

QUOTIENT STRUCTURES AND THE SABIAN SYMBOLS

One of the greatest astrologers of the 20th century was Marc Edmund Jones, PhD (1888 – 1980). Dr. Jones made immense contributions to our understanding of modern astrology and its application, but today he is also known for his part in the creation of the *Sabian symbols*. The Sabian symbols are a collection of psychic interpretations for of the 360° of the zodiac. The name *Sabian* was initially used in connection with a series of classes that Dr. Jones began to teach in 1920, and the name itself was picked by the students. In retrospect it has also been explained as referring to a religious sect mentioned in the *Koran* as being contemporaneous with Christians and Jews, an Aramaic word related to “baptism,” and as a modern version of the Hebrew word for “hosts” as in the appellation “Lord of hosts.” One of the students in this group was a young woman named Elise Wheeler who was confined to a wheelchair due to severe arthritis, but who was also a very talented psychic. Hence, they met one day in 1925 in San Diego’s Balboa Park, and for the next few hours Dr. Jones would place a randomly chosen card face down that had a degree of the zodiac on its unseen down face, and Ms. Wheeler would then give a terse psychic explanation of that degree. After the initial presentation, a few of the degrees were revisited and changes were made, but eventually the final project was published to become what we know today as the Sabian symbols. Also, the Sabian symbols are not the first attempt to find meanings in the individual degrees of the zodiac, for example Chaubel (1826-1908) did his own, but they, the Sabian symbols, are certainly the most popular interpretation of individual degrees and the most widely used today.

The Sabian symbols are important to us because they are, of course, yet another example of quotient structures in astrology. Specifically, they are, of course, a 1st harmonic where every degree that is equivalent *modulo* 360 is seen as the same., and this results in us wrapping back to 0° once we hit 360°. However, there is another important way in which quotient structures appear in these symbols. Namely, in that every fraction of a degree leading up to that degree point is identified with that particular degree. In other words, if θ is an angle such that $0^\circ < \theta \leq 1^\circ$ in any sign, then θ is associated with the Sabian symbol for 1° in that sign. Similarly, if $0^\circ < \theta \leq 2^\circ$ in any sign, then θ is associated with the Sabian symbol for 2° in that sign and so on, and in general if $(n - 1)^\circ < \theta \leq n^\circ$, then the Sabian symbol for θ is the interpretation for n° in the particular zodiac sign. Consequently, the differences between the various angles θ in the interval $(n - 1)^\circ < \theta \leq n^\circ$ are divided out, and all the angles in this interval become equivalent to one another. We could also say that we are modeling the infinite number of points on a circle with this finite sampling of just 360, and then we are assigning an interpretation to each of these 360 points. And that is how quotient structures appear in this construct!

Do the Sabian symbols actually work? Are they anything other than the ramblings of a misguided psychic? Well, what I can say for certain is that they are very intriguing and that they always stimulate thought, and that in itself makes them very worthwhile. As an example, the closest aspect in my chart is Chiron at 12° Capricorn in opposition to my Uranus at 12° Cancer, and the respective Sabian symbols for these points are *Natural wonders are depicted in a lecture on science* and *A Chinese woman nursing a baby haloed by divine light*. It may be just a coincidence brought on by ambiguity, but nonetheless, I find these interpretations very meaningful when applied to my own quest for enlightenment, and, thus, I have to conclude that the Sabian symbols are quite useful even if they do turn out to be nothing more than an arbitrary fiat!