

JUNO

Nagging Wife or Divine Consort?

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At the beginning of the 19th century, several small planets or asteroids were discovered orbiting between Mars and Jupiter. The first asteroids to be discovered were named after four major Olympian goddesses – Ceres, Juno, Vesta and Pallas Athene. All were important in Greek mythology, overseeing the important initiations and stages of life and interestingly enough, their cults predate those of their male counterparts. Prior to the discovery of these asteroids, astrologers recognised only two female archetypes - the Moon (woman as mother and nurturer) and Venus (woman as seductress and lover). As they began to use the asteroids in chart interpretation, the cults of these ancient goddesses were rediscovered and celebrated. The rise of the feminine had begun!

This month we examine the mythology and astrological symbolism of the Roman goddess and asteroid Juno, discovered in 1804. Juno is the goddess of marriage and was celebrated each year at the festival of Matronalia - origin of the slightly derogatory word 'matron' referring to a rather staid middle-aged woman. In fact the Matronalia festival was not about matrons at all, but a joyous celebration of motherhood and women in general. Women received gifts and prayers from their husbands and children, while female slaves were given the day off and had food prepared for them. Perhaps Matronalia was the original Mother's Day?

Juno was the highest ranking goddess in the Roman pantheon, wife and consort of her brother Jupiter, king of the gods. The month of June was named after her and in Europe is still the most popular month for weddings. One ancient custom says that a marriage consummated at the full moon in June will last for a lifetime! The Romans worshipped Juno for her beauty, fidelity and personification of the ideal wife. Each woman had her own guardian spirit named Juno, who guided her through marriage, childbirth and motherhood.

This same royal couple were known to the Greeks as Zeus (king of the gods) and Hera, the triple moon goddess and queen of the heavens who presided over the three stages of a woman's life - maiden, mother and crone. When Hera married the new Roman sky god Jupiter, she became the goddess Juno, her role to initiate women into the rites of sexuality and marriage. Juno symbolises woman as good wife and citizen, upholding tradition, social customs and duties. Interestingly, the 2007 American-Canadian movie 'Juno' deals with the issues surrounding a teenage pregnancy where a 'maiden' is suddenly faced with an unplanned transition to motherhood.

Unfortunately the 'marriage' between Juno and Jupiter was not a happy one. Jupiter was a philandering husband who took numerous lovers, both mortal and immortal

and fathered dozens of children outside his marriage. In fact the stories of the battles between Juno and Jupiter rival any modern day soap opera. Juno however did not sit by while Jupiter engaged in his numerous affairs. She took revenge on her husband's lovers, but rarely on her husband. Not wanting to risk her role in society and devoted to the sanctity of the union, she protected Jupiter and remained outwardly the diligent and devoted wife. Her traditional pathology of jealousy, dissatisfaction and rage stems from the way she was treated. We can see the parallel in modern day marriages where some wives prefer to keep up appearances and maintain their role in society, regardless of what really goes on behind the scenes. There may be affairs, there may be deceit, there may be no sex, but the important thing is that Mr and Mrs X are seen by others as the perfect couple.

Juno is symbolic of woman's quest to find equality with her partner. Hera was an ancient goddess long before she married and her cult was so powerful that unlike the other goddesses, Zeus could not dominate her and so settled for an equal relationship. The Pluto in Libra generation (born 1971-1983) are transforming the notion of equality in relationship, with many women from this age group choosing not to bear children, while many of their male counterparts shy away from the traditional responsibilities of providing for a family or saving to buy a home.

In the birth chart Juno represents our capacity for meaningful relationship and what we seek in a soul mate. Her placement shows how we deal with issues such as jealousy and power struggles in relationships and how we fight for equality. Juno through the zodiac signs describes the twelve different styles of relating and how we meet our emotional needs.

For those wishing to read more on this interesting topic, I recommend Demetra George's excellent book *Asteroid Goddesses*.