

# Phases in Cycles

## Organic Movement



by Michael Erlewine

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**By  
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## PHASES IN CYCLES

It's time for a basic introduction to cycles. Astrology, not to mention life itself, is not only filled with cycles, but is completely cyclic. Everything cycles or circles, if only to persist and endure. Anything that does not posit itself repeatedly (endure) does not endure. It is gone and passed into history and eventually out of mind.

Cycles can be as long as time itself, eons and eons. Or cycles can be as short as a breath or a beating heart, cycling and repeating. It seems that everything pulses in order to exist.

And then there are cycles that, like the three bears, are neither too long or too short, but are just right-sized enough for us to be aware of them and perhaps keep tracking of them. The breath, the rotating Earth, the monthly lunar cycle and on and on.

And so, IMO, one of the most useful examinations that we as human beings can undertake, at least in my opinion, is the study of cycles. We know that they come and go, but just how? And how are they similar?

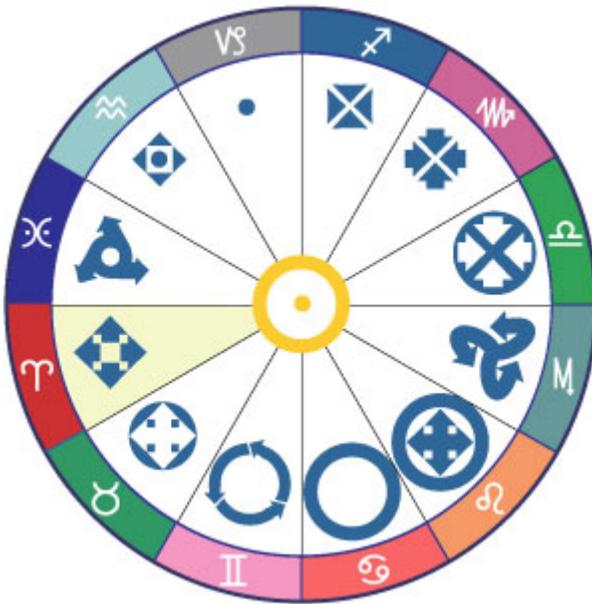
And, surprise, surprise, all cycles share a common nature. They have ups and downs and they come around again and repeat. Not only that, but once you understand the form of cycles, you can take any number of them and line them up next to one another, arranging them so their greatest points of expansion and contraction match. A lot can be learned from doing this.

The expanded part of the cycle of our breath and the expanded part of our heartbeat have actual similarities. And if you can learn something about the form on one kind of cycle, you will find that this can tell you about that same attribute in another cycle, and that can be invaluable.

And the same is true of the cycle of the zodiac signs, the Chinese animal signs, the wheel of astrological houses, and the synodic return of any two heavenly bodies, such as the solunar monthly cycle of the Earth, Sun, and Moon.

How do all these different circles and cycles fit together?. Is the moment when we breathe in and expand our lungs similar to Capricorn or Cancer in the zodiac, or to the 10<sup>th</sup> house or the 4<sup>th</sup> house in the chart wheel. Many years ago in the 1970s, the great astrologer Dane Rudhyar (who was visiting my home) and I discussed how these various cycles line up. Rudhyar said you could line them up so they match in many different ways and they all would have some meaning, however odd that might be.

However, the most logical approach, “logically,” is how we would line them up, allowing those who don’t agree to do whatever floats their boat. Here are the obvious:



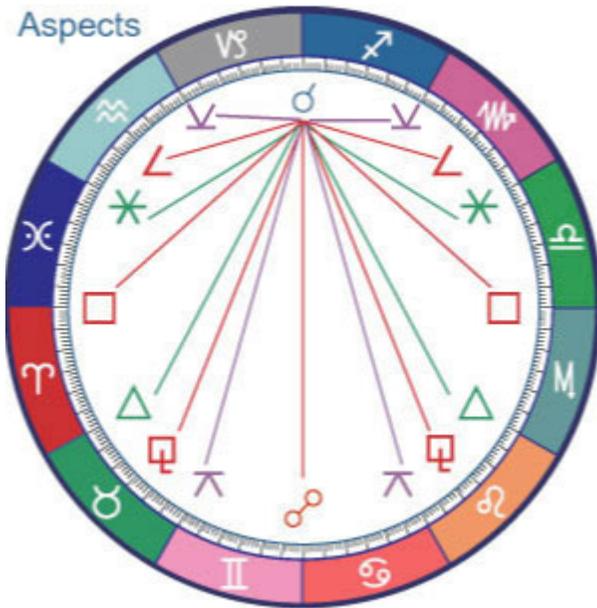
## **MOST CONTRACTED VS. MOST EXPANDED**

Lungs contracted vs. Lungs Expanded  
 Capricorn vs. Cancer  
 10<sup>th</sup> House vs. 4<sup>th</sup> House  
 New Moon vs. Full Moon  
 Conjunction vs. Opposition  
 Winter Solstice vs. Summer Solstice  
 ... and so on.

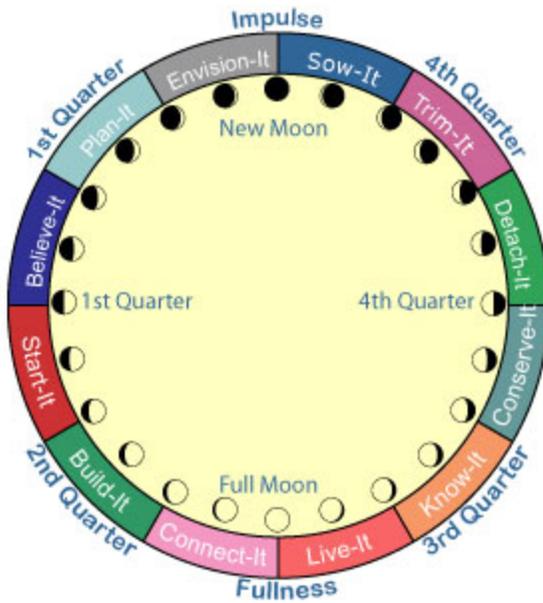
All of the above can be looked at cyclically, as a cycle. From the contracted part of the cycle, like the New Moon, the solunar cycle or breath expands outward through the First Quarter and on to the Full Moon, the point of greatest expansion, and then begins to contract through the Third Quarter, crossing into the Fourth Quarter until, fully contracted, it reaches the next New Moon, and on around.

It's the same with breathing, with the heart beating, and so on. All cycles can be examined in this way. I find it most helpful to look at any synodic cycle of two planets, where one is moving slower and the second is moving faster so that it makes a complete cycle of 360-degree compared to the first.

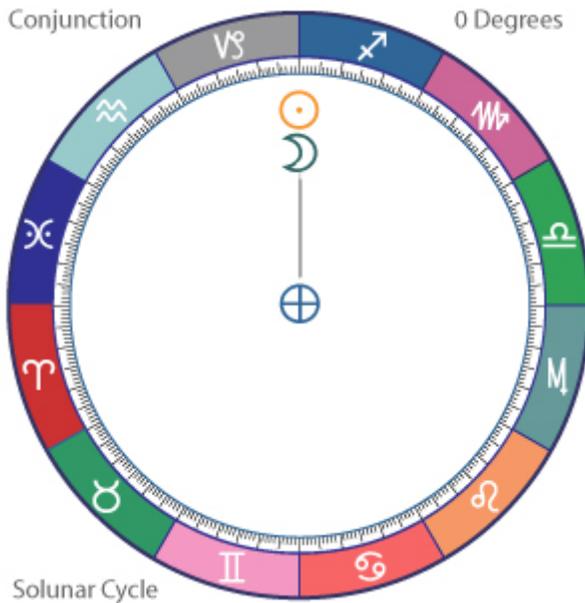
If we look at the various aspects the faster moving body (in this case the Moon) forms to the slower moving body (the Sun), every one of the 360-degrees of the circle is legitimately an aspect, in that without it we would not have a cycle or circle. Astrologers over the centuries have called out these aspects as what I call the "sweet sixteen."



- 000° Conjunction
- 030° Semisextile (waxing)
- 045° Semisquare (waxing)
- 060° Sextile (waxing)
- 090° Square (waxing)
- 120° Trine (waxing)
- 135° Sesquiquadrate (waxing)
- 150° Inconjunct (waxing)
- 180° Opposition
- 210° Inconjunct (waning)
- 225° Sesquiquadrate(waning)
- 240° Trine(waning)
- 270° Square(waning)
- 300° Sextile(waning)
- 315° Semisquare(waning)
- 330° Semisextile(waning)
- 360° Next Conjunction



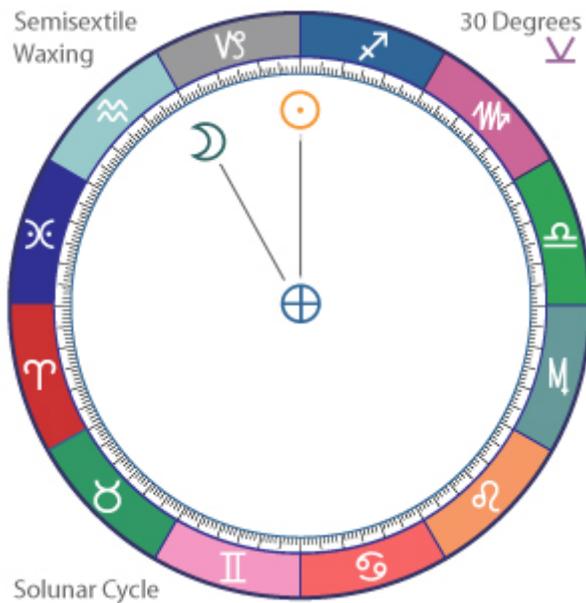
Let's go over these cycle aspects, in order of their occurrence in a complete cycle, keeping in mind that the whole group make one continuous whole, just as a breath or heartbeat is a complete unity.



### The Conjunction (000 Degrees)

This is the innermost point in the cycle, where everything starts or comes from, as it emerges from the exhaustion of the previous cycle, the subconscious (or wherever thoughts come from) into our conscious mind. At this point these are more like impulses, sometimes called in the literature a "tone," perhaps more preverbal than verbal - something stirring deep within us. This is a seminal moment, where seeds or kernels of new experience within us first stir and begin to move, to sprout, so these times are very potent, even if we can't see what they will eventually mean for us. Seminal is the good word.

Another way to look at this aspect is that it is a turning point or major phase shift from coming in to once again going out, and such a dramatic shift involves a complete change of direction, a reversal of polarities.

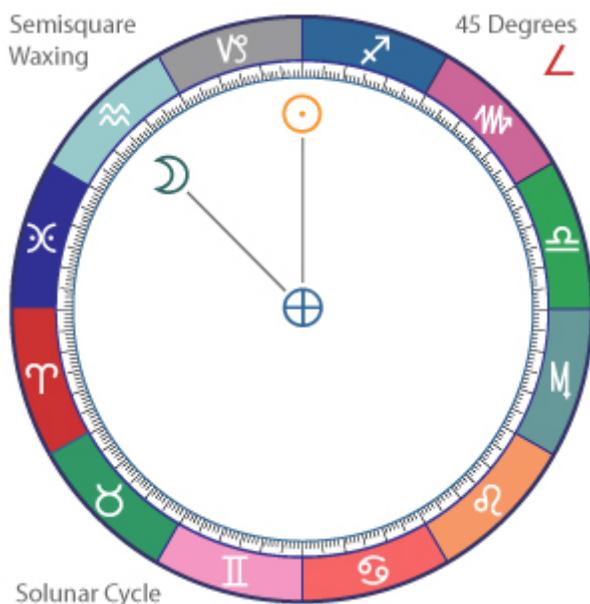


### The Semi-Sextile (030 Degrees)

With the Semi-Sextile, whatever tone or impulse that first stirred within us, here rises dimly to consciousness enough for us to begin to grasp and formulate it. Often, due to its sheer inner potency, these ideas soon take on the form of a vague or general plan for action, something to be done, to eventually be made manifest. As we become aware that we are formulating them, these plans are at first very broad or general in scope, and we look about us on all sides for help to make these ideas real. They are only now just forming. In this sense, we are at this point very community oriented, welcoming any assistance we can find, an Aquarian effort. In fact the zodiac sign Aquarius and the Eleventh House correspond to this phase of the cycle.

Another way to look at this aspect is that it is a recovery period or response after the Conjunction, where there was a complete phase or polarity reversal. We are

adjusting to this change, getting our bearings, and coming up with a new approach, with new plans that are just now emerging. In the solunar cycle, but this time we can see the crescent Moon.



### The Semi-Square (045 Degrees)

This is the midway point between the seed impulse or starting point (Conjunction) and the 90-degree point (waxing Square) of first manifestation, so this is a midway or turning point, turning away from the pure idea (seed impulse) and toward making whatever has been grasped of the impulse or new ideas thus far into a plan for actuality. In my experience, these 45-degree points on the circle, which in Tibetan astrology have been called "Tomb Signs," are for most of us more difficult or challenging than the traditional Square (90-degree) points, if only because they are not so obvious or clear. The reason may be that each 45-degree point in the aspect cycle, and there are four of them,

presages the more major Square point soon to follow it. Coming events cast their shadows, so to speak. Let me explain.

The 45-degree aspect is the first point in the new cycle where a midway point is reached, in this case moving away from the seed impulse, and toward the manifestation point at 90 degrees. Just as the 90-degree point is midway between the inner (starting point) and outer hemisphere (Opposition at 180 degrees), so the 45 degree point is midway between the seed impulse (starting point) and the point of first manifestation at the waxing Square (90 degrees). In this sense, the 45-degree point is a harbinger or forerunner of a more powerful experience, but it is also our first contact with this type of separation. That is the challenge of it.

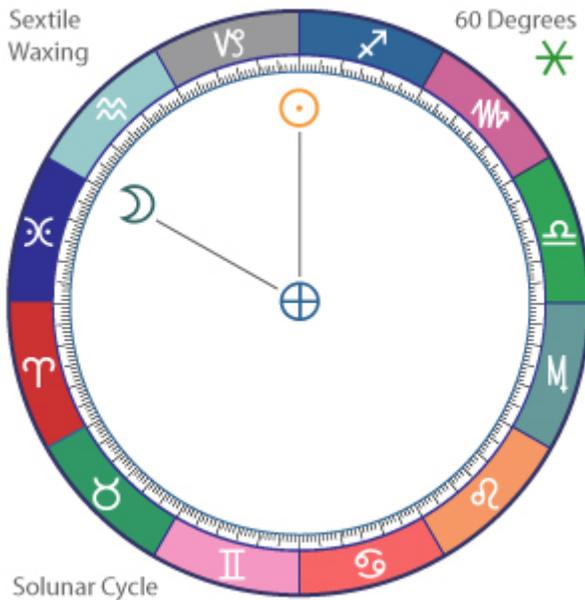
In that sense, the 45-degree point may be more significant to us, at least psychologically, as it introduces us to this type of event - being torn in two directions.

After the 45-degree point, when we reach the more dramatic 90-degree point, we have, in a way, already been inoculated or forewarned of this type of experience. It is now in our memory, from the point or the 45-degree aspect onward.

Be that as it may, the Semi-Square point often brings some obstacle to confront us, if only that it marks a true change in direction that there are obstacles or challenges, and we will find it to be more comfortable by pushing ahead in whatever direction we currently have been in. That change in direction requires that we adjust our own path and direction to accommodate it. And each of the four 45-degree aspects in the cycle

(the other two being the 135-degree aspects) requires a slightly different shift on our part.

Here the shift is turning away from still more new ideas and having to go with those ideas we have managed to grasp. That is the challenge.



### The Waxing Sextile (060 Degrees)

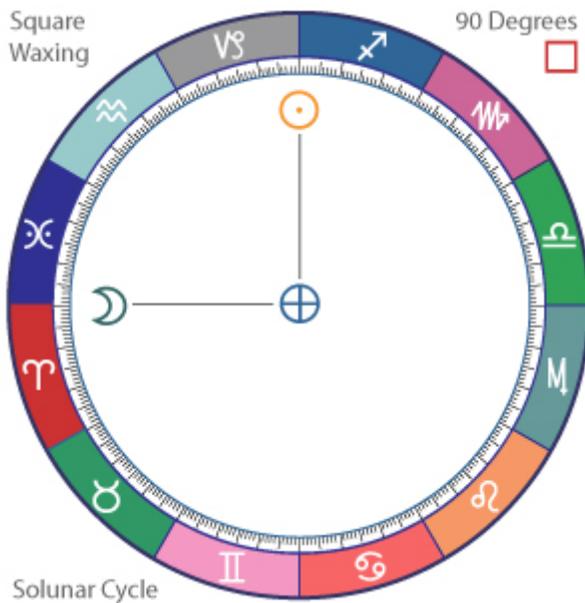
The Sextile is one of the four main energy-giving points in the cycle, where we have enough added space or room to actually accomplish something or at least to get some work done, and see progress made. Ideas and plans that were formulated earlier in this cycle are here being advanced, moved closer to the stage of reality at the 90-degree or Square phase.

While this waxing Sextile is a moment of energy, it is also the point where a certain amount of discipline and even sacrifice is required. Another way of saying this is

that now we have the space or room needed to work with these emerging ideas.

The fact that it corresponds with the zodiac sign Pisces and the 12th House should make sense in this context. Both of those factors refer to the need for sublimation and sacrifice, a better word might be acceptance, if only to set the stage and help to bring through the plan or concept we have been carrying within us into reality. We are getting our arms around the issue. It is not unlike a mother preparing to give birth.

The point here is that during this aspect (60 degrees) and from here on up to the 90-degree aspect, there is little room for distraction and any and all kinds of extraneous matters or obstacles that may appear on the periphery should be ignored or efficiently dealt with, whatever it takes. Pay the dues of the past remaining or left over from the previous cycle and move on. This is not the time for argument or quibbling. We should just suck it up at this point, so that we can bring as much of our emerging concept through to reality as possible, and not have our energy siphoned off by all the material beckoning from our past, whatever may rise up and attempt to block our way.

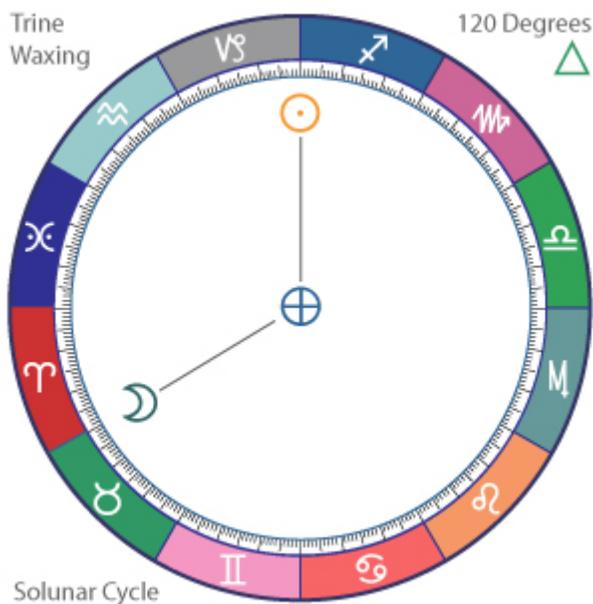


### The Waxing Square (090 Degrees)

This is one of the four main turning or changing points in the aspect cycle, the moment when we cross over from the inside (from our inner world of ideas and plans) to the outside world, where whatever we have been developing up to now is going to be born and makes a start. This is the first physical appearance in the outer sphere, and this aspect corresponds to the zodiac sign Aries, and the First House Cusp, both of which signify the same type of event as the rising sign. Something new rises into view or appears and can be seen.

That “something” we manage to get across at this point may not be much, but it has managed to make it over the great divide from the inside out into this moment, all the way from an idea that stirred in the mind to now a reality. This Square aspect marks the appearance in

fact, and the physical start in the outside world, of something, something we can point to as other than just a thought or idea. It is real, and from this first start or sprout it will grow whatever is the nature of the original impulse or particular combination of planets or bodies. What appears here is undeniable.



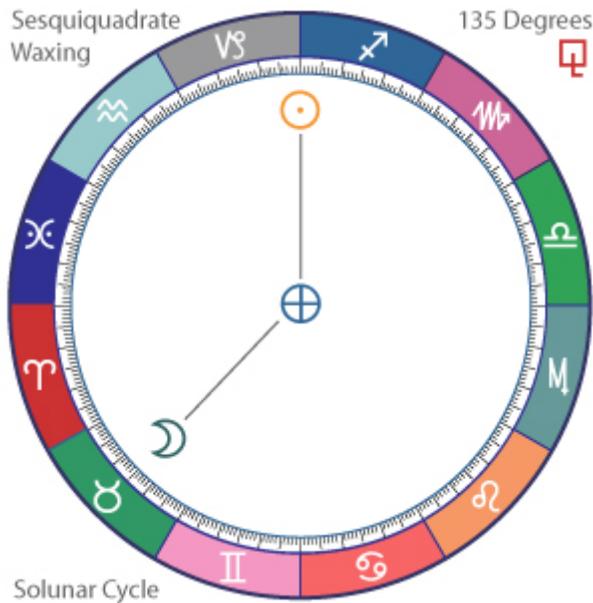
### The Waxing Trine (120 Degrees)

It is a full thirty degrees from the waxing Square to the waxing Trine, and all of this ground should mark a physical growth and emergence, as whatever is at issue here increasingly takes on form and materiality, that is: becomes real and visible. The Trine aspect is another of the four energy points in the entire cycle, where there is a burst of room, and enough space or expanded atmosphere to really get something done. This is the primary point in the cycle for the active and rapid building of form, and this aspect corresponds to the

zodiac sign Taurus and to the Second House, which, as we know, are all about form and materials.

The increased flow of energy here makes this, traditionally speaking, an easy or "good" aspect, and the astrological literature is filled with testimony to the fact that the Trine aspect is to be welcomed whenever it appears. It represents ease and fluidness of motion, a sense of expanded time, and room enough for great things to be accomplished.

At the same time, let's not make too much of a good thing out of the Trine. Yes, it represents freedom or room to accomplish things, to get our arms around a problem or project, but (and especially in whole-chart patterns like the Grand Trine) it equally can bring perhaps too much room or emptiness, which can amount to a sense of loneliness, to being an outsider, standing outside, and experiencing too much distance. So, as with all things, the middle way of balance is the sweet spot.



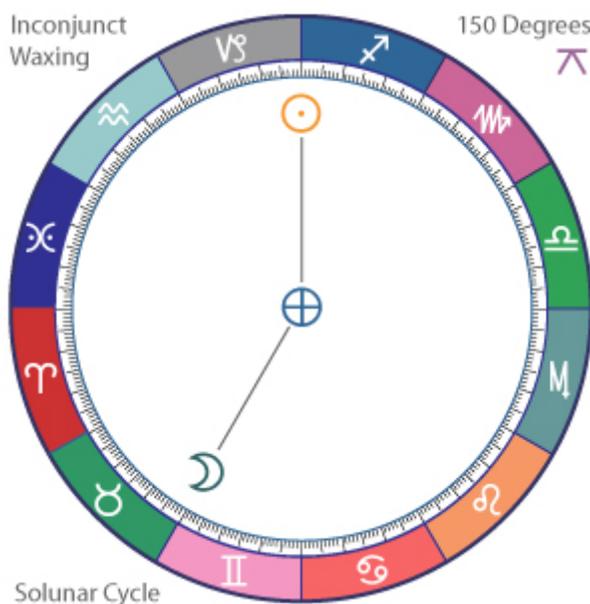
### The Waxing Sesquiquadrate (135 Degrees)

Here is the second 45-degree aspect, one of four aspects that in the Tibetan tradition are called "Tomb Signs." These, and not the Squares (90-degree aspects), are perhaps the real turning points in the aspect wheel, the places where the rubber meets the road. Each 45-degree aspect presages or comes before a major turning point, and by that fact perhaps may be more important as beacons of forthcoming events than the more major aspect that is still to come. In this case, the Sesquiquadrate (135-degree aspect) comes before the Opposition or 180-degree point.

In this waxing 135-degree aspect, the building part of the waxing cycle is essentially complete, much like we reach our physical peak as young adults, but continue to mature until our Saturn return, almost like a ripening. The waxing Sesquiquadrate marks the point where further pushing forward or driving to create or build can

actually be detrimental, and if it has any difficult qualities, it would be if we failed to heed that warning, which is: to ease off.

This is the point where we should pull back on the throttle, stop driving forward, and rather continue working with whatever we have achieved up to now. We are still moving forward, but its like slowing down before a stop sign. If we do that, then we avoid what can be a more friction-filled experience of this semisquare-type aspect. We change our attitude, and adjust our direction, and thus avoid problems. That is the challenge here.

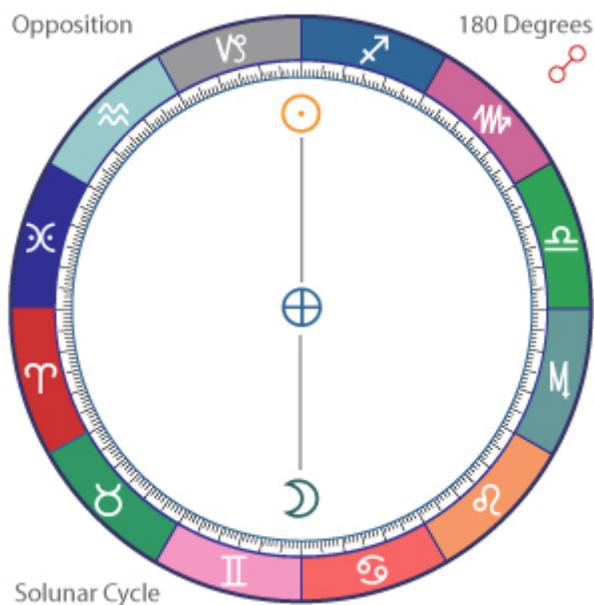


### The Waxing Inconjunct (150 Degrees)

Here is the last major aspect before the Opposition. Whatever was conceived at the Conjunction, worked into a plan at the SemiSextile, launched at the Square, and physically built at the Trine is here complete, much

like the physical body of the young adult is complete before the Saturn return, but continues to be filled in and ripens.

At the Inconjunct, there should be no more pushing forward, and no more building, but rather allowing our forward movement to coast. This is not the time to start anything new, but instead, a time to finish up whatever is already in the works, what has been set in motion up to now. It is here that, everything is connected up and fine details are followed out to the nth degree. This phase corresponds to the zodiac sign Gemini and the Third House, so communication and connections are key - anything to do with completion and details.



### The Opposition (180 Degrees)

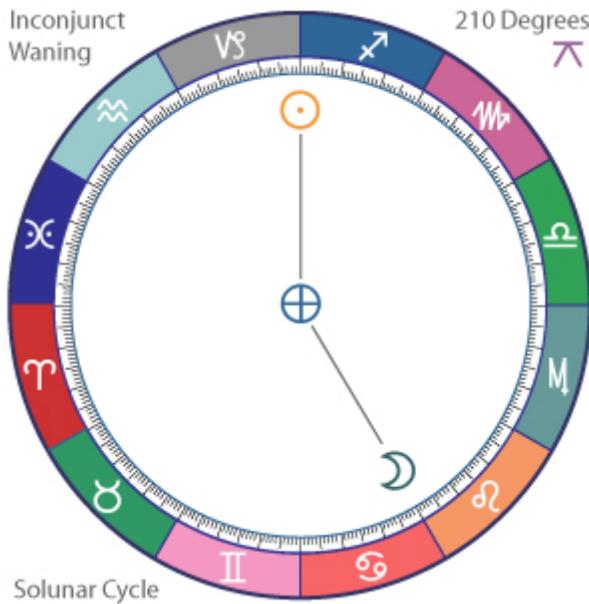
This is the top of the cycle, physically speaking, the most expanded or physically manifest point, the result, so to speak in an outward sense of the entire cycle,

whichever two bodies may be involved. This is it! Here is the fruition itself. There is no pushing forward here and, as yet, no decline, but only the full-blown experience - something to feel and be in.

This is not a point, in general, of recognition or awareness of what all that is happening might mean, but rather the experiencing itself of what it means, so that later there is something to be aware of, as the experience wanes and we begin to understand what we have been through. This is the “going through” itself.

Traditionally, this is the point to let go and abandon yourself to the experience and drink it in, to feel it fully. This, in the zodiac correspondence, is the sign Cancer, and the Fourth House, the home or body itself. In the major arcana of the tarot cards, this is “The Chariot” or vehicle, the body of the experience. As the philosopher Hegel said:

“We go behind the curtain of the Self to see what is there, but mainly for there to be something to be seen.”

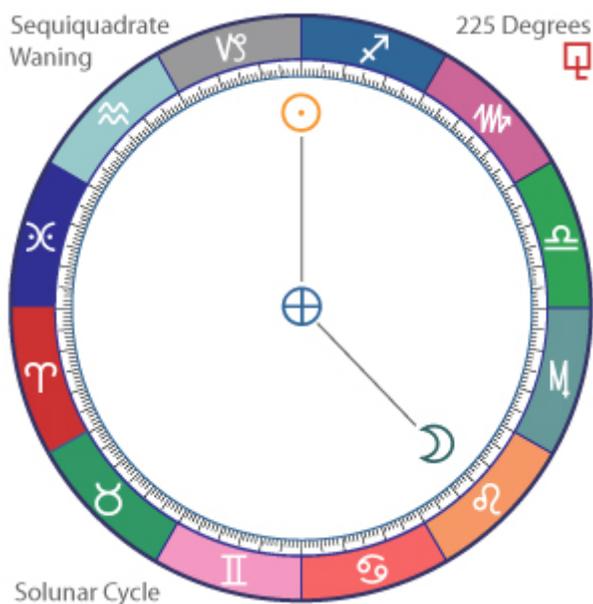


### The Inconjunct (210 Degrees)

At this point in the cycle, we are past the Opposition point, and the experience peak is over. As we move away from the Opposition, and begin to get some distance, for the first time, we are able perhaps to put that experience into some kind of perspective, to get a handle on it. Where before we were lost in the experience itself, now we have the first dawning of what it might mean or have been all about, at first perhaps just an awareness that we have been through “something” that up to now we were lost within. That is the nature of experience. We have to actually get into it and go through it. We can't watch it and do it at the same time. First, we do it, then we watch it or realize what we have been through. This phase is the dawn of the watching it, the beginning of realization.

If we look for the corresponding zodiac sign, it is Leo, and for houses, the Fifth House. So, this dawning

awareness of having an experience and now somehow owning it fits right into the traditional qualities of pride, ownership, expression, and so on. We have gotten through the experience, survived and come out the other side, and we now are getting our arms around it. We own it. It is our experience, and we can begin to describe and talk about it. This is often connected to telling or teaching others about whatever we have been through.



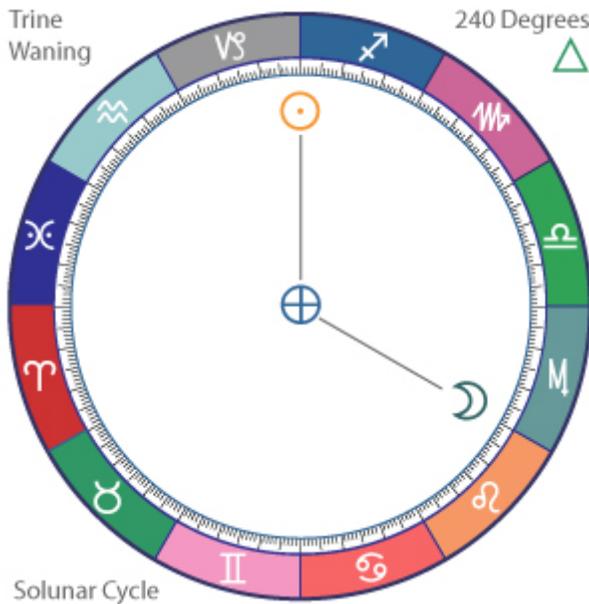
### The Waning Sesquiquadrate (225 Degrees)

This is another of the four 45-degree points, where there is a shift in perspective or direction, in this case away from the experience of the Opposition, marking the end of the freshness of the Inconjunct, during which the first awareness of the meaning (and experience) of the opposition dawned.

That awareness is more-or-less over, now fading, and probably getting old fast. Talking about, describing the experience, telling or teaching it to others loses its luster and begins to sound hollow. The shift is from a more innocent and fresh feeling, to one requiring a change in our attitude. Here we have the first signs that the party is over, and we had better cast about for what is coming next, and how we will cope with that. As the poet Gertrude Stein wrote “Before friendship faded, friendship faded.”

Perhaps the most important point here is that we are now firmly in the waning hemisphere, and while in the waxing hemisphere push and forward motion was the order of the day, here that is reversed. We don't push; we now must learn to pull or, better put, to let things come to us. We don't work to make or present things, but rather we learn to listen and to receive. It is all about handling and accommodating whatever is or has been experienced.

The 225-degree aspect marks the letting go of the thrill of first discovery that arose from the Opposition, and coping with the fact that this discovery has ended or is now wearing thin, and it is time for us to take a more reflexive and cooperative stance, like: accommodating, listening, adapting. That is the challenge.



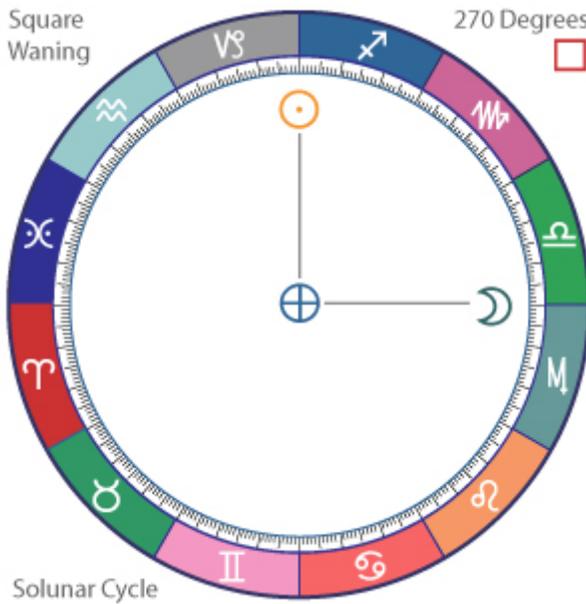
## The Waning Trine (240 Degrees)

The Waning Trine aspect brings another energy-filled time, one of increased space or elbow room, in which things can happen. Where in the waxing Trine, we got things done, here in the waning Trine, we help things to happen. It is the difference between Judo and Aikido, the former is offensive and attack oriented, the later is passive, oriented more toward accommodating whatever force is already in motion, directing it.

With the 240-degree aspect comes the clear realization that the pride and innocence we had in the discovery time after the Opposition is fully fading. The experience itself is over and at this point that is ever more clear to see. Here is the time to clean up after the party and make the most we can of it. This is an aspect of actively conserving or preserving whatever we can of what we have just been through, one of drawing conclusions, of learning to fail successfully. We are entering the 6<sup>th</sup>

House and the zodiac sign Virgo, preserving and taking care of “what is.”

This is the aspect of conservation, bar none, and we find ourselves scrambling to cap off the wells, save energy, and plug the leaks. Where before there was what seemed an endless overflowing of experience, here it is clear that that experience is fading, and will soon become even weaker. The action on our parts here must be passive, in that we actively save or gather what we can. This is all about returns, and catching what we can, like cupped hands filled with water - and plugging the leaks.



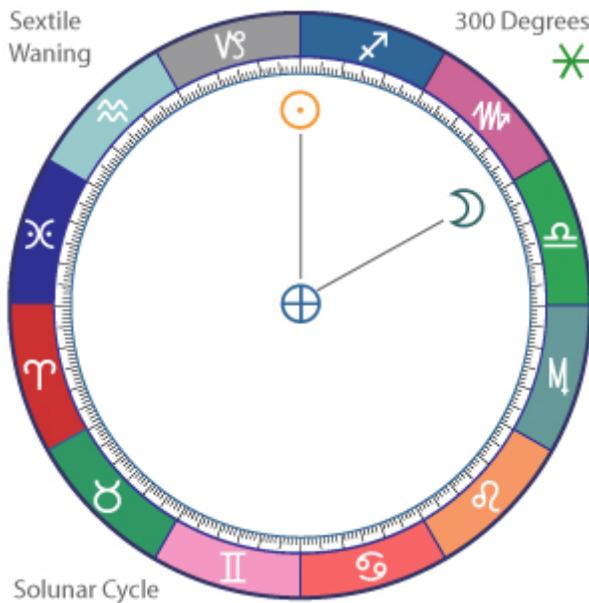
### The Waning Square (270 Degrees)

The Waning Square represents another major turning point, a point where we move from the external or outside, the manifest hemisphere, into the inner, non-physical, or meta-physical hemisphere. It marks the

very end of the physical experience we had at the Opposition, and any personal connections we might have had to it up to now. That more personal experience is not only over, but we have withdrawn whatever conclusions we can from it, and have, hopefully, saved those up or taken note of them. The party is over.

In one step we move from a more personal point of view to a much less personal and more objective or impersonal perspective. We agree to leave behind what has already been left behind. You get the idea. Just as the Waxing Square marked a point of the entrance of something real and substantial into the out world, so the Waning Square marks the beginning of a more spiritual or meta-physical (beyond the physical) experience. We grow up fast, in a single step. We cut the cord. This phase corresponds to the zodiac sign Libra and the Seventh House, which have been traditionally connected to the outer or public (impersonal) and also to marriage.

This phase is related to marriage because it is at this point that the physical experience drops away and can be fully seen and accepted for whatever it was and now is. We can see it, and we accept it, we say "I do," and are able to move on, to drop our personal connections to what we see is going nowhere further. We are, for better or for worse, now beyond it.



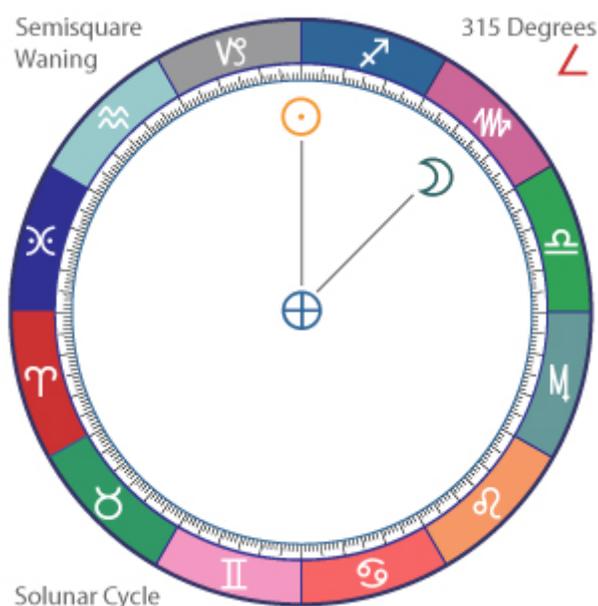
### The Waning Sextile (300 Degrees)

The Waning Sextile, like the Waxing Sextile, involves an abundance of energy, energy in the sense of increased room or space (perhaps atmosphere is a good word) in which activity can take place. There is room to move around in. Yet, unlike the waxing Sextile, where things are headed and oriented toward forming and building, here it is the reverse.

What has been in a state of deconstruction since the Opposition, here is reaching a more advanced or critical stage. The Waning Square saw the end of personal attachment to experience (whatever the Opposition brought), and here we take a step back, even farther, to where we actively can work to take things apart that no longer work or have relevance for us.

The Waxing Sextile is the maximum point where the critical faculties are brought to bear in examining the

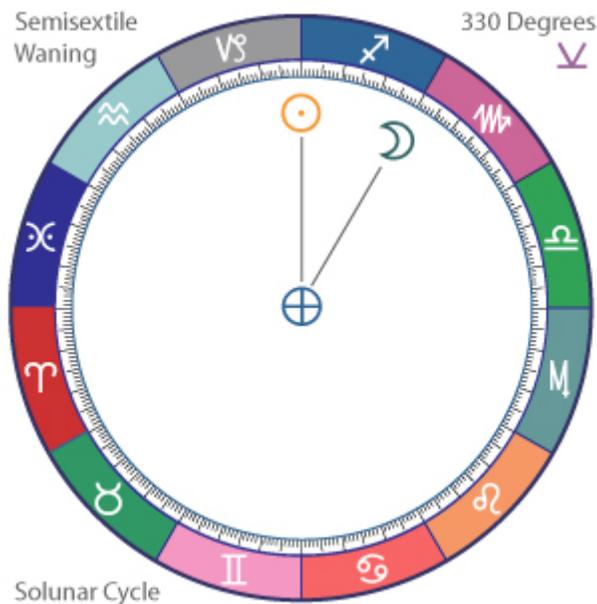
nature of whatever has resulted from the Opposition experience, examining in the sense of sorting the wheat from the chaff, into what has lasting value from what has already lost its meaning. That which has no meaning is here culled out. No wonder that the zodiac sign Scorpio and the Eighth House correspond here, for here all that superfluous is stripped off, leaving the naked truth or results - whatever of lasting value remains.



### The Waning SemiSquare (315 Degrees)

The Waning 315-degree phase brings further criticism, here even to criticism itself, finding that enough is enough and even the use of the mind to criticize and remove obstacles begins to shut down, and itself be removed. Things are folding inward. The train is leaving the station and it is time for the conductor to also jump on board. This is another of those 45-degree turning points or "Tomb Signs," that must be negotiated, and

there is always some kind of possible friction or attitude adjustment required here. As pointed out above, here we have the leaving off of even criticism, and the turning ever more inward, partaking of one's own council, and finding rest and stability in a simpler life, more is less. That is the challenge.



### The Waning SemiSextile (330 Degrees)

This marks that last phase of the 360-degree cycle, the last stop before the renewal at the Conjunction, and this phase has been called the seed stage or the seed essence, and corresponds to the zodiac sign Sagittarius, and the Ninth House of long journeys. Long journeys here refers to the things that last, whatever lasts longest, and therefore everything that religion is concerned with, that word meaning to bind back and hold what is most long lasting - eternal or lasting truths. The frankness and truth of zodiac sign Sagittarius and the Ninth House fits right in here.

This phase marks the end result of the cycle, the result of the entire experience, here reduced to the seed essence or bare bones, the seed from which the next cycle or circle will spring. We are going to do it all over again.