into the creation of illusory correlations (connecting what is not connected). This is what in methodology we call adjusting reality to the Procrustean Bed: cutting or stretching observed data until they fit the measure of our theory.

Thus, what I would defend (and we have already discussed it, although we are going to delve here into the nature of the archetypal) is that this historical and symbolic inertia would involve—in a non-deterministic nor absolute way—universal abstractions (archetypes), synchronously regulated by the cosmic and the cultural.

On the other hand, the SPAR model rejects understanding archetypes from an exclusively metaphysical perspective (Pythagorean-Platonic model) that does not attend to the problem of their abstraction and ambiguity, since it is easy for anything to structurally fit into these archetypes if they are too vague. I do accept the need for an astrological archetype to be super-abstract, but I believe it requires a sophisticated and hierarchized semantic understanding (taxonomized as if it were a trait psychology), moving away from taking only Greek mythology to understand them.

To resolve this, we need to understand the archetype not as a fixed image, but as a Supra-ordinate Category. Let's imagine the category "Vehicle". It is a universal abstraction (it serves for transportation). But in reality (Level 1), you never encounter an abstract "vehicle"; you encounter a "red Toyota" or a "rusty bicycle". If astrology stays in the Greek myth, it confuses the map with the territory. Later on, we will return to this whole issue. My proposal is to define planets as logical functions: Saturn is not "Cronus eating his children," but the function of "Limit, Contraction, and Structure". This technical definition allows the symbol to travel across cultures without losing validity: in China, that function of "Structure" will be

dressed in the silk of its culture, and in the West, with ours.

Heron is very incisive regarding Eurocentrism, which is a strong point of his critique. However, his own critique might fall into the same error by proposing that "until the Chinese tradition is studied" there is no validity. This assumes that the Western astrological system should work the same in other cultures if it were real, ignoring that other cultures have their own symbolic systems and different "environmental climates". It is an error of functional equivalence: pretending to validate a road map of Europe by driving through Beijing. If the archetype is an adaptive function, it will be culturally encoded in different ways; the lack of literal coincidence does not refute the underlying function, it only evidences the diversity of the cultural interface.

6. The Naturalistic Turn: Archetypes as Adaptive Functions

Thus, the archetype requires being understood cross-culturally. This is something Jung's perspective did attempt, although (as it could not be otherwise) I will propose a model regarding the archetypal that differs from the classical Jungian one. The critical distance regarding mythology is vital because the relationship between planets and their symbolism remains a central point of weakness in the foundation of the astrological corpus, and in this, Heron is right.

To remedy this, I propose a "Naturalistic Turn" applying Occam's Razor (the principle of parsimony): we must eliminate the need for divine intermediaries, planetary intelligences, or subordinate spirits. If the solar system holds a correlation with the human psyche, it is not because planets "emit" personality rays, but due to a phenomenon of structural resonance where orbital frequencies mark the activation times of our adaptive functions.

Instead of postulating that archetypes are "Platonic Ideas" emanating from a

metaphysical realm, we redefine them as adaptive functions emerged through evolutionary convergence. The recurrence of symbolic patterns in history responds not to a mystical influence, but to the fact that all members of our species share identical adaptive challenges that pre-exist any symbolic system.

To understand the epistemological break: the traditional model is essentialist (Mars is the "God of War" and we reflect that divine essence). The SPAR model is functionalist. Evolution has designed the human organism with basic needs: to defend, to nourish, to structure, to reproduce. These needs are biological universals. What the solar system does is act as an exogenous pacemaker (*zeitgeber*) for these endogenous biological functions. We do not "download" the archetype from the sky; the sky simply synchronizes a function that is already installed in our biological hardware.

This conception is not only compatible with orthodox biology but is supported by its recent vanguard. We already universally accept that solar light acts as a *zeitgeber* that adjusts our circadian clock. However, current scientific evidence reveals that human physiology also possesses 'circalunar' endogenous oscillators capable of actively synchronizing (*entrainment*) with the Moon's gravimetric cycles—not only the synodic, but also the anomalistic and the tropical—even in the absence of light signals. If our reproductive biology can 'read' and couple with subtle gravitational variations to adjust its tempo, the SPAR model simply proposes a scalar chronobiology: it postulates that, just as we have clocks for the day (Sun) and the month (Moon), we have long-term adaptive functions (maturation, senescence) that resonate with the cycles of larger bodies. Thus, Saturn does not 'cause' old age nor force us into anything; it acts as the low-frequency external metronome for a biological function of structuring that operates in decades, not days.

Under this prism, the Sun is defined as the "orchestra conductor," fulfilling a function of identity coherence and centrality (similar to the central executive function). Physically, it is the gravitational center that prevents the system from disintegrating; psychologically, it acts as the organizing principle of the Self that allows for the synthesis of all other drives. Without a functional Sun, the psyche fragments into the automatic responses of peripheral functions. For its part, the Moon acts as the system of somatic safety, attachment, and emotional homeostasis; a necessary function of protection and basal regulation, but subordinate to the identity direction of the Sun.

The rest of the planets are also redefined under this concept of adaptive functions of the species:

- Mars ceases to be the god of war to be understood as the function of self-assertion and defense; that is, the mobilization of metabolic and behavioral resources in the face of obstruction or threat.
- Saturn is not the "malefic," but the function of limit, inhibition, and structure, representing the necessary clash with the reality principle and the internalization of laws for long-term survival.

This categorization allows the analysis to be falsifiable: if our theoretical model predicts an activation of the "Defense Function" (Mars) through an impactful transit, and the subject does not report aggressive or assertive behavior, we do not necessarily conclude that the planet has failed. On the contrary, we register a datum of repression or inhibition, asking ourselves what contextual conditioning (history of punishment, social norms) is preventing the organism from executing its biological function of self-assertion. The archetype is active (the energy is mobilized), but the behavior is blocked.

This approach also (partially) resolves the problem of symbolic anchorage (or grounding)

that Heron criticizes. Why is Mars aggression and not love? It is not just because of its iron oxide, but because of its phenomenology for the observer: if for 200,000 years the hominid has seen a bright red dot moving fast (erratic), and the color red is neurobiologically "wired" to blood and alert, the symbol is built in that historical interaction between observer and object (a historical enactment).

In any case, I intuit this model is incomplete, as we cannot presuppose that the quality of the planet's effect depends entirely on this visual perception. In this sense, I would recognize the possibility of an unconscious perception of planets by some subtle sensitization system, such as magnetoreception (as mentioned, we know that the ethmoid and sphenoid bones contain ferric iron, material that endows other animals with a biological compass to orient themselves regarding the magnetic field), or the influence of light and gravity (study already mentioned). Otherwise, undiscovered or non-observable planets would have no effect, and that is not the common experience (although I admit this is anecdotal evidence susceptible to confirmation bias and the Forer effect).

Similarly, we propose a solution that Tarnas did not manage to see for the transpersonal planets: the importance of a planet does not reside in its visual appearance (which would close Heron's critique on whether Pluto is a planet or an icy rock), but in its Orbital Frequency or Tempo. Pluto, with its 248-year cycle, symbolizes supra-individual processes not because it is the god of the underworld, but because its cycle exceeds human life and that of empires.

Here I introduce the concept of Temporal Scale. Each planet "vibrates" or cycles at a speed that resonates with different strata of reality.

- The Moon (28 days) resonates with the fast biological (menstruation, mood, fluids).

- Jupiter (12 years) resonates with the biographical-social (educational cycles, vital stages).
- Pluto (248 years) is too slow to resonate with the daily anecdote; its "timbre" is necessarily that of the invisible, the geological, and the deep and slow transformation. Therefore, we define Pluto as "survival instinct and deep transformation" not because of mythology, but because of physics: it is a wave frequency so long that, upon impacting the short human psyche, it is perceived as a tectonic, impersonal, and inevitable force.

7. The Ladder of Abstraction and Multi-referentiality

Let us take it step by step to understand the problem regarding the falsifiability of universals/archetypes. If we understand the archetype as a "universal abstraction" (an almost empty structure), it is inevitable that any human event fits into it. This is what in psychology we call the Forer or Barnum Effect. The risk is that if the archetype is so ambiguous that "everything fits structurally," then the theory loses weight as a knowledge tool and becomes a tautology: "what happens is what had to happen according to the archetype."

We are in the realm of the greatest generalizations and, therefore, where it is hardest to discriminate (saying that A is not the same as B). To understand the magnitude of the epistemological challenge we face, it is imperative to recover the fundamental distinction I established years ago regarding the hierarchy of astrological language: the "Ladder of Abstraction".

The core of the problem lies in that astrology operates natively in a stratum of maximum generality, Level 200 (to put a high figure), where pure archetypes inhabit as formal principles empty of specific material content. At this level, symbols possess universal

validity but lack biographical precision. Conversely, human life and the events we attempt to predict or analyze occur at Level 1, the terrain of the concrete, tangible, and sensory.

Multi-referentiality or multivalence arises precisely in the abyss separating these two levels: a single astrological signifier from Level 200 does not have a univocal correspondence with a single event at Level 1, but acts as a generative matrix capable of descending into reality through multiple manifestations formally distinct but structurally identical.

To ground this theory, let's imagine the ladder:

- Level 200 (The Pure Archetype): Here we find, for example, the principle of Saturn. It is not a "strict father" nor a "broken bone"; it is simply the abstract function of "contraction," "limit," or "structure." It is a semantic algorithm void of matter.
- Level 20 (Contextual Categorization): As we descend, the symbol seeks a vehicle. That abstract function is narrowed down to a field: if the context is biological, Saturn is "retention or solidification"; if the context is socioeconomic, it is "scarcity or regulation."
- Level 1 (Literal Reality): It is the rough ground. Here, that "biological contraction" (Level 20) becomes the unique and unrepeatable event of "breaking the right tibia while skiing on a Tuesday at four in the afternoon."

The drama of astrology is that it often pretends to jump from the heights (Level 200) directly to the ground (Level 1) without a parachute. The problem is that Level 200 (contraction) potentially contains infinite Level 1s: it could have manifested as a bone fracture, but also—maintaining structural isomorphism—as a job dismissal (contraction of resources), a depression (vital contraction), or the successful

completion of a doctoral thesis (creation of definitive structure).

The astrologer seeing the symbol in the sky only has access to Level 200. Pretending to guess Level 1 without knowing the context (Level 20 where the subject lives) is not diagnosis, it is a probabilistic bet disguised as arcane knowledge.

The categorical error committed by habitual astrological practice—and which facilitates the justified critique of thinkers like Heron—is the confusion of logical levels: pretending that the language of the sky (designed to describe the *how* or the adverb of experience) can determine on its own the *what* or the noun of the event, ignoring that it is the terrestrial context that collapses the wave function of the symbol. That is, the astral code (genotype) is limited, but its behavioral manifestations (phenotype) depend on the environment.

8. Holonomic Seduction and Relational Frames (RFT)

It is for all these reasons that Heron, in his own way, criticizes this same point by speaking of "archetypal intoxication". He refers to the risk that, when operating at such high levels of abstraction, the mind loses its discriminative capacity and ends up seeing patterns where there is only chance or a biased selection of data (apophenia). Heron sees in Tarnas an excessive "fascination" in his role as analyst, an "intellectual obsession" that intoxicates the investigation.

Another fascinating concept of Heron's is that of "holonomic seduction". Translated into my framework of contextual psychology (RFT), this describes the human language's capacity to establish arbitrary relational frames (of coordination, of causality) between disparate stimuli. If the categories are broad enough (Level 200), any stimulus (Level 1) can fit into them through a transformation of functions.

From Relational Frame Theory (RFT), the human mind is a relating machine. If I give you the frame "Saturn = Limit" and show you an event "Losing keys," your mind will automatically derive the relation ("Of course! Losing keys limited my movement"). Heron calls this "seduction" because it feels like a discovery ("Eureka!"), when in reality it is a logical derivation forced by the breadth of the category.

For those unfamiliar with RFT, let's consider the phenomenon of transformation of functions. If we tell a child that a dog (stimulus A) is dangerous, and then tell them that the wolf (stimulus B) is 'like a dog but bigger,' the child will feel fear of the wolf without ever having seen one. The function 'fear' has transferred through the relational network. In astrology, the same happens: we have created a historical verbal network where Saturn is coordinated with 'bad' or 'difficult.' When the astrologer sees Saturn in the chart, they psychologically transfer the function of 'threat' to the client's life event, sometimes creating the problem they intended to predict. My proposal is to 'hack' these verbal networks to recover the original adaptive function (Saturn = Structure) and cleanse the 'seduction' of language.

It is for all these reasons that Heron describes (and reformulates) astrology as a projective technique (similar to the Rorschach Test). By occupying the "rational mind" with complex calculations, a state of cognitive defusion is produced that allows intuitive knowledge (implicit processing) to emerge. In this sense, the birth chart is not a "map of the territory," but a systematic ambiguous stimulus that allows the astrologer to access intuitions about the patient which are then "projected" back onto the map. Heron illustrates this with a striking experiment: he easily persuaded his friends that their sun sign was a different one, generating in them a "sense of liberating understanding." This is an empirical example of epistemic placebo. The liberation did not stem from astronomical truth, but from the act of re-narrating their identity under a new

symbolic framework that offered new affordances (possibilities for action).

With all this, Heron concedes the possibility of an "extrasensory faculty." However, from a rigorous scientific psychology, we do not need to appeal to the extrasensory; it suffices to understand the Forer Effect or, in reference to supposed intuitive knowledge, the brain's predictive processing. The brain picks up subtle signals from the client (non-verbal language, context) and uses the "noise" of the astral chart to articulate that unconscious information.

9. The Bridge and the Discrimination Experiment

However, we aim to solve the problem of ambiguity, not offer an alternative hypothesis (although these are necessary for an honest and impartial intellectual exercise). Well, Heron accuses Tarnas of jumping into an interpretive void; I propose making the intermediate levels explicit (through psychological theories, social and personal context) so that the high latitude of abstraction is not "permissive," but structurally justified.

The Forer effect feeds on "Level 200" language (super-abstract). If the astrologer says "you are a person with great internal sensitivity," any human being will identify with it. I believe it is imperative to build a Bridge as a methodological solution to avoid being locked up in the sky. We must come down to the ground. By forcing the astrological system to descend to Level 1 (sensory and behavioral description), the interpretation becomes so specific ("your sensitivity manifests as a crying response to Baroque music when you are alone") that discriminant validity is activated: if the chart is not the subject's, they should reject it immediately due to a lack of biographical correspondence.

If the client knows their own biography ("the territory"), they should be able to detect that the "music" described by a birth chart (written

by relating the universal symbolic to the concrete biographical) does not resonate with their structure, no matter how well written it is. And this is precisely the spirit and focus of an experiment I started some time ago: Is an astrologer (or a client, as I was saying) capable of discriminating between just two natal charts upon knowing a person?

This experimental design places the difficulty of the astrological regarding differentiation and concreteness at the center. (For more information on the original protocol of the experiment, you can consult the technical details [here](#)).

Experimental Variant: Double-Blind Report Discrimination

In the variant of the experiment I am currently proposing, we reverse the burden of proof: the astrologer creates two reports, and it is the client who must identify which one is theirs (instead of the astrologer choosing the correct chart after exploring the subject's life). By presenting two closed options (Option A vs. Option B), we eliminate client compliance and positive confirmation bias.

If the interpretation is rigorous and relies on "The Bridge," multi-referentiality is narrowed. "Anything goes" no longer applies; only that which has a real isomorphism with the subject's life is valid. In this way, the experiment combats "holonomic seduction" by forcing the demonstration of real discrimination capacity (which remains to be proven). If this test is failed (after repeating it enough times to reach statistical significance), we must admit that the system has failed to build the bridge and has fallen into the interpretive laxity Heron criticizes.

Thus, it is not enough for an interpretation to be "good" or "resonant"; it has to be specific to the point that the subject can safely reject the chart that does not belong to them, even when both have been written by relating them to their biography in a neutral way.

For this to work, the protocol must be rigorous:

1. Report Construction: The system must take the biographical data (Level 1) and psychological interpretations (Level 2 to 10) and look for structural isomorphisms with both Chart A (Correct) and Chart B (Decoy).
2. Astrologer Blinding: If the astrologer "knows" which is the real chart, they could unconsciously force the language to make it fit better. Therefore, this phase must be blind: the astrologer must seek the greatest structural resonance in both cases without knowing the objective. Here I suggest it is useful to use trained AI, since the astrologer, upon reading the subject's biography, might equally have a preference for one of the two charts, thus biasing their report.
3. Client/Consultant Blinding: The subject must also be blind, unaware of which is their chart. Furthermore, to control for obvious confounding variables, the same Sun sign is maintained in both charts (Real and Decoy), preventing the subject from discarding an option simply because they identify the characteristics of the Sun sign in the report.

Finally, the use of a bridge to unite heaven (astrology) and earth (therapy/psychology) in a real therapeutic context has already been exemplified in my previous writings (in [this text](#)).

10. Synchronization of Coupled Oscillators

From Jung, we know that Greek mythology is merely a "local dialect" for a global phenomenon. From an RFT perspective, we could say that the name "Saturn" or "Cronus" is just an arbitrary verbal stimulus that we have linked to a network of meanings (relational frames) of limit, time, and structure. If the phenomenon is "cosmic" (regulated by universal abstractions), other cultures will have created their own names and frames to label

the same underlying environmental or psychological "function."

We could speak of the same "historical inertia," understood as the tendency of human consciousness to organize experience into recurrent patterns. If these patterns are "regulated by the cosmic," astrology would be the study of those background rhythms that facilitate the appearance of certain human themes over others.

The critical question is: how to understand this "cosmic regulation" without falling into magical thinking? If we accept that the cosmic regulates these abstractions, the cross-cultural validation Heron asks for would not be to "prove" Western astrology, but to discover the common functional core underlying all mythologies (Campbell's "monomyth" applied to cosmic time). However, I differ on the mechanism. I do not believe this historical inertia is governed by the cosmos in a unilateral causal sense (the planet "sending" an order), but that a phenomenon of synchronization occurs. The organization of the solar system and that of the human psyche become coordinated by some principle of energetic economy (or Principle of Least Action) that reverberates, generating pattern tendencies.

It is vital to make a terminological distinction here: I am not speaking of *synchronicity* (Jung's principle of acausal connection), but of physical synchronization. It is the phenomenon that occurs when several metronomes are placed on the same vibrating surface and, over time, end up beating in unison. The "metronomes" of the Solar System would end up provoking, by pure wave physics, a synchronization with terrestrial "metronomes." This is a real physical phenomenon, known as entrainment or synchronization of coupled oscillators, originally studied by Christiaan Huygens in the 17th century. It describes spontaneous self-organization in nature: two systems oscillating at similar frequencies tend to synchronize if they share a communication

medium (the vibrating surface in the metronome example, or the gravitational/electromagnetic field in the case of the solar system).

Thus, if the cosmos and the psyche are part of the same open system, "synchronization" is an emergent property, not an order imposed from outside. In this model, the principle of energetic economy dictates that the total system seeks the state of least effort or greatest coherence (systemic homeostasis).

A classic physical example of this energetic economy is what happened at the Millennium Bridge in London. When thousands of people walk on a suspension structure, it begins to oscillate slightly. To not fall, pedestrians instinctively adjust their steps to the rhythm of the bridge's oscillation. By doing so, they amplify the oscillation, forcing more people to synchronize. No one ordered the crowd to march in unison; it was the system seeking stability (not falling) that generated the order. Similarly, I postulate that the human psyche 'adjusts its step' to the massive oscillations of the solar system simply because it is the most stable and economic way to stay standing within an open dynamic system.

Nor do I intend to reduce the explanation of the astrological solely to this, as I admit freedom (in a sense of non-astrological determinism, just as we mentioned when recognizing the direct causal power of context). I admit this synchronization only at a structural level, acting as a background for certain general tendencies. The terrestrial possesses its own metronomes, both at an individual level (circadian rhythms, learning history) and at a systemic/organizational level. Each entity would have its own sensitivity or latency to synchronize, while many other contextual factors (environmental noise) would allow them to maintain a great variability of behavior.

11. Structural Variability of Universal Archetypes

Another crucial topic: stating that universal archetypes are 'empty structures' does not mean they are amorphous or lack specificity. On the contrary, they possess a distinctive logical topology. That a glass is empty of liquid does not mean it lacks shape; its 'container' structure defines what it can hold and how the liquid within will behave.

To illustrate this rigorously, let us turn to geometry. Imagine a triangle and a circle. Both are mathematical abstractions 'empty' of matter (they are not made of wood or iron; they exist at Level 200). However, their properties are radically different due to their Structural Logic: the triangle has angles and direction; the circle has continuity and equidistance. We do not need to 'fill' them with reality to know that the triangle has pointed or directional properties and the circle inclusive or cyclical properties.

Similarly, each astrological archetype possesses an irreducible qualitative geometry. Saturn is not a 'neutral energy' that becomes bad or good depending on the context; Saturn is a logical structure of contraction and limit. Jupiter is a logical structure of expansion and increase. They are like distinct prime numbers: 3 and 7 are abstract, but their operational properties in an equation are unique and non-transferable. The scientific question, therefore, is not seeing how the context 'invents' meaning, but investigating how those precise logical structures (contraction vs. expansion) operate as formal laws shaping the matter of human experience.

Furthermore, I posit that the synchronization mechanism would result in a very economic (biologically "cheap") way to increase phenotypic variability, which facilitates species survival.

Imagine you are facing a fertile but unknown field; you do not know what the climate will be or what plagues will come. An intelligent strategy to ensure something survives is not to plant a single type of seed (monoculture), but to plant the greatest diversity possible. In

evolutionary biology, this relates to the concept of Bet-hedging (diversification of bets). Variability is life insurance against uncertainty; it is a guarantee against new circumstances requiring unforeseen adaptations.

The Cosmos as an Evolutionary Engine

On the other hand, I think the astrological—understood as the coupling relation between the cosmos and the mundane—could act as an exogenous evolutionary engine by facilitating this variability. It would imply a type of constant creative influence.

Each astronomical configuration is like a clock with many hands that are never exactly at the same point. It is true that each hand (planetary cycle) is periodic and returns to the same place, and that joint cycles exist (like the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction every 20 years); nevertheless, the configuration of the solar system as a whole is a quasi-chaotic dynamic system, practically unrepeatable due to the immense quantity of variables it includes. As Heraclitus would say: "We never step in the same river twice."

Thus, the cosmos functions as a source of informational entropy, a continuous modification of the nature of the sown seed. I strongly trust that the universe follows the Principle of Economy (or Least Action) whenever it can, seeking maximum efficiency with minimum complication.

That is why I postulate the following hypothesis: life could have "taken advantage" (a process of exaptation) of those continuous and changing external influences for something as beneficial for evolution as variability is. Instead of spending internal metabolic energy to generate randomness in traits, life uses the "background noise" of the solar system to modulate individual differences, thus ensuring that there are always diverse individuals prepared for any environmental change.

12. From Theory to Evidence: Experimental Hypotheses of the SPAR Model

As I have defended throughout this text, it is not possible to sustain a mature astrological practice without accepting the rules of the game of science. The SPAR model, however coherent it may seem to us by integrating enaction or oscillator physics, remains a philosophical map until it is exposed to the real risk of failure. For this to cease being a sophisticated intuition and move into the field of empirical research, we need to derive falsifiable hypotheses and methodologies that go beyond the blind discrimination experiment ("The Bridge") discussed earlier, which sought to resolve the specificity problem. Beyond that first step, I propose three complementary methodological avenues—retrospective, objective, and macro-social—to test the reality of this synchronization.

First, to avoid the omnipresent placebo effect and suggestion—that is, the subject acting conditioned by what they "know" of their chart—it is fundamental to conduct retrospective studies on objective past events in people unaware of astrology. A promising avenue would be the chronobiology of bonding. The hypothesis is simple: if astrology describes "climates of opportunity," relational milestones should cluster under certain temporal geometries with a frequency greater than chance. We could, for example, collect objective start dates of significant relationships in subjects blind to their chart and verify if these coincide significantly with angular transits to natal Venus or Venus-Uranus configurations. For this to have scientific validity and to rule out statistical noise, it would be imperative to compare the observed distribution against thousands of random distributions generated by computer using Monte Carlo Simulations.

Following this logic of seeking correlations in incontestable data, chess presents itself as an ideal experimental paradigm. Unlike subjective biography, in modern chess, the quality of a

move is not a matter of opinion, as it is measured objectively by comparing it with artificial intelligence engines like Stockfish. Resuming previous findings suggesting correlations between Mercury-Saturn aspects, we could analyze if performance patterns—peaks of genius versus grave errors or blunders—synchronize with critical transits in players who are unaware they are being studied. The use of Big Data from massive platforms would allow replicating these findings in competitive environments with a rigor unattainable in private practice. The presence of Mercury-Saturn aspects could also be explored in games akin to chess, such as Go.

Finally, if we elevate our gaze from the individual to the collective, we can apply data science tools to study the cultural 'background noise'. Here we encounter a technical problem: the planetary signal is clean and periodic, but the signal of human history is chaotic and noisy. To connect them, traditional frequency analysis (which assumes cycles are constant) is useless; instead, we need Wavelet Analysis. This mathematical technique is ideal for non-stationary signals like history, as it allows decomposing a complex signal without losing the temporal reference.

Let us imagine applying an 'equalizer' to the database of news from the last three centuries. We know history has 'high-pitched noise' (daily events) and 'deep rhythms' (changes of era). Wavelets would allow us to filter out all the daily noise to ask the historical data: *"Is there a low-frequency wave hidden within your chaos that matches the clean 248-year cycle of Pluto?"* The hypothesis is not that history is a perfect clock, but to verify if, upon cleaning the noise, islands of synchronization appear where 'social entropy' or cultural creativity beat in unison with Planetary Orbital Frequencies (POF), thus validating the existence of a background pacemaker operating upon collective chaos.

Complementarily, and from our perspective as contextual psychologists, we know that

language not only describes but configures realities. Through the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and based on Relational Frame Theory (RFT), we could track if the "semantic distance" between concepts changes under certain transits. The hypothesis postulates that, during a cycle like Saturn-Pluto, words like "border," "restriction," or "wall" should not only increase in frequency but become central nodes of the global semantic network (increasing their Betweenness Centrality). If we were to observe that previously disconnected concepts become strongly linked through these nodes across diverse languages and cultures simultaneously, we would be facing robust evidence of an archetypal synchronization underlying the very structure of human language.

13. Conclusion

The approach proposed by the SPAR model allows us to abandon the speculative terrain of divination to enter that of a symbolic chronobiology. However, we must be intellectually honest: the greatest risk of this proposal remains apophenia. Our formidable evolutionary capacity to find patterns in chaos is so efficient that we run the risk of mentally "synchronizing" any biographical datum with any planetary cycle if we are not methodologically rigorous. Precisely for this reason, the SPAR model does not seek to confirm beliefs, but to operationalize resonance; it attempts to verify if, effectively, we dance to the rhythm of background music that, although it does not force nor determine the step, marks the energetic tempo of our adaptation.

The other great epistemological challenge lies in the non-linear nature of human behavior. Since we are dealing with complex systems, a small variation in the initial conditions of the context can produce diametrically opposite behavioral results facing the same "astrological" stimulus. A Saturn transit, for example, can be experienced phenomenologically as the culmination of an

achievement or as severe depression, depending on the prior learning history. This implies that isolating the astronomical signal from the immense contextual noise requires statistical control and a sample size (N) that are extremely difficult to achieve in private consulting practice.

Finally, we must admit a fundamental current limitation: as there is not yet a physical unit of measurement to quantify that supposed common "energetic economy" that synchronizes celestial and terrestrial oscillators, this proposal remains, for the moment, in the terrain of a metaphysics that aspires to be empirical. However, it is precisely that aspiration to rigor and falsifiability that distinguishes psychoastronomy from superstition, opening the door so that, perhaps in the future, we stop looking at the sky seeking gods to start seeing, simply, an evolutionary clock.

¹Aleix Mercadé is a philosopher, psychologist (at sercontigo.com), and astrologer at the Cosmograma school. In astrology, Aleix holds an integral, deep, revolutionary, and very critical—almost skeptical—approach, and stands out especially for introducing science and therapy into the practical application of astrology, as well as new spiritual perspectives. Aleix drives the scientification of astrology through his website *Astrología Experimental* as well as its dissemination in congresses, YouTube, radio, and TV.

Email: aleix@cosmograma.com