

## **An Introduction to Progressions and Directions**

It is rare to find an astrologer who only uses transits for purposes of prediction. To accompany transits, different astrologers rely on different predictive techniques, such as eclipses and solar returns. Those of us of a more traditional bent may add yearly profections. This essay gives a quick survey of important predictive devices that many astrologers use: progressions and directions. I will then slide back in time and we will examine the ancient origins of these techniques.

### **Secondary Progressions**

The majority of today's astrologers use secondary progressions. This technique advances all planets so that each day of planetary movement corresponds to each-year of life.

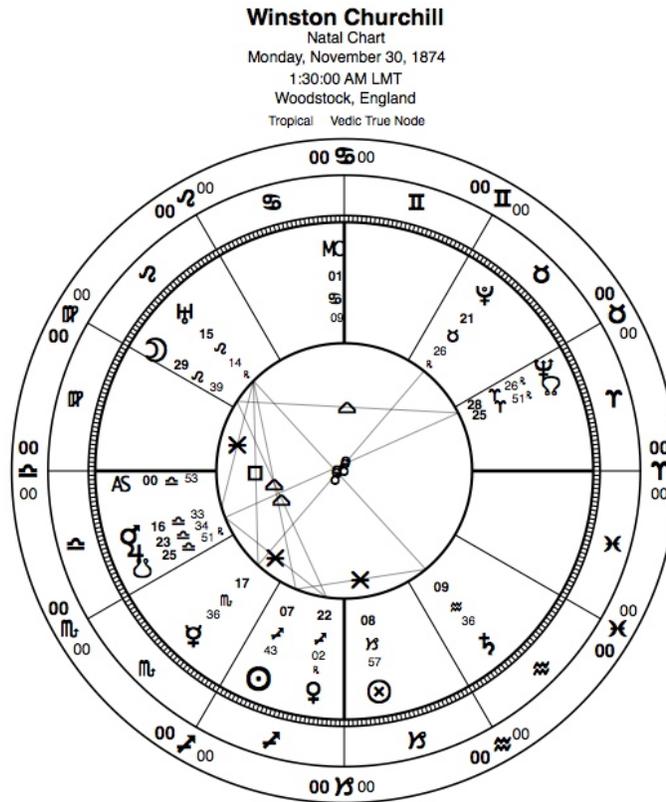
To many people that sounds a bit weird, since we tend to think of time as one continuum. According to the modern astrological view of time, however, all cycles have the same structure and one can illuminate another. The days after ones birth can be magnified to subsume the years in one's life.

At this moment, I am fifty-one years and five months old. To find my secondary progressed positions, one would find the planets' locations fifty-one days and ten hours after their positions at my birth. (If, in secondary progressions, 12 months of the year is 24 hours, then 1 month is 2 hours.)

Why are these progressions called "secondary"? This brings us back to the two motions contained in the astrological chart. The secondary motion is the motion counterclockwise, west to east, in the direction of the zodiac, which captures the movements of the planets at their own rates of speed. By secondary motion, the Moon travels through the zodiac in twenty-eight days, Saturn in twenty-nine years, and Pluto in about 260 years. This is contrasted with the "primary" movement, which is from east to west and is the diurnal cycle.

I use the chart of Winston Churchill, for whom the different predictive techniques that we examine yield interesting information.

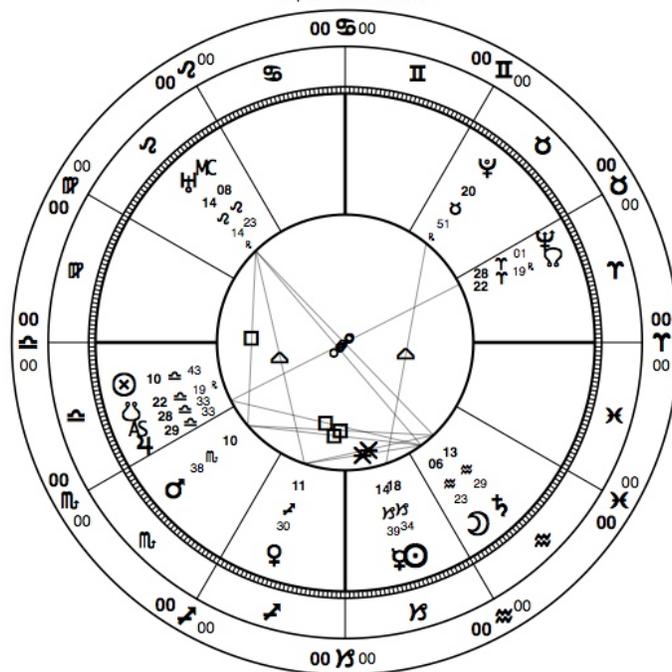
Here is his natal chart.



We begin with his terrible year 1915. He was the Minister of the Admiralty and was blamed for a botched attempt by England to end the First World War by a naval expedition through the Dardenelles. Eventually he had to leave the government and he spent the rest of the war outside of a policy position, to his heartbreak. . Below is his progressed chart for this time.

### Winston Churchill

Naibod Secondary  
January 15, 1915  
12:14:30  
Woodstock, England  
Tropical Vedic True Node



Winston Churchill was forty years old during his terrible year; his secondary progressions would move all his planets forty days. Since his birthday was at the end of November the previous year, three hours to the middle of January 1915.

Comparing this chart with Churchill's natal chart, you will notice that the planets from Jupiter and out move hardly at all; if *in forty days* they move but a little, they will move just so little by progression. The Sun has moved roughly one degree a year, from 7 Sagittarius to 18 Capricorn. Mercury had moved quickly, passing his Sun and now well ahead of it in the zodiac. Venus, having turned retrograde and direct, is 11 degrees *behind* its position in the natal chart. The Moon, moving roughly a degree a month, conforming to its daily movement of about thirteen degrees a day, had gone around the zodiac once and was now at the opposite sign from its natal position. .

Of these progressed positions, what is most interesting to us? During this year, progressed Moon was moving toward a square to Mars. After a sextile to Venus, Moon becomes conjunct Saturn, then opposite Uranus. The progressed Moon can give us the timing of occasions during the year.

More important is that the Moon is in opposition to the progressed Midheaven, and also that the progressed Ascendant, conjunct Jupiter, opposes Neptune. The former can show a division between Churchill and authority – which is ironic because he *was* authority at that time – except that he lost his job *being* the authority. The latter configuration pictures one whose grandiosity (Jupiter) is based on illusion and wrong thinking (Neptune).

How do we calculate the progressed angles? I will hold off on that for now.

Next we look at Churchill's progressions for May 1940, when he became Prime Minister of England and began to conduct his country's war against Hitler.

### Winston Churchill

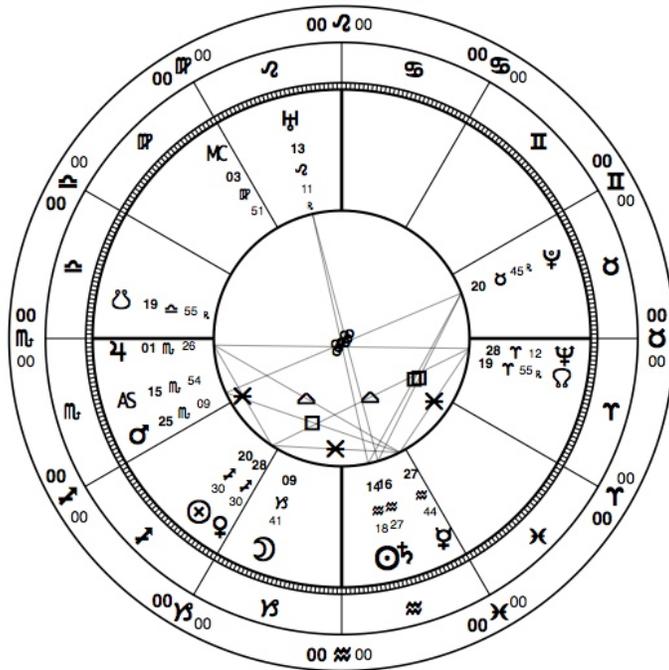
Naibod Secondary

May 6, 1940

19:08:57

Woodstock, England

Tropical Vedic True Node



There are many changes in Churchill's life and by progression during the twenty-five years between 1915 and 1940. In 1915, he was at the beginning of a Sun-Moon cycle -- as Sun was in Capricorn and Moon moving away from the Sun in Aquarius. 1940, as you can see, is at toward the end this Sun-Moon cycle. (Churchill will have a progressed new Moon in mid-war.)

In 1940, by progression, his Sun is involved with Saturn and Uranus, by conjunction and opposition. In 1915 it was his Moon. The Sun is the more active and intentional planet; displaying that Churchill was more in control of his own fate although facing enormous difficulties. Progressed Mercury, applying to Neptune by sextile, gives us some sense of the voice he was able to give to the war effort.

## Solar Arc Directions

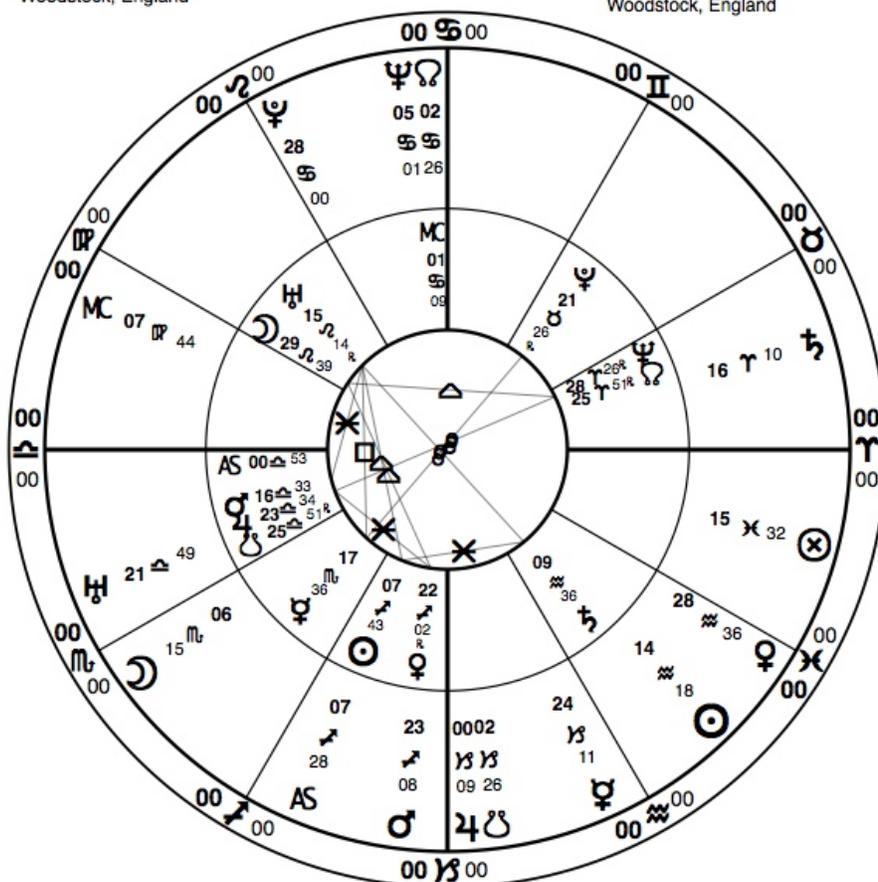
Let us now set up a contrast with Churchill's solar arc directions for this time in 1940. One will note that the Sun is in the same position as in his secondary progressions for this time, but everything else is different.

A direction is not just about cycles: we advance all planets and angles the same distance as the Sun has moved by progression. When I turned fifty, the Sun by progression had moved about the same number of degrees. By solar arc, *everything*, from Ascendant to Saturn to Pluto, moves at the same speed.

For secondary progressions one examines progressed positions and how these positions aspect *other* progressed planets and angles. (Some astrologers, however, do look at progressed positions and their relationship to natal positions similar to transits.) For solar arcs directions, the directed planets and angles are always in the same positions relative to one another. Here we only use aspects that directed positions make to *natal* positions. In the chart below, everything moves 66.5 degrees. You see that it is properly presented as a biwheel with the natal chart.

**Winston Churchill**  
**Reference Chart**  
 Natal Chart  
 November 30, 1874  
 1:30:00 AM LMT  
 Woodstock, England

**Winston Churchill**  
**2nd Chart**  
 Solar Arc Direction  
 May 6, 1940  
 19:12:12  
 Woodstock, England



What is interesting here? One sees here a major factor: the directed Ascendant has moved to a conjunction with Sun, and the directed Midheaven forms a square to the Sun. The Ascendant and Midheaven are the two most important personal points in the chart, summarizing the presence of the native and his or her activity. Both positions contact his Sun, the planet of leadership. Noting that Sun is also conjunct the fixed star Antares, this is a perfect configuration for one to become leader during warlike. Here we see a major event in his life triggered by the arcing Ascendant and Midheaven.

Modern astrologers tend to use secondary progressions and solar arc directions differently. Secondary progressions are often used to highlight turning points or climate changes in a person's life: if a person's Sun moves by progression from Aries to Taurus, gradually one will see this person's Sun taking on some Taurus qualities. These kinds of changes also occur when a planet changes sign or is at a direct or retrograde station, or when an aspect (particularly between Sun and Moon) becomes exact. Solar arc directions are more often used to predict discrete events, intentional or accidental. When one is unsure of a person's birth time, solar arc directions are often used to "rectify" the chart by looking at the timing of singular events in a person's life. When we look at the legacy ancient astrology we directions also used in both ways.

With solar arc directions, the movements of the Ascendant and Midheaven are the same as everything else. We find things more complex when we return to secondary progressions. This serves as a way to approach the ancient tradition.

### **Progressed Angles and Ascensions**

When I was first studying secondary progressions, a point of bewilderment arose: if the entire chart moves around during an entire day, why does the Midheaven progress about a degree a year and the Ascendant progresses an average of a degree a year? I thought that the angles would be constantly moving, reflecting the moving angles going full circle in a day.

It turns out that the progressed angles move not according to the secondary motion through the zodiac but according to the primary -- diurnal -- motion. (The exception to this is Quotidian Secondary Progressions, which move the angles all the way around during a year and whose angles can be used to time specific events during the year.)

How do we progress the angles according to the diurnal motion? The simple answer is by noting how many degrees cross the Midheaven during the time it takes an area of the zodiac to rise -- to cross the line of the Ascendant.

It takes about four minutes for a degree to cross the Midheaven, and a degree equals one year of person's life. But now the question becomes: *a degree of what?*

The degrees over the Midheaven vary slightly - the Naibod method averages out this variation so that the rate of change of the Midheaven is constant throughout a day and, by progression, through a person's years. Some astrologers use the average in zodiacal longitude; I use the more popular alternative, which averages the equatorial degrees: Right Ascension.

The moving degrees of the Midheaven conform to how the time of day moves according to the rotation of the earth, which we measure by the terrestrial version of Right Ascension - our familiar longitude. A planet in square by RA to the Midheaven will take six hours to culminate: this is because one hour of time is equivalent to fifteen degrees of Right Ascension, and fifteen times six gives a ninety degree distance from the Midheaven. Our conventional time zones are apart by about fifteen degrees of longitude, to make up a 360-degree circle in twenty-four hours. If you want to calculate when the Sun will rise in Boston and in Los Angeles, subtract the longitudes of the two cities - their distance from each other from the reference of the Midheaven -- and multiply that by four minutes for each degree of difference.

Compared to the steady movement of degrees over the Midheaven, the degrees of the Ascendant vary widely, based upon the location in the zodiac. "Ascensional times" are how many degrees cross the Midheaven during the rising of a sign of the zodiac. They are called ascensional *times* because one degree over the Midheaven equals four minutes of time, and fifteen degrees equals one hour.

In the northern hemisphere, an Ascendant in Pisces and Aries rise in the shortest times, and are called signs of "shortest ascension". Virgo and Libra rise

in the longest time and signs of “longest ascension”. The pairings of Aries/Pisces, Taurus/Aquarius, Gemini/Capricorn, Cancer/Sagittarius, Leo/Scorpio, and finally Virgo and Libra all rise in equal amounts of time, going from the fewest to the most degrees over the Midheaven as they rise. The ancients called these “equally ascending zoidia,” and modern astrologer deem these symmetries from the 0 Aries – 0 Libra axis “contra-antiscia.”

Ascensional times also depend on the latitude of the place of birth. The closer one is to the equator, the closer are the ascensional times to one another; the further north or south, the further they will be apart.

Churchill’s chart is a good illustration of higher latitudes, since he was born in the 52<sup>nd</sup> parallel of latitude. If you look back at his solar arc directions for 1940, we advance all positions, including the Ascendant and Midheaven, by that of the progressed Sun: 66.5 degrees. By secondary progression, however, Churchill’s Ascendant has moved only 47 degrees! With an Ascendant at 00 Libra, the degrees of the zodiac following his Ascendant will rise most slowly, equaled only by those on the other side of 00 Libra, the last half of Virgo. If, however, Churchill was born with an Ascendant at 0 Aries, the Ascendant progression would move all the way into Gemini by the time he was twenty!

Continuing our topic of the progressed ascendant, I now introduce another possibility for directions: instead of directing by the progressed Sun, one could direct *by the progressed Ascendant*. This option is available in the Solar Fire computer program. It is not popular but has an interesting rationale: the primacy of the Ascendant itself in the natal chart. What is the symbolism of the Ascendant?

You should consider that the Ascendant itself is the place of connectedness between the rhythms of the sky and reality of our being on this earth. One could say, in the spirit of the twentieth-century astrologer Dane Rudhyar, that the Ascendant is the place of *incarnation* on this planet. The Ascendant serves well to be the reference for the beginning of our lives and, by

direction, for the end of our lives. For this to occur we need to compare the Ascendant of birth with the necessary rhythms of the day cycle. This is what using ascensional times are doing.

Churchill's Ascendant-directed chart directs all positions 47 degrees, in conformity with the movement of his Ascendant at his latitude. Importantly, this Ascendant and also the Midheaven are configured with *Mercury*. During the previous year, his Moon directed to degree of his natal Mars, denoting the beginning of a warlike time for him. At the time Churchill became Prime Minister, within a day, Venus directed to conjunct his Saturn: his personal life would be in cold storage for many years afterwards.

The directed Ascendant, 47 degrees after the natal Ascendant, is one degree past Mercury's position, and in January, 1939, sixteen months before becoming Prime Minister, the Ascendant was exactly conjunct his natal Mercury. Midheaven was in exact square to his Mercury eight months earlier. About a year before becoming Prime Minister, Ascendant-directed Moon moved to a conjunction with his natal Mars. Close to the day he became Prime Minister, Ascendant-directed Venus was conjunct Saturn. Unlike with Churchill's solar arc directions, one does not get discrete events from aspects becoming exact but the beginning of different phases in his life. This is a factor that would strongly interest ancient astrologers, although they used a form of directing akin but significantly different from Ascendant-arc directions.

### **How did the ancients handle all this?**

Well, they handled it differently. They were less concerned with the ascensions of a continuous part of the zodiac but of the twelve individual signs or zodia. Ascensional Times measure how many degrees of ecliptical longitude – not Right Ascension -- cross the Midheaven when a sign or zoidion rises. This is the origin of our modern directions and profections.

Supplied by the *Delphic Oracle* computer program, here are the ascensional times for the twelve signs or zodia for Winston Churchill's chart:

Aries and Pisces: 12.91 years

Taurus and Aquarius: 17.01 years

Gemini and Capricorn: 26.52 years

Cancer and Sagittarius: 37.85 years

Leo and Scorpio: 42.81 years

Virgo and Libra: 42.90 years

Churchill was born in England at almost 52 degrees latitude, and so there is great variation in the ascensional times for the different zodia. With current British Prime Minister Tony Blair, born in Scotland, it's more extreme:

Aries/Pisces is small 10.43 and Virgo/Libra an enormous 45.39. Muhammad Ali, born in Kentucky, has ascensional times for Aries/Pisces at 18.70 and Virgo/Libra at 37.12 – the differences are narrower for him, as he was born farther to the south than our two English Prime Ministers.

What would one do with this information?

Vettius Valens, an important Second Century astrologer, added the ascensional time for zodia and numbers for planets. (The numbers of the planets are Saturn 30, Jupiter 12, Mars 15, Sun 19, Venus 8, Mercury 20, and Moon 25). Putting these different numbers may indicate when a natal position might give its greatest results. Valens took more abstract numbers for the zoidion's ascensions; instead, we might round up. For example, the ascension of Sagittarius is Churchill's 38<sup>th</sup> year. Churchill has Sun and Venus in Sagittarius: this adds 19 and 8 years for these two planets. This places the maturation of Sun and Venus and Sagittarius when he was 67, in the middle of the Second World War.

This is a technique completely alien to any modern astrologer. For that reason we should give it a closer look.

The more common use of ascensional times is for the purposes of directing important positions in a chart, *even if these positions are far off the Ascendant*. This would include the Midheaven itself. This is commonly known as “circumambulation,” the Greek is *peripatos*, a walking around.

The important positions directed were the Ascendant, Midheaven, Sun, Moon, and Part of Fortune. In the case of determining the length of one’s life, one would also move the planets that are responsible for the number of years. (One would also look at various numbers attached to the planet.)

The technique is simple. Pretending that you were also born in Boston with an Ascendant at 00 Capricorn but with Saturn at 15 Aquarius, one would take the Ascensional time of the entirety of Capricorn (28.45) and half of Aquarius ( $21.03 / 2 = 10.51$ ). Add 28.45 and 10.51 together and you have determined that fewer than 40 degrees would have passed over the Midheaven in the time it would take Saturn to rise from its position in this birth chart. This might determine a life expectancy of just less than 40 years. Looking for contacts between directed and natal positions is very much like our modern use of solar arc directions.

Using this method, there is a great variety in the lengths of time to circumambulate different parts of the zodiac – this is especially so at high northern or southern latitudes. Once again, we are directing positions *as if it was the Ascendant*.

The next use of circumambulation is more difficult for the modern astrologer: aspects of these moving positions to the planets in the chart will yield these planets as time lords or *chronocrators*, until the circumambulation takes the following aspect. It is important to note that these aspects will not be within the degrees of the zodiac – that 60 degrees apart in longitude make a sextile – but that a sextile is 60 ascensional times apart. Sixty degrees of ascension would be four hours of time (24 hours divided by 6 is 4 hours), if this position were

continuously on the Ascendant. (I am beginning to anticipate Ptolemy's different formulation.)

Because we're calculating from the Midheaven using degrees of the zodiac and not Right Ascension, calculations between ascendant-arc directions and ascensional times yield different results. According to ascensional times, Churchill's Ascendant crossed Mercury at the end of 1942. Because his Midheaven of Cancer has fewer ascensional times, the Midheaven was in square to Mercury five years earlier, in 1937. Two years later, in 1939, the directed Sun was in square to Mercury. In other words, the planetary lords for AS, MC, and Sun were *all Mercury* during the Second World War. This is befitting a person whose wartime speeches are considered historical and literary achievements.

Depending on the frequency of aspects, a position can quickly change planetary lords or have the same planetary lord for a very long time. Perhaps for that reason circumambulations also took these positions through the bounds of the signs or zoidion they were moving through. (The bounds consist of five segments within each sign or zoidion that is governed by one of the five visible starry planets.) This provides a supplementary planetary lord, and perhaps one that would be considered the more important of the two.

Circumambulations that are based upon ascensional times were prevalent throughout the Hellenistic tradition of astrology. Some astrologers, Ptolemy in particular, felt that the different positions in the natal chart had different risings due to where they were in the chart: a position at the Midheaven should move at the rate of the one degree per year, not based on ascensional time.

Here is the difficulty: when a position is not on the Ascendant, could you use something closer to its true diurnal motion for direction? Take a moment and return to Churchill's natal chart: his Moon is 29 degrees of Leo, fifty degrees from his Midheaven at 01 Cancer. How long would it take his Moon to rise, to reach the Midheaven? This comes close to four hours. Using ascensional times for

Cancer and Leo, how long would it take? Cancer's ascensional times for Churchill's latitude is 37.85, for Leo it is 42.81. The total ascensions between the Moon and Midheaven are about 80 times. If one ascension is four minutes of time, it should take 320 minutes for the Moon to culminate, which is 5 hours and 20 minutes, 80 minutes more than the true time it would take for the Moon to culminate.

This quandary is the origin of Ptolemy's reform of circumambulations and the systems of primary directions that developed in the centuries after him. Most importantly to us, *this is the basis of some of our most popular quadrant systems of house division.*

A fuller explication of Ptolemy's reform will have to wait for another time. It is very likely that our present system of secondary progressions was a simplification of a technique that had grown increasingly complex over the centuries after Ptolemy. Indeed, the calculations of the progressed angles bear the mark of their origins in ancient astrology.