

# Astrology as a therapeutic tool

## A study of a complicated grief case<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** Astrology is a millenary practice that is in crisis due to its numerous internal problems and its resistance to scientific rigor. This paper reviews these problems and tentatively and constructively proposes an alternative based on the integration of astrological experience and the XXI-century psychology knowledge. We will present a case where astrology was used as a tool for the psychotherapeutic treatment of Teresa, a woman with a major meaning-of-life crisis after the traumatic loss of her 15-year-old son in a traffic accident. This paper attempts to set the bases of the natal chart utility (map of the Solar System at the moment and place of birth) in order to personalize the evaluation and treatment.

**Keywords:** Astrology, experimental therapy, transpersonal psychology, philosophy, existentialism, interdisciplinarity, comprehensive astrology, spirituality, grief, suffering, trauma.

### 1. A paradigm in crisis

Astrology suffers from a range of problems and inconsistencies that require a revision of many of its principles and body of knowledge. My motivation for such a revision is not based on contempt towards this discipline but on the love of knowledge that can improve in the same way as all human knowledge has done and continues to do so.

These problems and inconsistencies are right in front of our noses. They can be easily observed and comprehended in this

discipline's concrete and applied practice. A minimally critical attitude and some detachment from our identity (and pride) towards astrology are the only things that we need to observe it.

There are certain situations that make us suspect that something is not going well in the practice of the astrologer with the consultant:

I. The natal chart seems more important than the person sitting in front of us; that is to say, the map prevails over the territory. Therefore, an astrological consultation usually consists of

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<sup>1</sup> Traduction: Esther Andreu (revision: Virginia Navascues)

“interpreting the natal chart,” describing and making a conceptual analysis that is based purely on astrology.

II. The language used during this analysis tends to be highly abstract and ambiguous<sup>2</sup>, very inferential due to the symbolic languages, which hampers its comprehension and thus facilitates cognitive phenomena such as the Forer Effect. This effect assumes that the consultant subjectively perceives a high degree of accuracy in his psychological analysis despite that this is not the case.

III. The fact that circumstances (non-astrological factors) enable (and simultaneously limit) the wide range of possibilities for an astrological symbol to be expressed concretely is ignored. That is to say, circumstances act like a catalyst that manifest the infinity of the archetypal reality, the same way that quantum phenomena, of a probabilistic nature, collapse and define when the environment pressures them to be (to exist concretely).

IV. During the analysis, the astrologer tends to project his personality, values, and personal preferences, skewing and projecting his own map onto the consultant. This, in turn, represents a risk for the consultant as well as a gross violation of ethics.

V. The astrological body of knowledge is assumed to be correct. It becomes dogma. There is a massive assumption of its concepts and principles, naive disbelief of theoretical knowledge from which everything is inferred. In the most extreme cases, the fact that astrology is conceptual knowledge is also denied, as if feeling without mind were

something pure, which we know does not occur this way (Mercadé, 2021).

VI. In general, and related to the previous point, induction is visibly lacking, and the astrologer bases his wisdom on his own semi-divine authority or on texts considered sacred, underestimating and denying the remarkable progress of knowledge in the last decades, human fallibility, the existence of bias and subjectivity as contaminants<sup>3</sup>. I think that we have to stop repeating what others have said (and the abuse of deduction), and curious and critical observation must come into play (the inclusion of the hypothetical deductive method).

VII. Instead of encouraging a revision and a constructive debate, the irreconcilable divergences among different astrological schools and thoughts still remain a taboo, probably because of the lack of reliable methods that allow contrasting advantages and disadvantages of each perspective.

VIII. We don't think about the consequences of the fact that symbolic language can be materialized in multiple ways and that it becomes impossible to be sure how the natal chart is going to manifest beforehand (horizontal development). That is to say, the same archetype can be manifested in different behaviors and, at the same time, the same behavior can be a manifestation of different astrological archetypes.

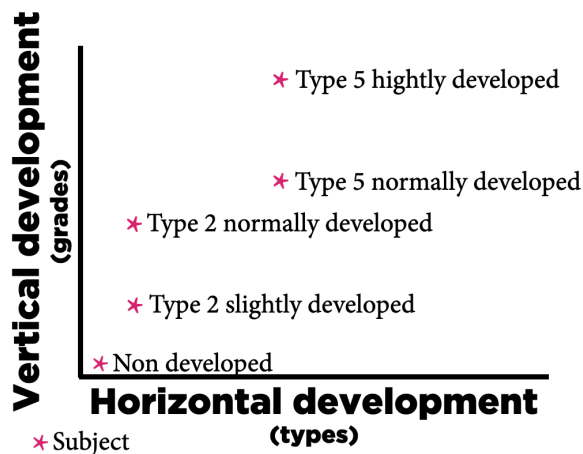
IX. Nor do we don't reflect on the fact that the natal chart is a potential (vertical development). You cannot say someone is this way or that way just by looking at the natal chart, omitting all the non-astrological factors

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<sup>2</sup> Some astrological trends show off concretion and prediction, something that could be considered as a more accurate and reliable astrology. However, this astrology is rarely concrete or predictive if a minimum of controls are applied (Mercadé, 2019b).

<sup>3</sup> We think that intuitions are a channel that enable knowledge that is free of prejudice but just the opposite is true.

that enable or complicate releasing this potential.



X, We forget that astrology is a systemic discipline and, instead, we resort to biased interpretations, especially in the most popular astrology.

XI. Although we astrologers keep connecting the symbolic to all kinds of mundane matters (psyche, body...), there is very little interest in interdisciplinarity, as if the astrologer could only be an astrologer. In our society, we have lost the figure of the interdisciplinary wise man that had always gone hand-in-hand with the figure of the astrologer.

XII. It seems we have forgotten that we are dealing with highly subtle knowledge and it is pretentious to think that we dominate it or that somebody dominates it.

XIII. After mentioning the previous omissions and ignorance, we can conclude there is an important lack of humility, critical spirit, patience, and intellectual and spiritual depth, as is typical these days.

## 2. Revolution

The up-to-date astrology I propose is an astrology that integrates past, present, and future; art, science, and spirituality (Mercadé, 2021a). It embraces the wisdom of tradition but without idolizing it and being aware of its

limits. It appreciates the integration of psychological points of view, such as Liz Greene's or Howard Sasportas's, or the spirituality of Richard Tarnas or Eugenio Carutti, but with the critical and scientific spirit of our time.

The revolution that I propose retains key elements such as the systemic and holistic approach. Astrology is, therefore, a universal matrix that reconciles everything, which turns it into the most interdisciplinary discipline, that is, the discipline that needs to know the most about other disciplines. Due to astrology's deeply structural and slightly superficial nature, it must have a close link with the specific knowledge mentioned by the astrological concepts. For instance, if we talk about the importance of communication for Gemini, we will have the chance to understand this archetype better than if we delve into the current knowledge about communication or comprehension, to which astrologers from the past did not have access. The same happens when we talk about personality, behaviors, difficult emotions, pleasant emotions, or other psychological concepts. Psychology has matured considerably during the last decades. The astrologer who aims to help others to know themselves better has access to infinite knowledge that helps him have greater solidity and depth in his astrological analysis. Therefore, it would be a significant limitation to practice astrology without psychology, the same way as it would be restrictive to practice chemistry without physics or economy without mathematics.

This astrology would be holistic and systemic due to its integrative framework. However, on its own, it would be one more tool. That is, I propose to provide therapy with astrology, not astrology with therapy.

Philosophically speaking, this astrology would not be reductionist and it would understand that the archetype acts like a kind of a mathematical function that turns environmental circumstances into a specific reality. This interaction between circumstances and the natal chart would be mediated by a symbolic subject (human beings). Of course, all this is very speculative. Let us say that the human becomes impregnated by the solar system (due to its structure and quality), which would act fractally<sup>4</sup> on their symbolic interior and, at the same time, it would interact with the person's circumstances<sup>5</sup>, thus materializing a particular way of experiencing it.

**SOLAR SYSTEM**

(Natal chart)



**Symbolic subject**

(fractal nexus)



**CIRCUMSTANCES**

Another important characteristic of the revolution I propose is that this astrology would not reject science or the related critical thinking, as this rejection leads to reductionism and limits our perspective. I think that rejecting something because of its limits instead of valuing it for its possibilities is not a good approach. It represents limited

thinking in its purest state. I do not think there is a better or worse perspective, but a whole range of perspectives that can be combined, knowing what each one can contribute. The past had its own theoretical frameworks and, therefore, it is important to become aware that we astrologers tend to practice astrology that is contaminated with many metaphysically outdated principles (in the case of Traditional Astrology) as well as with too restrictive, and sometimes naïve, concepts such as the ones from theosophy, psychoanalysis, and New Age (in the case of Psychological Astrology).

Of course, integrating science into Astrology implies an enormous epistemological challenge, although it would allow overcoming many problems:

- 1) It would contribute with ways of controlling induction and deduction processes, providing creative quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
- 2) It would foster a critical spirit and minimize truths based on authority. I think that authors like Geoffrey A. Dean (2016) or Julián García Vara (2016) would be great examples.
- 3) We would have a more solid knowledge, less prone to the most subjective extravagant speculations. In the previous congress, I had already presented experimental evidence to confirm that there exists reality in Astrology (Mercadé, 2019 a).
- 4) We would open the interdisciplinary dimension to its full extent. We could build bridges with Physics, as did Demetrio Santos (1978), or with Biology, with special reference to José Luna (2022) and his recent

<sup>4</sup> Here, by fractal the repetition of a pattern, we refer to a structural level. This would enable the analogic relationships that are typical in astrology.

<sup>5</sup> These circumstances would define a local environment of possibilities and probabilities. Culture, physical environment, and interpersonal relationships would fit here.

dissertation on the possible relationship between astrology and epigenetics.

5) Astrology would enjoy greater social acceptance and institutional support because, although it would still be partially pseudo-scientific, many brilliant minds and souls would become exponentially interested (let us not fall into the prejudice of thinking that a scientist cannot be both sensitive and spiritual).

Therefore, the thorough study of astrology implies being able to quantify astrology, of which there is some tradition and for which certain astrology software has been developed from multiple criteria. I will briefly share below (without mentioning all the exceptions and nuances) the criteria I personally use when I look for correlations among different psychological phenomena and astrology:

	Astrological factor	Numerical value
1	Sun (sign*)	9
2	Dispositor of the sun** (sign)	8
3	Aspects*** of the Sun and of the dispositor of the Sun (planets turned into signs + signs)	6
4	Rising sign**** (and close planets turned into signs)	9
5	Chart ruler (sign and planet turned into sign)	8
6	Aspects of the chart ruler (planets turned into signs + signs)	6
7	Moon (sign)	4
8	Aspects of the moon (planets turned into sign + signs)	2
9	Others***** (sign)	2

TABLE 1

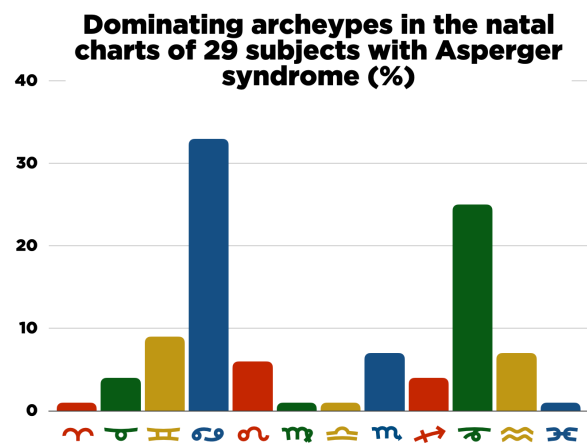
\* Here, signs contain meanings that go further than literal signs. I barely consider houses (just AC) for reasons I will explain on another occasion.  
 \*\* In case of double regency, I usually give priority to the transpersonal dispositor of the sun. It is not definitive, I keep on testing.  
 \*\*\* Conjunction, opposition, and square. Loose orb for in-sign aspects and tight for out-of-sign aspects. In the case of conjunctions, I add 3 to the planet per sign instead of 6. I don't take more aspects into consideration because practice and critical observation made me think that they were just slightly determinant factors.  
 \*\*\*\* Regarding "close" planets: changing orb depending on whether or not it changes sign. If the orb changes, I reduce it to 5 and otherwise, I increase it to 20.  
 \*\*\*\*\* It also considers aspects among other planets of the natal chart.

Also, I share below some provisional results with some psychological phenomena:

	Psychological phenomena	Dominant signs (archetypes)
1	Asperger Syndrome	Cancer-Capricorn
2	Anxiety and panic disorder	Capricorn-Scorpio
3	Selective mutism	Capricorn- Gemini
4	Psychotic disorders	Scorpio-Aquarius-Piscis
5	Eating disorders	Libra-Taurus-Cancer-Virgo
6	Depression and bipolarity	Capricorn-Sagittarius-Piscis

TABLE 2

In practice, a conjunction between Sun and Saturn in Cancer would count as "Capricorn." That is, as you can see in Table 1 (measurement criteria), I use astrological sign concepts to group archetypal qualities such as the ones from signs and planets. In Table 2, I selected the archetypes that stand out from the rest. For example, in the cases of Asperger syndrome (Chart 1), these percentages were revealed:



GRAPHIC 1

All these results should be taken with caution. They are obtained from very reduced samples (a mean of n=25), with a snowball sampling approach and a statistically deficient treatment. These results are based more on

case studies rather than quantitative strategies and, therefore, they must not be generalized in any case but be taken as a starting point. The great challenge of quantitative astrological research, apart from relying on Astrology quantification criteria (Table 1), is to rely on large quality databases.

For those astrologers who reject that science can be a part of Astrology, I will present the following situation:

*Could you discriminate a person's natal chart against another one that is false just by talking with that person at a specific level of depth?*

*If the answer is yes, then you would be accepting a way of scientifically "capturing" astrology, because repeating this test would mean proving something that is supposedly impossible. However, if the answer is no, then I would ask you two more uncomfortable questions: 1) What information can you then obtain from a natal chart? And 2) Then, why do you tend to speak in contrasting terms?*

It is hardly arguable to refuse to accept that astrology could become a science.

By all means, the astrology I propose would not be entirely scientific because the wisdom and philosophical, artistic, and spiritual sensitivity that we currently have access to would also have their place.

In conclusion, based on all of the above, my proposal is that astrology should remain open to receive the influence of its time, being able

to transform itself and mature, which, of course, will lead to its own problems.

### **3. The therapeutic-clinical model**

This model is based on the importance of the context and other non-astrological dimensions when analyzing a natal chart. This implies that, in a consultation, the territory is explored; that is, the consultant is asked about his life, circumstances, relationships, feelings, thoughts, and actions. All this allows analyzing how he experiences and has experienced his natal chart, measuring how he is developing his potential and what this development has been like. We know that two individuals with the same natal chart live very different lives, as they come from parents with different natal charts, and genetic and sociocultural contexts<sup>6</sup>.

This way, astrology turns into a tool (it has always been), into a map that serves us and that we use for our main goal: to help the client understand and know himself, understand his strengths and weaknesses -both the developed ones and those that are still a potential. And all this knowing the current reality so that we can visualize at which point he is, what barriers he is encountering to move forward, or simply what he could improve.

It is crucial to highlight that this model emphasizes the client's current significant problems<sup>7</sup> as well as his reality, avoiding speculations or talking about unlikely possibilities. Hence, there is a real interest in

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<sup>6</sup> We could say that, from an archetypal point of view, they have very similar lives although the specific expression looks very different. However, although we assume that everybody develops his natal chart "his own way," there are also non-astrological and unfavorable circumstances for the manifestation of the involved archetypes. Thus, we can find people who don't manifest their natal chart (or part of it) or do it imperceptibly.

<sup>7</sup> A given situation of crisis motivates self-analysis. These circumstances define what will be relevant in the analysis of a natal chart. That is, the process of self-knowledge would not necessarily be that open (as it represents the analysis of the whole natal chart) but instead it would mean exploring all the parts of oneself that were in a revision and readjusting process.

the person, respect, and a humble approach, recognizing one's ignorance when accepting something categorically. We perform astrology with flexibility and not with certainty, and this requires the astrologer to do some personal work to avoid counterproductive countertransferences

I firmly believe that the knowledge of psychology we currently possess is specially useful for astrological practice. We must also consider that to offer therapy and to diagnose, one must be a registered clinical psychologist, so one must be careful not to invade these competences. However, both for the astrologer who is interested in using astrology to understand other people at a psychological level and for therapists in general, this approach allows for a much deeper and more accurate astrological analysis as well as for providing more useful and personalized advice.

Hence, what does astrology contribute to the therapeutic context?

1. The natal chart is just one more map that, combined with other tools and therapeutic knowledge, enables us to know the territory with greater clarity and depth.
2. We can study natal charts that are similar to our client's and use them as a model, both for inspiring role models to be imitated and for learning behaviors to be avoided.
3. When we analyze the arousal of problems or certain types of experiences, transits and synastries allow us to identify what is going on, what is at stake, and what issues appear. This is particularly useful when the diagnosis is confusing.
4. We can understand why we have certain energy patterns that make us tend to experience certain events; why we attract

certain events or people. The systemic nature of astrology allows us to understand our natal chart as if it were a molecule with given links to the outside that are designed to attract or repel certain types of molecules, and this facilitates some connections and hinders others. This must not be considered in terms of guilt. We do not cause suffering abuse or for a relative to suffer an accident. We are part of multiple systems where all those involved interact with everyone else.

5. Symbolic language, far from determining, allows us to open up options. Each archetype can manifest in several ways and, therefore, the astrological language is especially useful when a person is living in a very rigid way. That is, the natal chart will propose a wide range of activities aimed at substituting the problematic behavior while maintaining motivation. Or, if there is no problematic behavior, related activities will simply be proposed.

6. The natal chart allows us to have a global comprehension of who we are, and this is useful for setting goals that are full of meaning and life purpose. This is especially useful after a crisis due to extreme situations like typical problems of our time.

7. The natal chart model presumes a given internal systemic structure (and not only external) that enables us to visualize and naturalize that we, as individuals, are internally multiple, with different facets and sub-personalities that can be connected to each other in multiple ways.

8. The natal chart facilitates self-acceptance and acceptance of different ways of being, independently from what is established as normal in our environment. In other words, it allows us to accept the little quirks that make us unique, to reconcile our unique normality.

I could have mentioned other contributions from astrology, but they would be less exclusive, such as the fact that it allows reflection and peace due to naming facts, emotions, and behaviors that caused too much distress or uncertainty.

#### 4. Case study

##### 4.1. Exploring the territory

I am going to present the case of Teresa below. Teresa is a 47-year-old woman who was my client ten years ago. I have changed her name and other biographic data due to privacy issues. Teresa visited me to receive therapy because she wanted to feel better and know herself better, know what to do with her life, and find the meaning in her life. She came to me after a desperate night, feeling sick and thus, suffering a lot. However, she would later discover that she had been disoriented for many months. Her husband had been encouraging her to go to therapy for a long time. From the start, she was very kind and committed. She had never gone to therapy before but she trusted that it could really help her<sup>8</sup>.

The following analysis contains the elements that were analyzed both during the entire therapy and more recently, years after finishing treatment. The main aim is to provide an example of how the natal chart can facilitate the work in a therapeutic context<sup>9</sup>.

I would like to clarify that the therapeutic-clinical model is compatible with many psychotherapeutic styles and approaches.

However, one non-negotiable principle of this model is the real and empathetic interest in the client, as well as the prioritization of the territory over the map (the person is more important than the conceptual world that forms astrology). Consequently, using the natal chart is fair and necessary but without abusing it.

Teresa was working in a multinational telecommunications company. She had studied engineering and held a good post in the sector. She grew up in a very religious family (Catholicism) and considers herself to be a believer. Nevertheless, she now reports a crisis of faith. She is married and has three children. Two years ago, her youngest son, 15-year-old Alberto, died in a motorcycle accident due to a highly improbable mechanical failure (the motorcycle was in good condition). His father, who was driving, survived with very few physical consequences. They were driving in the city, not speeding, but unfortunately, when Alberto fell, the impact was fatal, and it was impossible to save him. He died a few hours later.

At the beginning of the consultancy, the most and best information should be collected to personalize and understand the case globally and specifically. Later, we will have time to think about the case, applying all kinds of theoretical astrological<sup>10</sup> and psychological frameworks and principles. For this purpose, I used the open interview and self-registration as the main tools.

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<sup>8</sup> Her initial intention was that I should interpret her natal chart instead of receiving therapy from me but quickly, one thing led to another.

<sup>9</sup> I would like to mention that the most therapeutic elements, such as treatment, can be less relevant for our readers, who are more interested in the purely astrological analysis. Nonetheless, I included them.

<sup>10</sup> In practice, I had already analyzed the natal chart before knowing Teresa's history. However, it seems to be a good habit to avoid this due to the prejudices and assumptions that it could activate.



Hence, we explore the following to collect more information:

- 1) What behaviors, emotions, and thoughts did she have during the night that led her to ask for therapeutic help? Also, we need to know what happened before and after.
- 2) What kind of relationship did she have with her deceased son Alberto?
- 3) What kind of relationship did she have and has with her husband and with her other two children and other relatives (such as parents).
- 4) What hobbies, passions, and activities did she have before which could be used as inspiration for the future?
- 5) What was her spiritual life like before, and what is it like now?
- 6) What is her relationship with death, both in the past and present?

All the gathered information was really useful to better understand Teresa's case. It seemed that she was undergoing a major meaning-of-life crisis, as she explained to me. It was not really something new because she had never really known what motivated her, but this crisis was a whole different story, much more profound and painful.

It was clear she did not mourn her son, and this would be the central issue of our sessions and the starting point that would help address the meaning-of-life issue. At that time, I did not use any test that would have allowed me to rigorously check her diagnosis but instead, I relied on scientific literature (Worden, 1997).

Teresa had a number of physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems, and most of them had been present for several months (8-9 months). On a physical level: hypertension, a painful pressure in the chest, and an empty feeling in the stomach, muscle

tension in various parts of the body, lack of energy and appetite, digestive problems, and insomnia. Probably, her immune system was especially weakened due to permanent stress. On an emotional level: a lot of pain, sadness, a deep emptiness, loneliness, helplessness, and blame for different reasons that we will be dealing with. Also, she did not accept her son's death. On a cognitive level, low personal esteem, and confusion about her identity, skepticism, and not understanding why God had taken her son away, denial of God, obsession about understanding how the accident could have been avoided (what would have happened under other circumstances), difficulty remembering positive moments with Alberto, self-questioning herself as a mother, thinking she would not overcome it, that she would never be happy again. On a behavioral level: binge smoking, social isolation, preserving Alberto's room and objects, and an overactive pursuit of answers.

She had had a very good relationship with Alberto despite being very different from each other. She is very rational, mental, and practical, hardworking and helpful, whereas Alberto was chaotic, very creative, emotional, and empathetic. Her husband had been receiving psychological treatment since the accident, and he had already been discharged. The only point of conflict was keeping Alberto's room intact. He was very understanding about everything else and supported Teresa unconditionally. Actually, he was the one who encouraged Teresa to go to therapy although she did not believe much in psychologists and preferred seeking somebody with an alternative approach. That is why she liked my approach, which combined Astrology and NLP (Neurolinguistic

Programming)<sup>11</sup>. Teresa had a good relationship with her husband (despite the fact they did not talk about Alberto) and also with her other two sons (aged 18 and 20).

She had always liked alternative therapies such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Astrology. She had studied Naturopathy and massage, despite never having worked in them because her job had totally absorbed her. She had considered changing her profession to alternative therapies, but she finally refused to do so.

Teresa was living a religious faith crisis. She stopped believing in God after the accident because she could not understand why God could have allowed her son, who was a great person, to die.

Teresa grew up in a very demanding and little emotional family, with a parental authoritarian style (few displays of affection or of grieving). She had a pet, a dog, and when it died, she had a really hard time and could not understand why it was not there anymore.

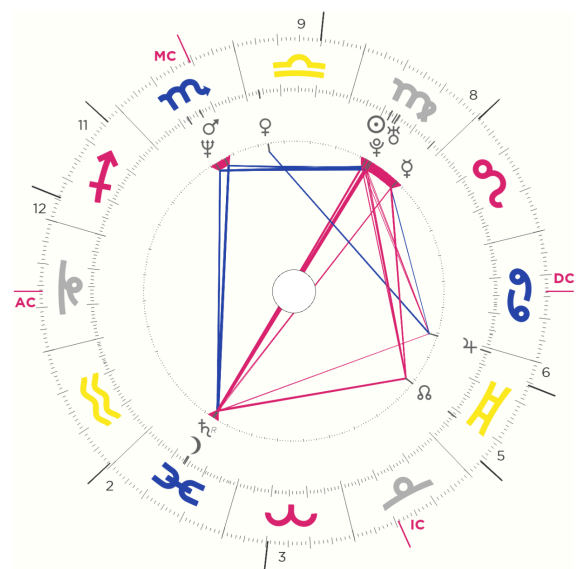
#### 4.2. Map analysis

When calculating the natal chart, we obtain a representation of the solar system configuration at the moment of Teresa's birth (and how it could be observed from a local point). Each astrologer applies the criteria and

variables he considers optimal, although, as I stated before, I think it is urgent to identify reliable common denominators, the truly relevant factors, so they can be distinguished from the non-significant ones.

I personally practice a minimalist astrology, which is strongly hierarchical, distinguishing essential levels from others that are more speculative and arbitrary. I do not use minor aspects such as the semisextile or quincunx (and I relativize the impact of sextiles and trines). Placidus is the house system I choose here, but I pay special attention to cardinal points<sup>12</sup>. The software I use can be found for free on the Cosmograma webpage<sup>13</sup>.

Teresa was born on September 10, 1965, at 4.30 pm in Madrid:



<sup>11</sup> I would like to clarify that shortly after this session, I gave up offering therapy and a few years later, I started studying Psychology with the aim of achieving a solid training. Nevertheless, despite its limits, NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming) seems an interesting tool, with a lot of elements typical of systemic therapy, constructionism, cognitive behavioral therapy, Behavior Analysis, and an extremely idiographic approach.

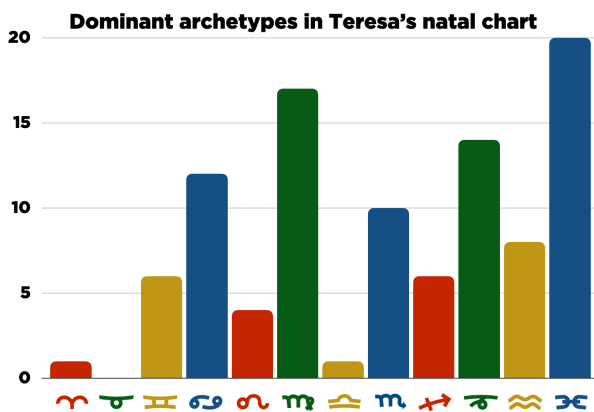
<sup>12</sup> I distrust all house systems due to some reasons I will comment on later.

<sup>13</sup> [www.cosmograma.com](http://www.cosmograma.com)

The most essential information of this natal chart can be found in Virgo, where we can find the Sun and the Sun's disposition<sup>14</sup>, as well as two outer planets. The 8th house, which is considered to be analogous<sup>15</sup> to Scorpio, would then emphasize Pluto's features.

From my point of view, all the above statements would be the most relevant part of the chart. Also, it will be useful to analyze Mars and Neptune in the 10th House at some point, and the same for Jupiter in Gemini and Venus in Libra.

We could confirm the previous analysis with the research criteria (Table 1), from which we would obtain the following:



In the following pages, we will dive into the natal chart meaning, an analysis that we will always make from the real gathered information and, therefore, avoid pointless digressions.

I would like to add that knowing Teresa's natal chart also made the therapeutic alliance easier because it increased the chance of connection, authenticity, trust, and empathy. The client's profile was, in this case, very mental, and Venus facilitated the dialog and

the constructive and polite discussion from the beginning. The 7th House in Cancer, whose disposition would be Moon conjunct Saturn, made our meetings in therapy magical, although it was fairly obvious that the water element of her natal chart did not flow well.

When I am facing a natal chart, I always make a lot of assumptions about how the person is experiencing and developing his natal chart. In the case of Teresa's Virgo-Piscis opposition, I came to the conclusion after hearing her story that it didn't seem to be integrated. Her job as an engineer (although it was more a team-management and consultancy job) polarized her towards her Virgo side. All her different interests (massage and naturopath) could fit this sign. Even astrology was a way of analyzing and controlling everything for her.

Therefore, despite having Mars-Neptune in Scorpio, which is a position that should give a lot of energy to the water element of the chart, there was no evidence that she was internally experiencing the Moon-Saturn in Pisces because she had always had a literal, mental, superficial and naive approach to the Piscean phenomena and experiences such as religion, symbol, and death.

### 4.3. The matter of destiny

I don't have a definitive answer to the matter of destiny. Still, I'm not convinced that the cosmic conscience would have brought her son's death to Teresa so she could learn something because she hadn't learned something painful. I do not think this is the conclu-

<sup>14</sup> The issue of the sign rulers is another great topic to be revised. The astrologer and fellow Andrés Zaragoza suggests some reflections and alternatives that I think are very well reasoned and should be seriously considered, no matter how awkward it is for those of us who assume the current model to be unmovable. However, I also consider it necessary to seek an experimental model that would allow verifying which ruling model is more accurate (if there is one).

<sup>15</sup> Although I don't share the traditional house system I neither have great sympathy with the most currently extended model based on matching signs and houses.

sion Jung would reach, but it is the interpretation that is usually made.

Although it was like this, I do not agree at all, as I stated before, when telling a client that his tragedy can be seen in a natal chart, I consider it can produce a blameful and terrifying effect. Moreover, I think it is false because each archetype can be experienced in several ways, and many people with such positions will never undergo similar tragedies. There are some spiritual reasonings that rule that if you don't experience something as your own, you will experience it as destiny. In this case, it would translate into stating that if Teresa had maturely integrated the lunar and saturnine pole, life wouldn't have brought her traumatic experiences. That is, according to this principle, we have a greater likelihood of experiencing the important non-integrated natal chart parts (such as the planets opposite to the sun) as external events (experiences or people). Therefore, although I question this principle and above all, its communication, I find this topic to be really worrisome and not entirely clear. In my view, I intuit that there is some truth there, although the explanation I gave was based on a systemic approach where the interactional patterns are the relevant issues. Thus, if we wish to force a reading of the tragic death in terms of casualty (something I don't think is possible because I consider the cause to be bad luck), it would not be Teresa's natal chart but the interaction of Alberto's with his mom's and other relatives as well as other environmental factors (I am not going to show Alberto's natal chart due to the family's request for privacy but I can say it had, indeed, strong Piscis elements).



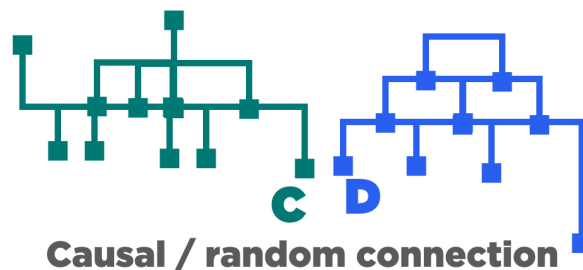
### Meaningful/ synchronic connection

Let's further elaborate this point. According to the synchronicity principle, what happens out-

side (B) is a reflection of one's interior (A), such that B is a reflection of A and vice versa. Although this reflection is not causal, it is stated that the outside has a hidden meaning for us. This is usually interpreted as a message from the universe which is especially directed towards us so we can learn something. I want to highlight that what happens in our life is usually interpreted as a consequence of our ignorance and immaturity.

I think the more modern astrologers assume synchronicity to be a universal spiritual principle, but there could be other explanations. Although I find this principle interesting, especially if it is understood from the framework of a mysterious connexion and thus, highlighting non-causality, I also consider other existential principles that make me doubt synchronicity as an absolute.

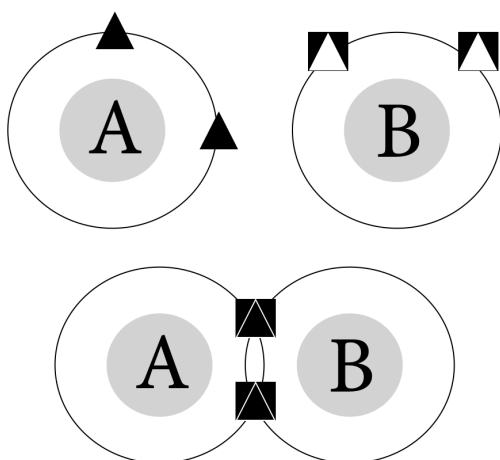
To start with, I consider the possibility that accidental things can happen to us, that is, accidents can really exist, two events coming from different causal chains find each other by chance. For example, we can be shot by a gunshot that was aimed at another person.



In the above picture, we can see that C and D would chance on each other as a result of independent ways. Here, C would represent a person who is taking a peaceful stroll, and D would represent the lost bullet of close gunfire. There wouldn't be a significant connexion, there wouldn't be a hidden meaning, but the two would find each other. Summing up: neither causality nor correlation would exist here but an accidental connexion, a coincidence.

Spirituality of our time is destiny, transcendent meaning, the sense that everything is related, that all the parts are related to all the other parts or, at least, that any encounter between two parts implies a meaning (many times hidden) for one of the parts. I think that if this principle is taken to the extreme, it can become pathological because it forces us to find hidden and synchronic meanings everywhere, which easily leads us to error and absurdity. That's why I think that including the chance factor --that nonsensical things can happen-- can be very healthy and, above all, realistic and spiritual.

The most extended spirituality fears insignificance and nonsense, paradoxically due to egoistic reasons. I think there is a randomness factor in the universe either as an evolutionary engine or because we are indifferent to the universe. From this perspective, Alberto's death would not be tied to a hidden meaning where Teresa had something to learn. We wouldn't always need to learn something from what happens to us or that the cause of an event was our need to learn something. It would be different if this experience could move core issues of our interior, a meaningful experience due to how we are and that would allow us to evolve.



In any case, I would not completely reject the connection between what Teresa experienced and Teresa herself.

The natal chart would be like one of the characteristics of an atom (A) that would facilitate its connection with another type of atom (B), which could be from other people or given events.

Each atom would move across the universe without following an outlined plan for each particle, but because of many causal chains and chance. The universe would be an ocean of atoms where the combinations that would occur would depend on the luck --or not-- of finding a compatible atom, and this would not be due to synchronicities but to probabilities.

As I am unconvinced about the synchronicity model, I would alternatively propose a circular causality model, which is a typical concept in systemic approaches, where the parts of a system feed off each other.

Hence, following the logic of the atoms, if Teresa was A, her design would provide certain conditions --B--, but Teresa--A- would not cause B because the real reason for the relationship between A and B would be the interaction of several factors.

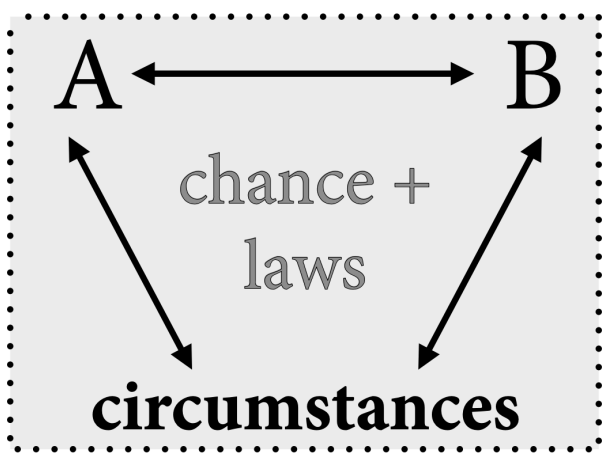
1- the design of A (which would include the natal chart and other non-astrological properties)

2- the design of B (uncertainty or spiritual situations or people with these characteristics).

So far, we could understand there would be a tendency towards the union of A and B but other underlying factors would always be there as well.

3- Circumstances, such as other people, the sociocultural or natural environment, etc., which would define the huge range of possibilities given in a space-time.

4- the laws of nature (causality, probability, etc.) and chance.



Therefore, archetypality would provide us with some meaning, a relationship strength, a union tendency, but many other factors would coexist.

According to a given level of integration (vertical development) and circumstances, it could seem as if a natal chart would favor the attraction of a type of event. However, although I support this idea, I want to highlight that I would always refer to a general type of experiences, experiences with a very variable spectrum of manifestations (horizontal development) and dependent on the circular causality that is typical in complex systems.

From this perspective, the natal chart can help us find meaning to situations where we lose it. In this case, the work was based on realistically integrating uncertainty and the depth of spiritual practice, suffering, and death, which are phenomena whose meaning I didn't raise in terms of casualty but of opportunity and learning.

Years after we finished therapy with Teresa (16 sessions in total + 1 follow-up session), I started collecting new natal chart cases that were practically identical. If I had had them previously, they would have helped me to better understand this case. During all these

years of consultancies, I found cases of people who had integrated both poles of the opposition and people who had not. Even though my skepticism resists -as any generalization is risky if it is based on anecdotal evidence- I recognize that surprisingly, I met two types of profiles:

1) Those who integrated the Virgo-Piscis axis. For example, I remember some medical doctors who were highly analytic and rigorous but, at the same time, they were very human and interested in multifactorial medical problems whose appearance or resolution was impossible to control. I am also thinking about high-class astrologers who knew how to unite rigorous analysis with symbolic sensitivity.

2) Those who did not integrate Saturn in Piscis. Most of these cases implied tough experiences (Saturn) that impose an uncertain and uncontrollable reality (especially illnesses). Years later, I even discovered the story of the actor Keanu Reeves, whose case I have recently analyzed (Mercadé, 2021b).

Hence, astrology can provide models to follow or avoid, models that could inspire solutions for the clients, and models that allow us to understand underlying problems. This also happens with people who, despite not having the same natal chart, have similar positions<sup>16</sup> that are strong and functional and also interesting to integrate. For example, the writer Herman Hesse had a very strong Moon-Saturn in Piscis (although the other chart positions were different), which is why I think his work could have helped Teresa. This writer studied Theology and developed a deep and complete understanding of spirituality<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> We must be especially cautious here and recall that the parts interact with other parts.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, Saturn in Piscis is also a strong position in cardinals (Polito and Mercadé, 2013), as it suggests effort and accuracy when dealing with the sacred.

We could also have used examples of past clients if the issue was not that philosophical and the thinking of someone like Hesse was not all that useful. In fact, when role models are used, it is preferable to use a model of someone who is closer (and more similar) (Labrador et al., 2005) and not a “superstar.” We achieve this more easily if we talk about someone who we know from therapy or consultancy (a person like our client).

#### **4.4. Integrating maps to understand the territory**

The more interesting material starts here. Here, we need to understand Teresa’s case by triangulating different maps. The astrological map will be crucial for us, but ideally, we should consider others, such as psychological and philosophical maps. Deeply understanding the problem from different angles will facilitate an adequate solution very much.

The aim of the therapy was the integration of the described opposition, and this meant a deep analysis of death, loss, suffering, spirituality, and the meaning of life and, at the same time, we looked for the emotional processing and a non-rational experience of the aforementioned issues. Also, we aimed to know how to differentiate when we were facing something with human proportions, analyzable and controllable in a Virgo way, or, in contrast, when we were trying to impose the human on the transcendent reality, a difference that Teresa was far from identifying and accepting. A person with an integrated Piscis wisdom would have faced the situation flowing with what life had brought her, but Teresa had never applied this coping strategy and, besides, she was not going to apply it to the loss of a son, which is an extremely difficult event to spiritually process because,

as we will see, this type of experience involves our most primitive systems.

The Working Model is an interesting theoretical model to start analyzing this case. It describes the cognitive-affective attachment circuit (Romero, 2013). Teresa was (and probably still is) attached to her son, which is usual due to the instinctive processes that promote and enable maintaining the emotional ties. The attachment system, represented by her Moon in the natal chart, would have suddenly been interrupted, which is something that the attachment behavior tries to avoid at all costs. This would then explain the emotional reactions that appeared, such as pain, frustration or guilt, among others.

On the other hand, this also explains the fact that certain processes related to semantic and implicit memory (the unconscious and the deep memory) were not capable of adapting (whereas the most conscious and superficial memory could indeed easily finish its processes). This could explain how Teresa knew about her son’s death but did not understand it. Astrologically speaking, the Jupiterian (semantic memory) and Mercurial (episodic memory) polarity of the Piscis-Virgo polarity is being shown.

The experience of loss, which we experience in multiple situations (breakups, loss of possessions or status, etc.) is part of our existence and, for this reason, a very intense experience of loss, for example, the loss of someone close, penetrates to the core of our being (Cabodevilla, 2007). Loss is part of life and, at best, it helps us to take advantage of and face life with authenticity, it helps us to grow and to self-realize. It is an experience that reminds us how fragile and vulnerable we are, the fleeting nature of life, our finitude, temporariness, and inexorable destiny. All these conflicts with Teresa and the

omnipotent controlling paradigm she was in. A person with strong Pluto in Virgo could even think that if he did everything perfectly, nothing bad could happen to him, as in the case of someone who believes that by eating a perfect diet, he is immune from developing illnesses, or who thinks that tragedy, although already present, is controllable and becomes obsessed, unsuccessfully seeking thoroughly inefficient solutions.

Loss due to death confronts us with the most radical loneliness, it imposes an empty silence and confronts us with the mystery of life (Cabodevilla, 2007). We are the only species that is aware of his own unavoidable death, and this produces the deepest fears, anxiety, and other completely normal reactions. Death is a taboo in the society we live in, like any painful and disturbing reality, and this tendency will probably increase as the effectiveness of medical treatments against all kinds of diseases and the new promises of immortality (such as the epigenetic treatment) advances. Paradoxically, the unawareness of death leads to the unawareness of life because life includes the certainties of death, pain, suffering, and mystery, no matter how much aversion they produce.

Usually, religious people experience death (their own or their relatives') as less stressful due to the protection conferred by their convictions and rituals, such as prayers, which give meaning and adaptability (Villalba et al. 2012). And this makes sense because God's will underlies everything. Death is the path to eternal life, a better place, and, therefore, separation, which represents death, is "only" a part of this incarnate life, for there is an expectation of a reunion in the afterlife. Unfortunately, all these ideas were useless to

Teresa. She denied believing them; her understanding of these spiritual principles was not profound. Teresa had always been aware that some mothers lose their sons or daughters most tragically, but her faith had remained untouched. Only when tragedy turned into a reality for her did her faith become conditional and personal because the religious principles that she knew how to repeat mentally did not apply to her case. Therefore, this strong cognitive dissonance was another cause of her vital disorientation because she resolved the aforementioned internal conflict by rejecting religion. This only worsened the meaning-of-life crisis and made it more severe. Of course, the therapy's goal was not to help her recover faith in the religion she had professed. However, she could not cope with her situation without the reconstruction of her spiritual cornerstones, which would now be established saturninely; that is, with foundations as real and solid as possible.

We normally say that *Piscis* is a spiritual sign (among many other dimensions), and if we do not explore it in depth in an interdisciplinary way, we cannot understand what this word contains or the person facing us. The approach I present in this paper seeks the profundity underlying the abstract concept. It is not astrology filled with grandiloquent words but astrology with words embodied with understanding and experience. This justifies the fact that astrology necessarily implies knowing and mastering all types of problems that are external to the strictly astrological<sup>18</sup>.

Grief is a completely natural process that allows us to assimilate loss. It includes shock, pain, sadness, rage, guilt, loss of appetite,

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<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the astrologer who shuts himself off from other kinds of knowledge, and astrology is his only weapon, would incur in absurd reductionism.



weight loss, sleep loss, difficulty concentrating, periods of denial, and other features. Grief is a necessarily painful process and there are some complications that could emerge. These difficulties impede opening up to life, love, and happiness.

There are many ways of labeling a non-functional grieving. I think Teresa's grief could probably be a traumatic type of complicated grief (due to the dramatic death, avoidance behavior, and the state of permanent agitation); also an obsessive type (she kept asking excessively metaphysical questions with no answer and beyond her control or ability to contrast); and finally, a chronic type (because her grief hadn't evolved successfully and remained stagnant after two years).

The goal of the therapy was to assist Teresa, in a hard and painful process, promoting effort, courage, flexibility and balance, recovery of values, and connection with a life purpose. Giving enough time is of critical importance. Grieving is a Neptunian<sup>19</sup> process and therefore, pressure is not at all advisable. On the contrary, the therapeutic bond is specially Pisces: it is non-directive, extremely unconditional, and sympathetic. The client should be able to dive down the unlimited ocean of his being. Often, people going through a grieving process feel that the environment is censoring them, and this should not happen during therapy. Here, the Socratic dialogue is usually beneficial because the therapist is not playing the role of possession of truth but the role of an

intelligent, humble, and curious questioning person.

I am going to use William Worden's (1997) method, still a great referent in the grieving treatment, to delve into the therapeutic process<sup>20</sup>.

Worden suggests four tasks to be done during the grieving process:

The first one is accepting the reality of death, facing the fact that the dead person will never come back and that reunion is impossible, at least in this life. The main problem here is denial, which also occurred in Teresa's case to a certain extent because she avoided clearly saying that her son had died. In fact, she had already explained that her son's bedroom remained untouched. Teresa remained trapped in some hypothetical parallel world where Alberto had not suffered the accident, the motorbike had not broken down, he did not go to training that day because he had to study an exam. Talking about the real event in detail was very useful. I thought her strong Virgo energy would facilitate this, but it was harder than I had imagined because Teresa was not emotionally self-connected. In her mind, she was separated from her emotions. Consequently, this task was easier to carry out when we went on to the second task.

The second task consists of identifying and expressing one's emotions, the place with the most important blockage. Although four planets of her natal chart were in the water element, Teresa had been polarized in the Virgo energy, in her Venus in Libra and Jupiter

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<sup>19</sup> It is Neptunian due to transcendental sadness, uncertainty, mystery, state of depression, victimhood, hope, etc. Also, it is mainly Saturnian (accepting reality, lack, and death) and Plutonian (outbreaks, deep pain, void of meaning, coping with numbness, helplessness, taboo). However, due to the fact that tragic loss stirs the foundations of our being, our whole being requires readjusting and therefore, the entire natal chart becomes significant in our analysis.

<sup>20</sup> Moreover, some years ago, I had the chance to talk to him after a conference in Barcelona and thus I could discover his natal chart, where the Sun dispositor in Scorpio and the Moon in Pisces stood out, among other configurations that helped me to better understand the archetypal essence of grieving. When seeking solutions, it is interesting to analyze the natal charts of the "solvers," who virtually always reflect their identity in their tool or philosophy.

in Gemini (all of these are mental and harmonious). The Capricorn rising sign had provided her with the ease to become an authority in her work. Professionally, she had already had experiences that could be described as Lunar and Piscean, such as subordinates who played the victim and unfairly went to their labor unions. She always responded with practical solutions (Virgo) that were not well received by someone who expected to be pitied and saved. In any case, she had always played a technical role and was really hardworking, but her water element was not integrated.

We can therefore see an example of a clear difficulty of connecting with emotionality despite having a lot of water in the natal chart<sup>21</sup>. It was essential to help her connect with her vulnerability seeking depersonalization, universalization, and the legitimacy of her vulnerability, because her Moon in Piscis conjunct Saturn made it very difficult for her to feel differently.

It was also crucial to clarify that finding words to describe her feelings would be difficult. These astrological positions require indirect and non-literal forms of expression. It was hard for her to speak in a way that was not concrete, descriptive, and direct. Thus, it was important to integrate abstract concepts that would allow her to philosophize, enter the metaphysics of the world's soul, the dreams of a symbolically ventriloquist world. We started by establishing a vocabulary for all these concepts, and the Virgo-Piscis opposition became naturally integrated.

At this point, we worked on some emotions allowing her to connect with them, feel them,

and talking about them. During that period, I applied some techniques<sup>22</sup> from EMDR, which is very useful for traumatic experiences. It basically consisted of processing emotions that had not been processed. This was done through exposure and bilateral stimulation and accompanied by moments of resignification of the finally processed experiences. Alberto's death had invalidated many parts of Teresa's mental structure in order to face reality. Thus, resignification meant constructing a base for her to recover the meaning of her life.

During this stage, connecting with sadness was an important task so she could vent without judgment. This allowed her to go over memories or talk with her son, using techniques such as the empty chair. Teresa kept telling me she felt sadder than when she had started the therapy but she calmed down when I explained to her that this was normal because it meant she was becoming profoundly aware of reality. She was unblocking from that emotional limbo into which she neither entered nor did she go out.

In grieving, it is crucial to leave room for pain in order to process what has happened so that we can later release it and embrace life. As García-Monge (2010) states: "Pain fits in our life, but our entire life does not fit in our pain."

Other emotions, such as blame, uncertainty and loneliness, started to come out.

To cope with guilt, it is sufficient to rationalize it because it is highly irrational. Nevertheless, it was not as simple as thinking (with common sense) that nobody was to blame, that senseless fate could occur. Teresa was opposed to this idea because she was holding

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<sup>21</sup> Other times natives of natal charts without the presence of the water element can be very emotional because if they have the moon in the AC or conjunct to the Sun, this would ease emotional connection. We must be very careful not to rush drawing general conclusions from individual analysis.

<sup>22</sup> Brain Integration Technique (BIT)

on to spiritual principles such as “There is a reason for everything.” As I said, Teresa was in a crisis concerning her religion and had rejected the idea that her son’s death was a consequence of God’s divine plan. She expected to find an explanation in spiritual principles of alternative spiritualities, where everything happens for a reason, due to some kind of synchronicity. Now, I regret this because I don’t think it was a good idea to insist (she energetically placed me in a too invasive Sagittarius role). I made a passionate philosophical defense of the possibility of the existence of randomness in the universe and that there were also connections between events that were causally disconnected to each other (events that were the consequence of independent causal chains) but that would causally coincide at a particular point (which would be an accident).

However, Teresa insisted on finding a hidden meaning to the accident (that would turn it into causality). That’s why she wanted us to look at the astrological transits, but I recommended her not to do it because it would reinforce her paradigm of obsessively seeking explanations for everything instead of stoically accepting the reality presented by life. Philosophically speaking, I thought there were two clear and obvious possibilities: 1) that there was a hidden meaning but which was also hidden from our capacity (which would justify Teresa’s arguments although it was not exactly what she was seeking) or 2) that this particular event was the result of chance. A third possibility, as Teresa wanted to think --a hidden meaning that she could discover--was, in my opinion, desperate, a defense mechanism to cope with stress and uncertainty as well as an attempt to perpetuate the situation masochistically and agonizingly. Nowadays, I think that I would have handled this point more humbly and

empathically through the Socratic dialogue to kindly show Teresa the inconsistencies of her speech, the secondary gains of her beliefs, and finally, how we were moving away from the agreed therapeutical objectives, such as acceptance and building a meaning to life (and not searching).

Teresa also suffered from loneliness because she did not feel understood, which is why she felt great relief in our sessions. Also, her environment became much more receptive to openly talk about all kinds of subjects as soon as they perceived that Teresa was moving on and she was not obsessed with the same things.

The third task during grief is to learn to live without the presence of the deceased person. It is adapting to the new reality. Here, you need to explore the internal and external adjustments that need to be done about everything that has changed. It includes paying attention to the tasks of the deceased person and how they could be done now (for example, presenting income tax declaration). However, in the case of Alberto, they were simple tasks. However, it took time to identify that Teresa shared memories and worries about her other sons (Alberto’s brothers) and relatives with Alberto. Alberto had nurtured Teresa’s moon and was a stimulus of her intimacy and family dimension. Therefore, making her aware of all this was another significant factor that helped us explain her loneliness and helped her adjust to her new reality.

Teresa also needed to adjust at an identity level because now, she was the mother of two and not three sons. Of course, she would always be Alberto’s mother; she could even spend moments in this activated role, but she had to make an important adjustment here because grieving implies “detaching from the

beloved one without giving up his memory” (Cabodevilla, 2009). Even at a social level, she was “the mother who had lost her son in an accident” and this was felt as a stigma by her. This didn’t seem very important in comparison to other adjustments. Still, her Venus in Libra made it an important factor (and hard to recognize) to be addressed for the recovery of her social life, which, because of her Jupiter in Gemini, would provide her with a lot of meaning.

The most challenging adjustments were spiritual adjustments and adjustments in values and beliefs, a lot of which were destroyed. Our first sessions with Teresa allowed her to release her obsessions (she made analyses that were typical of a quantum metaphysician). Later, we could make adjustments to her beliefs. Astrologically speaking, factors related to analysis and meaning, such as Mercury or Jupiter, plus all the stellium in Virgo<sup>23</sup>, made me intuit hard work in this sense.

It was very useful to brainstorm the meanings of Teresa’s personal world, past motivations, trying to open up many options of what had motivated her in the past. That is, when we realized that she was moving without direction even before the accident, working at her job by inertia, and refusing to work in what she really enjoyed (alternative therapies). I don’t think our job must necessarily fulfill us because I consider it a dangerous idea due to its elitism and idealism. I think it is a great privilege to engage in activities that fulfill us in our spare time. Teresa enjoyed learning about different types of jobs, mainly related to physical health and alternative therapies. With such an amount of Virgo in her natal chart, also because of the opposition with Piscis, it

was easy to conclude that the field of health, service, and helping had always been there (they were important values for her).

You convince a Jupiter in Gemini by talking to her with humility and being able to deal with many different viewpoints. For this reason, Socratic dialogue became useful, making her think about how the same events could be interpreted from different philosophical approaches. For example, she connected very well at an emotional level with existentialism, a Plutonian intellectual movement that describes an absurd universe, lacking meaning, a whole existence without any transcendental matters that would guarantee a scale of values, a path, good and evil. Intellectually speaking, she felt far from this thinking, but not emotionally. This was more proof that she had not deeply processed (implicit and semantic memory) what she intellectually knew (explicit and episodic memory). Reading Viktor Frankl prepared the ground and helped to go from the existential void to the will to create a life with meaning. We talked a lot about attachment, Bowlby’s theory, Kubler-Ross, near-death experiences (NDEs), esoteric theories such as theosophy or anthroposophy, Christian and Islamic mysticism, and Greek philosophy. This process led to very positive results: 1) she experienced the emotion of intellectual pleasure, which allowed her to connect with something essential for her, and 2) I could represent her Jupiter and hence, be perceived as someone who, as a philosopher, knew something that would help in the moments when I had to persuade her, especially when I had to firmly bring up some basic principles such as the fact that death is the destiny of all

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<sup>23</sup> As I stated previously, I don’t interpret the twelve houses in a conventional way; thus, I would not consider houses like 3 or 9.

humans sooner or later and without exception<sup>24</sup>.

Many of Teresa's adjustments were moral, related to her right to be free, choose her own way, not be the slave of a morale that ruled that she couldn't be happy, smile or enjoy herself ever again, couldn't open up to life, connect with herself, connect with other people, and experience love. I can't remember how much crying she needed, how many goodbyes in the form of tears.

The fourth and last task that Worden proposes is emotional relocation of the deceased in the new life. This task represents the final stage. Teresa created a weekly routine where she talked with Alberto and told him about his siblings. She created a small altar that helped her to connect with him. Here we can see clear signs of the integration of the Piscis symbolic universe, a lunar bond beyond death, a sacred and mature tie, a relationship with the afterlife that still remains today. It is interesting to realize that rituals are one of the many ways to integrate the Virgo-Piscis axis because both signs integrate the Virgo sequentiality, concretion, and order on the one hand, and the Piscis spirituality and symbolism on the other hand.

At this point, Teresa had returned to her life in an emotionally calm way (it took us 16 sessions) and she was intellectually and socially active again. Of course, she was not the same person anymore, as she was now much more sensitive (more "watery"). The integration of the opposition motivated her to

write (as well as engage in other creative activities), to help and support disadvantaged populations (such as the "menas"<sup>25</sup>) through NGOs while connecting with values like service and other related ones such as loving dedication and unconditional affection. This way, she recovered meaning, developed a much more mature and profound spirituality, with mystery finally integrated, believing in an unfathomable destiny and building meaning for her life and Alberto's death.

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<sup>24</sup> I could dare to say that death is necessary for our evolution, for guaranteeing a long life to humanity because human beings, over time, are prone to becoming rigid and stagnant, and incapable of adapting to the new times.

We, human beings, are for humanity the same as cells are for our body, cells that keep dying and being born to keep the body alive. In other words, the youth-maturity dialectics allow humanity to flexibly and solidly advance, with its crises and conflicts, its great milestones and innovations, its securities and learnings. Yes, it is death that makes humanity's long life possible, a life that really matters, a life in which living has a meaning.

<sup>25</sup> Protected foreign minors who entered Spain illegally, and who suffer from discrimination and racism. The lack of resources and support makes them highly vulnerable.

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