

Articles by Willi O. Sucher

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Article by Willi Sucher, August 1937

ASTROLOGY II

LOOKING THROUGH THE HOROSCOPE OF BIRTH

It has been pointed out in the preceding article that in the light of modern scientific knowledge it is scarcely tenable to regard birth alone as the foundation for astrological inquiry. Research in embryology has shown that the development of the germ, especially in the very early stages, is of more far-reaching significance than actual birth. Thus, if astrology is to have its place in modern times, we must use the horoscope of birth as a starting point for the penetration of those events which take place in the starry world during the period before birth.

The birth constellation is rather like the physiognomy of a human being. Even the most untrained person will perceive how many things lie concealed there behind the features; things of importance with regard to the human being's character, the destinies one has undergone, and so on. The human physiognomy can be felt as a gateway to the understanding of the individual behind it. So it is with the birth constellation. We must pass through it if we would reach knowledge of the human being's coming into existence during the time before birth. How can we do this?

There exists an ancient Rule handed down to us by the Egyptians. It is the so-called Hermetic Rule. It appears long before the beginning of the Christian era in the almost mythical writings of the Egyptian priests Nechepso and Petosiris. This Rule gives valuable indications for a wider, less rigid conception of the birth constellation so that it may be understood in its connection with the prenatal events. The kernel of it is as follows:

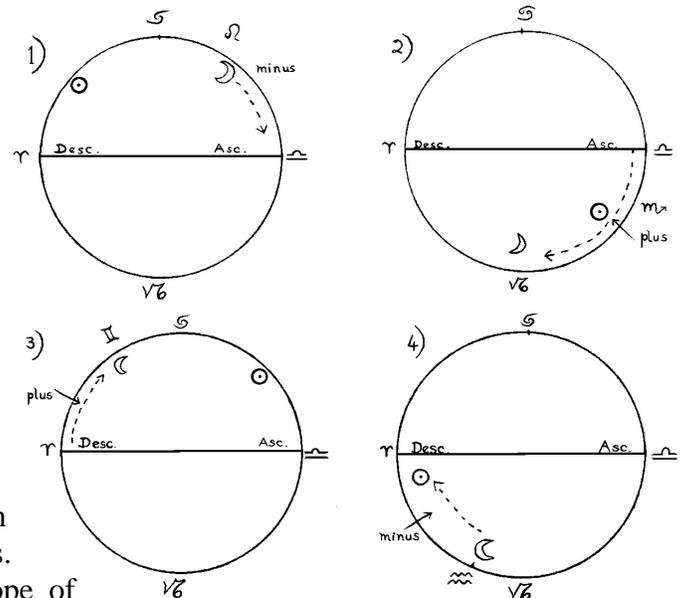
1. If the Moon was waxing at birth, then at the so-called epoch of conception—that is, approximately 273 days before birth—the Moon was in that place in the Zodiac which appears in the ascendant (on the eastern horizon) in the horoscope of birth.

2. If the Moon was waning at birth, then at the epoch of conception it was in that place in the Zodiac which appears in the descendant (on the western horizon) in the horoscope of birth. This period of 273 days corresponds approximately to the duration of a normal embryo-development, though in the case of an abnormally short pregnancy, as with seven-month children, it would be correspondingly shorter.

Four possibilities arise when this Rule is used in practical astrology. These we will illustrate in four drawings.

These are the four possible conditions for a horoscope of birth. In the first example the Moon is waxing and above the horizon (designated by the horizontal line from ascendant to descendant). Then in the so-called epoch, the Moon will have stood in the part of the heavens which is in the ascendant, i.e., in this case in the sign of Libra. From there, in approximately 273 days it has moved to its place in the horoscope, which is in Leo. It has not quite come back to its starting-point in Libra. To return to Libra, it will take exactly 273 days, for this time corresponds to ten whole revolutions of the Moon through the Zodiac (10 times 27.3 days). Thus in the first example the epoch is about four days short of the 273 days; namely, the four days that the Moon will take to go on from Leo to Libra.

In the second example the Moon is waxing but below the horizon. According to the Hermetic Rule, at the epoch of conception it was at the place that is in the ascendant at birth—which is again in Libra. From there in 273 days it returned to Libra, but the birth took place a few days later, so that in this case the period of 273 days will be lengthened by the days taken by the Moon to go on from Libra to Capricorn.



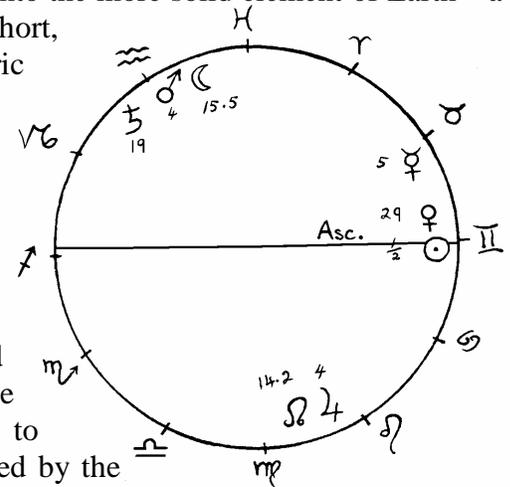
In the third and fourth drawings the Moon is waning. At the epoch of conception it will have been at the place in the Zodiac that is in the descendant at the time of birth, which is in Aries. Now in the third drawing the Moon is above the horizon in the horoscope of birth and we must assume that it took a little longer than the 273 days, namely, the time it took to go on to Gemini. In the fourth case, on the other hand, it took less than 273 days, the number of days it will take to go on from Aquarius to Aries.

Now it will readily be understood that the epoch referred to in the Hermetic Rule signifies a moment of time somewhere about the period of conception. It is clear that in the case of a seven-months' child we must not take ten Lunar cycles (10 times 27.3 = 273 days) but eight (8 times 27.3: 218 days) as a standard average.

These calculations do not, however, tell us whether the moment of the epoch coincides exactly with that of physical conception. The manifold processes connected with conception are indeed not yet so tangible in the present stage of scientific knowledge, nor is it necessary that they should be so from the astrological point of view. Spiritual Science sees conception as a kind of focus or radiating point for a whole world of cosmic spiritual events, and it is these which are reflected, pictured in a sense, in the moment of the epoch. Conception indicates a precise physical point in the line of development, while the epoch refers to a whole sphere of events—even a sphere in time.

That the Moon stands, at the epoch of conception, in the place in the Zodiac that is at the ascendant (or descendant) at the time of birth, is most significant. It means that the ascendant or descendant is like a picture of a bridge leading inward from those cosmic regions in which the Moon was standing in the very first stages of prenatal development, a bridge uniting all that belongs to the sphere of the Moon with the earthly sphere. It is clear that this kind of astrological imagination does not in any way deny the classical traditions, but it helps us to penetrate what is made manifest in the horoscope of birth with a more active knowledge. For the ascendant or descendant will now appear to us like a pathway along which the human being is led: out of a fine ethereal condition in the Moon-sphere, through all the embryonic development, into the more solid element of Earth—a process which reaches a certain culmination in the moment of birth. In short, the ascendant or descendant is a picture of the way in which the etheric human being, the so-called ether-body, enters into the physical human being. The astrological notion of the ascendant is thus enlarged to a far more real and concrete world of facts, as regards the human being's entry into life. This will be shown with the help of examples. We will apply it first to a historic example, in the horoscope of Richard Wagner.

Richard Wagner's birth took place on May 22, 1813. At this time the following constellation was present in the diagram. The so-called astrological Houses have been purposely left out of this drawing, for the main aim of these articles is to build up from simple beginnings and to understand each step as we go. Only the line of the horizon is indicated by the ascendant.

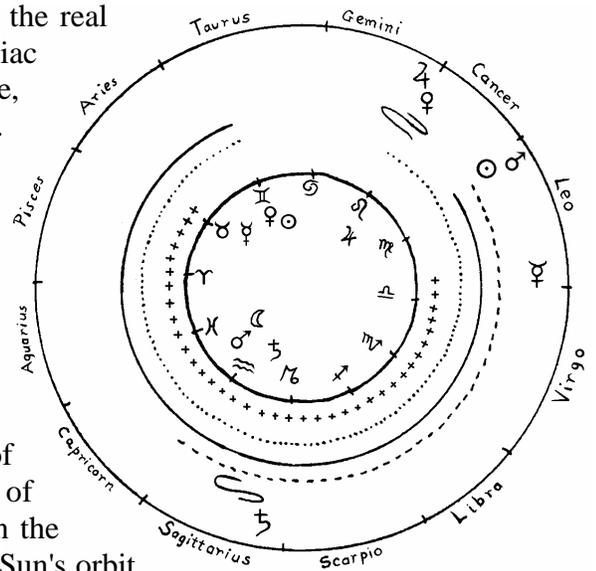


To comprehend the language of this constellation without falling back too much on mere tradition, we must look through it to what is at work in the background, i.e., to the forces which have been leading up to the moment of birth, as to a culminating point. Once again, it is as though we were to see through the physiognomy of a human being to the spiritual forming powers that are beneath it.

We will first look for the epoch with the help of the Hermetic Rule. The Moon is waning and above the horizon; therefore, the third case (see above) comes into question. At the epoch the Moon must have been in the descendant of the horoscope of birth—in Sagittarius. If from the time of birth, when the Moon is in Aquarius, we go 273 days backward, we will have followed the Moon back for ten whole revolutions and will have arrived at Aquarius once more. But we are looking for the Moon in Sagittarius, so we must go back a little more than 273 days, and at last on August 15, 1812 we find the Moon in Sagittarius. This gives us the time of the epoch—or more correctly, of the beginning of the epoch.

There was a certain constellation of the planets present at this moment. During the subsequent period until the date of birth on May 22, 1813, the constellations undergo great changes. All these events in the cosmos will be made clear in the next drawing.

In this drawing below we have added something new, namely, the real Zodiac of the fixed stars—the actual constellations of the Zodiac visible in the starry heavens. These are indicated in the outer circle, each constellation being shown more or less in its actual extent. Over the Zodiac of the ecliptic, which is indicated in the inner circle, this Zodiac of the fixed stars is a distinct reality. The Zodiac of the ecliptic, as is well known, begins at the vernal point (a point determined by the rhythms of the seasons) and from thence divides the yearly path of the Sun into twelve equal sectors. The vernal point is known as Aries and from here onward the succeeding sectors are named in order after the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Now the actual Zodiac of the fixed stars is to some extent independent of this ecliptic circle, for as a result of the precession of the equinoxes, the real constellations and the corresponding signs of the ecliptic no longer coincide, and they will do so less and less in the future. Thus, for example, when we look toward that portion of the Sun's orbit which is designated Aries, the actual constellation we see there is not Aries but Pisces. In the astrological science of the future, it will be necessary to take into account the real constellations as well as the signs of the ecliptic.



In the drawing the positions of the planets at the beginning of the epoch on August 15, 1812 are indicated within the outer circle. There is a conjunction between Jupiter and Venus at the transition from Gemini to Cancer. There is also a conjunction of the Sun and Mars in Leo, Mercury is passing from Leo to Virgo, and Saturn is in Sagittarius. During the period of prenatal development until May 22, 1813, the planets move forward through the Zodiac, and their several paths are shown in the drawing by the corresponding circular arcs, or loop-curves in the case of Jupiter or Saturn. Saturn is retrogressive at the beginning and at the end and Jupiter about the middle of the prenatal epoch. The path of Mars is indicated thus -----, that of the Sun _____, of Venus, and of Mercury + + + + +.

We see that by proceeding in this way an extremely many-sided picture is formed. The whole of it appears as a great ebb and flow of cosmic movement, and a wealth of phenomena present themselves, even if we only take into consideration the conjunctions of the planets during this whole period. There are three things especially that we must consider if we would gather up the picture of this flow and movement into a certain whole. They are the movements of the Moon, Sun, and Saturn during this prenatal time. We have already seen that in the time from August 15, 1812 till May 22, 1813, the Moon has gone from Sagittarius (that is, the ecliptic sign of Sagittarius) to Aquarius. Ten Lunar cycles lie between these times and also the small additional way from Sagittarius to Aquarius. Thus, on an average the Moon will have passed each planet about ten times and on each occasion will have met it at another point in the cosmos, for the planet too has its own movement. In the most manifold ways, the forces of the planets are taken hold of and reflected by the Moon into the Earth-sphere. This is an extremely important point and will presently lead us to far deeper insight.

If we consider the path of the Sun and the adjoining paths of Mercury and Venus, we have the impression that they have not covered a portion of the Zodiac. There remains a kind of open space in the picture. In the horoscope of Richard Wagner this is quite evident and simple, but in other cases it may be far more irregular; Venus, for example, may almost close this open space. This fact can also tell us many valuable things; it is more connected with the human being as an earthly personality, even our outward appearance. On the other hand, the Moon with its prenatal revolutions pictures the whole process of embodiment of the super-sensible human being into the physical organism. Saturn, helped in a sense by Jupiter and Mars, stands far in the background of all these events, not passively but in great cosmic quiet. Saturn moves far slower than the other planets do, and above all Saturn brings the great drama of destiny into our existence.

In the following articles, linking on to what we have built up so far, we will set forth the main points in the biography of Richard Wagner so that we may see how this Earth-life was mirrored in the cosmic picture. To this end the rather extensive preparation we have undergone was necessary, for we consciously desire, above all, to understand the cosmic facts and their relations.