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Article by Willi Sucher, June 1938

HOROSCOPES OF BIRTH AND DEATH

When we recall how the people of the Middle Ages looked up to the starry heavens, we have the impression that the stars at that time spoke a language we were still able to understand. Slowly, however, the language of the stars was reduced to silence; even during the Middle Ages it was partly so. Increasingly, the sublime wisdom of the stars of olden time died into mere tradition, to the mere handing-down of old and, to some extent, newly added rules. This is the point of utter silence we have reached today.

On the other hand, as we have seen, through the constellations of death a new relation to the stars has been explored. Fresh spiritual substance is carried out into the cosmos by the human being; the world of stars is thereby, in a certain sense, rejuvenated. Manifold, richly colored, shot through and through with Earth-reality, human destinies are written now into the heavens. We now speak to the stars—at least, we begin to speak,—even as once upon a time the stars spoke to us. This is the great world-turning-point through which humanity is passing, affecting, as it does, all aspects of human life. We must learn to face it with clear consciousness.

The great cosmic Spirit-Man who is revealed when in the mirror of the constellations of death, we consider a whole period of history as we did in last month's article, does not remain only in the outer cosmos as a thing separate from us on Earth. On the contrary, it is intimately connected with the historic course of our earthly evolution. Moreover, with the changing of humanity on Earth, so too the macrocosmic human becomes transformed. It happens in this way: the spiritual substance streaming out from each person through horoscopes of death into the cosmos, comes back again to humanity on Earth in questions and problems of destiny. What former periods and generations carried outward through the horoscopes of death, comes to life again in the horoscopes of birth in later epochs. A given age can only solve the problems of earthly life, taken as a whole, up to a certain point. Never can things be brought to a finish within the earthly life alone. Unending change and transmutation is the destiny of Earth. This also is revealed in the relation of one to the heavens. In the horoscopes of birth of humanity of later times, there is re-born what humanity of former times carried up to a certain point of development.

A historic example may serve to illustrate this. There stands in history the mighty figure of Dante Alighieri, who made an overwhelming impression on the people of the Middle Ages with his great poem, *The Divine Comedy*. We will consider the horoscope of his death (14 September 1321) and see how it reflects his path of destiny.

Dante's life was full of drama; cut across by revolutionary changes and events. In the hidden space of time, his life is comparable to an ellipse with its two foci. The one was in his youth which he describes in his earliest poem *Vita Nuova*. From a certain moment onward, as he tells us, his inner life was centered in that mysterious being whom he calls Beatrice. From the historical records it has never been possible to ascertain who, in the city of Florence where Dante lived, this maiden Beatrice was. Nay, some have even doubted if she existed at all as an earthly being, and whether Beatrice is not an allegorical figure to represent some kind of inner experience.

Dante describes the overwhelming impression she made on his inner life. The deepest emotions were stirred in him when she came near. Above all, her early death became a determining factor in his development. First, it inspired him to tell of his experience with her in the *Vita Nuova*. At the end of the poem he tells how the soul of the dead Beatrice appeared to him in wondrous clarity and promised to open out to him far more in time to come. We are thus brought to the other focal point in Dante's life, the origin and creation of the *Divine Comedy*. Between the two poles there came the time when he worked for his native city and attained high office. But the political revolutions in Florence altered the course of his life. He was obliged to leave, never again to return. For in his absence, sentence of banishment was passed on him. He spent the last twenty years of his life in restless wandering from one city or monastery to another. It was in this time that the *Divine Comedy* rose to its dramatic greatness.

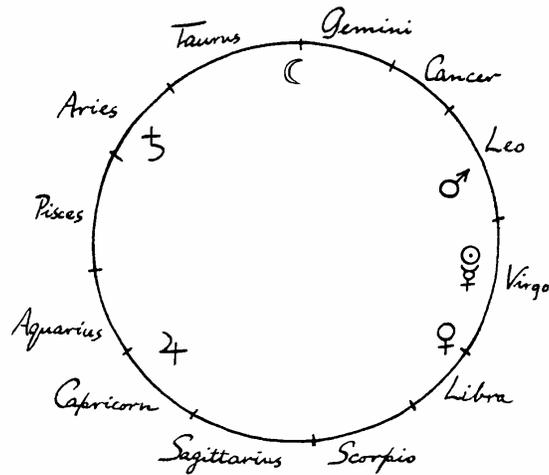


Fig. 1: DANTE - Died 14 September 1321

Now we discover the signature of these two poles in Dante's horoscope of death (Figure 1) in the position of Jupiter in Capricorn on the one hand, and of Mars in Leo on the other, very nearly in opposition to each other. The past transits of Saturn, described in a former article, inscribe Jupiter in Capricorn as the time when the *Vita Nuova* originated—the poem dedicated to Beatrice. Whilst in the opposite quarter of the heavens—over against Jupiter—there is inscribed the hour of birth of the *Divine Comedy*, Good Friday 1300. On this day, Dante underwent a deep inner experience. He tells of it in the opening passages of the *Divine Comedy*, followed immediately by the awe-inspiring description of his journey through hell, where he witnesses the pain and torture of souls condemned to eternal punishment. To begin with, Virgil is his guide through the realm of shades. Later on, when in the further course of his long wandering through the spheres of after-death existence he is allowed to rise into heaven, it is the blessed Beatrice who becomes his guide. We see then how the two aforesaid foci in Dante's life belong together and how harmoniously this is reflected in the constellations at his death. Through his love of Beatrice, preserved in youthful purity, Dante is led from the places of purgatory and damnation into the spheres of eternal bliss.

This great and world-embracing experience of Dante's was carried out into the cosmos through Jupiter in Capricorn, but it did not simply remain there. It flowed back again into the earthly sphere to be transmuted, and it is wonderful to see how it arises again in the horoscopes of birth of those of later time; for example, in that of Michelangelo (6 March 1475 - Fig. 2).

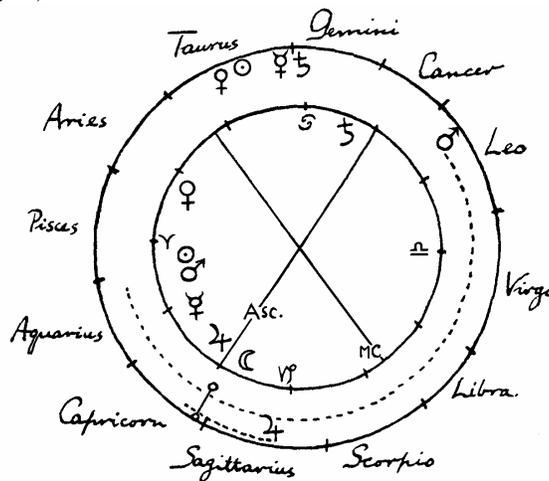


Fig. 2 MICHELANGELO - (Inner Circle) Horoscope of Birth, 6 March 1475
(Outer Circle) Prenatal Horoscope, 20 May 1474

In the first place, in Michelangelo's horoscope of birth, Jupiter is at the same place as at Dante's death in the constellation of Capricorn. This fact already seems to suggest a kind of cosmic reminiscence, as if there were

some hidden bond between the poet and the artist. But it is not this alone; deeper connections are revealed when we take the prenatal horoscope into account.

Mars, for example, at the beginning of Michelangelo's prenatal constellation, is in Leo in the same cosmic place as at Dante's death. Then it goes on to Capricorn, the place occupied by Jupiter, where the two planets are in conjunction in the ninth prenatal Lunar cycle. Moreover, this is later the place of the ascendant of birth. Now as was indicated in earlier articles, the prenatal lunar cycles can be referred to the rhythms of earthly life and destiny, and in this sense we find the prenatal conjunction of Jupiter and Mars related to the period about 1534-35 in Michelangelo's life. This is precisely the time which throws the greatest light on the peculiar connection between Michelangelo and Dante. For it was in these years that Michelangelo began his work on the great fresco in the Sistine Chapel, known as the *Last Judgment*. If we recall this picture of the overwhelming drama of souls ascending into heaven in contrast to others falling headlong to damnation, we realize that it is born entirely out of the world of thought of the *Divine Comedy*. Hermann Grimm, in his well-known *Life of Michelangelo*, writes very fully of this connection. Looking upon the *Last Judgment*, it seems to him as though Dante had been standing at Michelangelo's side as he worked and had 'breathed his spirit into him'. To anyone familiar with Dante, Michelangelo's work cannot but appear as a second revelation of the same inspiring genius. The flowing stream of verse in which the poet's fantasy was living, was cast into everlasting forms by the painter.

We see then how a certain world of thought, the striving of a whole historic epoch for the essential spiritual being of humanity carried through all the storms and travails of an individual human destiny, flows through the horoscope of death into the cosmos. Thereafter, born again into the earthly life of a person of later time, it undergoes a transmutation. We may feel how such a spiritual substance, filled ever more with the spiritual life-blood of individual human beings, grows ever more transformed and, reaching far beyond the—no doubt—limited pictures and imaginations of a particular historic epoch, will at long last emerge in a true realization of the spiritual world.

It would be of great value now to see how this impulse which we see living in such men as Dante and Michelangelo, the impulse to take hold of the after-death existence in all reality, lives on in human evolution. Jupiter in Capricorn was the important constellation in their case, and we can trace this further. There lived in more recent times a man who in his personal life and destiny experienced the connection of the living and the dead in a quite new way. We refer to the poet Novalis—pseudonym of Georg Friedrich von Harden berg, born on 2 May 1772. Once again, it is the prenatal horoscope (Figure 3) which tells us most. During the prenatal period, Jupiter went through Capricorn, while Mars took its start from Leo. In broad outline we are reminded again of Dante's horoscope of death. Indeed, there is an amazing similarity between the destinies of the two men. It seems as though the task which Dante carried through his life, with real greatness yet subject to the limitations of the Middle Ages, became in an infinitely deep and tender way the underlying motif of Novalis' life on Earth.

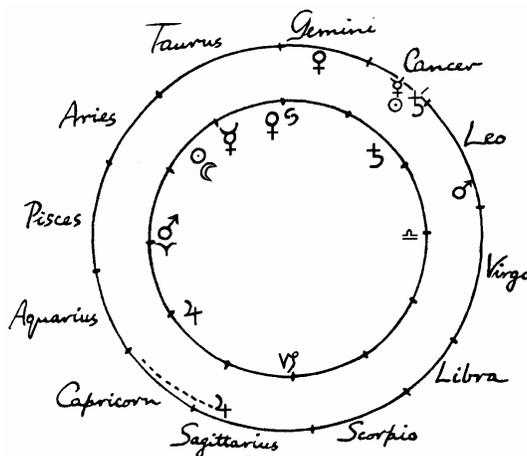


Fig. 3 NOVALIS - (Inner Circle) Horoscope of Birth, 2 May, 1772
(Outer Circle) Prenatal Horoscope, 2 August, 1771

old forms of life and had to wrestle for the sustaining forces of the future. Much has been published in recent years of Tolstoi's dramatic life. We find it indicated to a high degree in his prenatal horoscope. The horoscope of death on the other hand reveals how Tolstoi had come to grips with these pre-destined tasks during his life on Earth. We must consider once again the past transits of Saturn. We need only take two transits, for example, and we shall recognize how eloquent the constellation is.

In the year 1881, Saturn passed by its own position in the horoscope of death; in 1865 it passed the place in Libra where the planets crowd in the horoscope of death. In 1865 we see Tolstoi, after a somewhat eccentric youth, married and settled down to a fairly ordered life. Out of this sphere he wrote his novel *War and Peace*, which breathes the wide perspectives, the far vistas of the Russian language and the Russian folk-soul. The inner quiet, the almost physical tranquility of this work is an expression of one side of Tolstoi's being. Quite another side is manifest in the experiences he underwent about the year 1881. It was an overwhelming inner crisis. All that he had from the past, all his accepted standards of religious and social life fell into ruins. The mood of Scorpio arose—destruction of the old—while at the same time a new impulse seized him. He wrestled his way through to new conceptions of the religious and social life of humanity. It is this aspect of his being which is reflected in Saturn's position in Aries—Aries, which has so much to do with the in-pouring of fresh impulses into evolution.

We see then how the problem of Libra and Scorpio, indicated in Tolstoi's prenatal horoscope and belonging to the great inner crises and decisions of his life, was transmuted into a new beginning after all—Saturn in Aries at his death. Even if, to a superficial view, Tolstoi's great individuality with his, no doubt, primitive and naive beginnings may seem to have gotten little further than to create beautiful literature, still from his horoscope of death we have the impression that the new social impulses he set on foot will thrive, and maybe in some future time reach their fulfillment.