

Articles by Willi O. Sucher

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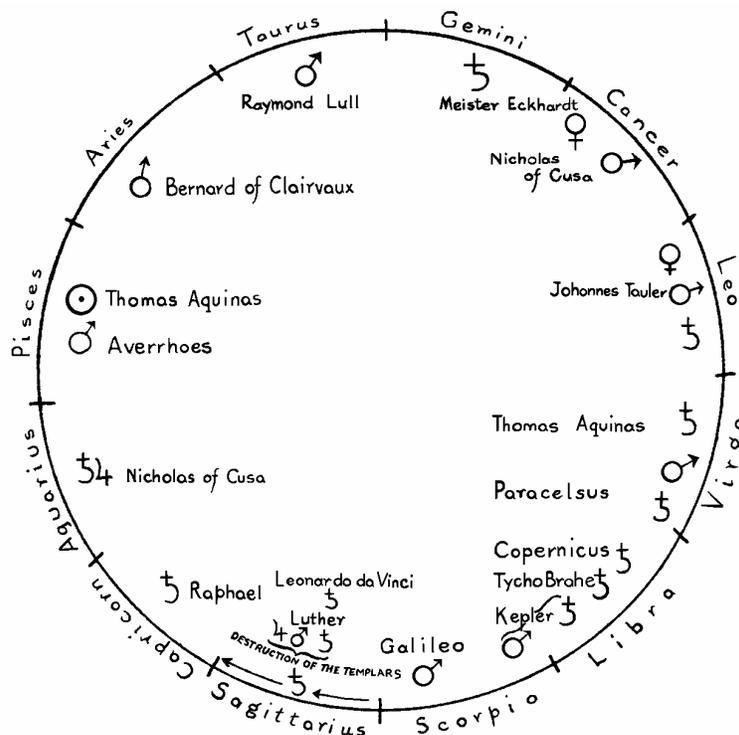
The Modern Mystic and Science Review

Article by Willi Sucher, May 1938

THE ZODIAC (continued)

In last month's article we tried to show how a moment of deep import in the spiritual evolution of humanity—the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries—was inscribed in the writing of the stars. In a great cosmic cross this epoch is recorded in the starry heavens. On the one hand there was the last withdrawal into the dark hidden background of external history of the ancient wisdom, shown in the tragic drama of the destruction of the Knights Templars and recorded in the constellation of Sagittarius, and on the other hand there was the flower of medieval Scholasticism, related to the constellations of Virgo and Pisces. Finally, there was the rise of Mysticism in the figure of Meister Eckhardt, whose destiny is inscribed in Gemini.

This cosmic cross—Sagittarius and Gemini, Virgo and Pisces—represents in its world-historic aspect a decisive moment in the spiritual evolution of humanity as a whole. Forces of consciousness from times of old are dying out, and a new beginning dawns on the horizon. It is indeed significant how the evolution of the Western world from this moment onward until the present day appears revealed in the light of cosmic happenings. With a remarkable continuity, this evolution of humanity from the Middle Ages onward is represented in the cosmos.



Let us then take our start from Aries this time. We shall see how the leading figures in spiritual evolution came into relation with the Zodiac through their horoscopes of death. To begin with, there is St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who died 20 August, 1153. Mars was in the constellation of Aries. What signifies this place of Mars? The past transits of Saturn, explained in a previous installment, will enable us to find an answer. It is the foundation and growth of the monastery of Clairvaux in which St. Bernard played a decisive part and which is recorded here by the planet Mars. In Aries an event stands written proceeding from a most important impulse; born of the fiery mystical experience of a man who was also the inspirer of the second Crusade. There dawns in these events the path to which medieval humanity was destined, from the last relics of ancient Mystery-wisdom to the type of mystical experience which comes to full expression in Meister Eckhardt.

This new incision in the spiritual strivings of humanity approached the human beings of the Middle Ages time and again and from many aspects. Passing on now into the sphere of Taurus, we find Raymond Lulli, at whose death—29 June, 1315—Mars stood in this constellation. He was the well-known originator of the "Lullian art", as it was sometimes called, trying to reach by subtle combination of philosophic concepts already known to humanity, new kinds of questions and new answers. His way of thinking influenced many others, even in much later times—Giordano Bruno for example. Raymond Lulli was born in Mallorca. In his youth he lived a life entirely given up to the impressions of the senses. Then, of a sudden, he had a visionary experience which made him change the direction of his life. Thenceforth he devoted himself exclusively and wholeheartedly to spiritual study and to the great religious questions of his time. This was the decisive event in his life which was inscribed by Mars in Taurus.

In Aries we saw reflected a human event arising out of a deep inner impulse, an all-absorbing mission. In Taurus we have the picture of a conversion, a transformation due to a deep experience in spirit. A powerful incision gives a quite new turn to an existing tendency of life. This quality of Taurus will also be found in other horoscopes of death.

Now we trace human history in its cosmic aspect further on into the sphere of Gemini, where a deep cleft arises between the inner and the outer world. We had already encountered this kind of soul's experience in Meister Eckhardt. The mystic with his deeply inward orientation of life comes into conflict with the Church. Gemini, the twin brothers wrestling with one another in every human soul, is revealed here; typified in the striving of the individual within itself toward the inner light and, in the mighty institution of the Church, desiring to adhere to past tradition.

Yet evolution took its course in such a way that the old faculties of knowledge gradually died into the characteristic mystical experience of the Middle Ages. Scholasticism in its best exponents still maintained a balance by deep discipline of thought. In thought, the conscious inner life of a human being sought to retain connection with the higher world of Divine Revelation. This faculty became extinguished by and by.

Significantly, we see this happening in such a man as Nicholas of Cusa, who died 11 August, 1464. Born at the turn of the 14th to 15th centuries, he grew up in the Scholastic discipline of thought; but his inner experience, led him along another path. While voyaging across the sea, a mystical experience came to him as if being bathed in the eternal ocean of the spirit, yet in such a way that the experience no longer penetrated up into the realm of thought. A "knowing ignorance" is his own name for this experience of the divine; so he describes it in his book, *De docta ignorantia*. Now at this death there is a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Aquarius. Herein we see his connection with Scholasticism. Yet on the other side Mars and Venus are in the region of Cancer and Leo. This is the cosmic picture of his own more inward path into the sphere of *docta ignorantia*. Between the two constellations, his experience on the sea-voyage is recorded in Aries.

Thus we see indicated in the constellation of Cancer a tendency in human spiritual development to withdraw into the inner life of the soul. This is expressed still more strongly in the horoscopes in Leo. Therefore, in the horoscopes of death of quite a number of mystics of the later Middle Ages and of the dawn of modern time, we find the planets entering the realm of Leo. One who stands out among them all is Johannes Tauler, a disciple of Meister Eckhardt. At his death on 16 June, 1361, Saturn, Mars, and Venus were in Leo. A unique experience of Tauler's life was recorded into this constellation. We refer to his so-called conversion by the *Friend of God* from the Oberland, a man whose influence extended far and wide in the neighborhood of Basle at that time. The *Friend of God* is indeed a mysterious figure in the history of the time. There is no actual historic evidence of who he was or where he came from, only the stories told in the circle of those amongst whom he moved refer to him as a wonderful being who had a deep and far-reaching spiritual influence. So too the story of Tauler's "conversion". In his encounter with the *Friend of God* he underwent deep inner experiences, and his own influence and eloquence as a preacher was wondrously enhanced.

While in this way the constellation of Leo is connected with the quest of spiritual truth in deep recesses of the human soul, Virgo belongs to the inner peace, the quiet poise of the soul within the spiritual being of nature and of human life. This was already pointed out in relation to Scholasticism in the previous article. Unknown to the outer world, in inner silence and serenity of soul, experiences take shape in the sphere of Virgo, preparing to bring about essential changes in the development of consciousness. Thus in the constellation of Virgo we see one who very strongly represents this trait, the famous alchemist and doctor, Paracelsus, who died on 23

September, 1541. At his death, Jupiter was in Leo while Mars and Saturn, together with the Sun and the two lower planets Mercury and Venus, were in Virgo. Saturn was rather on the border-line between Virgo and Libra. All this belongs to the peculiar place of this great individuality in the spiritual life of his time. For on the one hand Paracelsus, as an alchemist, was living within that spiritual stream which sought by a more inner mystic path to penetrate to a grasp of the divine and spiritual; yet on the other hand he was already one who consciously turned to the outer world, seeking to find the very roots of nature's being. We see this in the way he brings forth a new conception of human nature and also to some extent a new science of medicine. Paracelsus is a very living representative of the transition from medieval humanity, for whom the experience of the spiritual world was fading away into the form of Mysticism, to the new tendency of soul which gave birth to modern Science. True, in this scientific stream the consciousness of the reality of the spiritual world was and is in danger of being completely stifled; however, this development was also destined and inevitable; a necessary phase in our evolution, for it led us on the way to spiritual freedom.

This turn in the evolution of humanity is potently expressed in the constellation of Libra. Here we find Saturn in Libra in the horoscopes of death of three great men—inaugurators of the scientific era: Copernicus, originator of the new astronomy (died 24 May, 1543); Tycho Brahe, the famous Danish astronomer (died 24 October, 1601); and Johannes Kepler, the great German astronomer and mathematician (died 15 November 1630). In the relation of these three to one another, the transition of humanity to the new outlook upon nature is most impressively portrayed. Copernicus, purely by outward observation and mathematical experiment, laid the foundations of a new world-system. Tycho Brahe took a very different line. As an astronomer he also devoted himself whole-heartedly to outer observation of the starry heavens, but in the depths of his soul there was living side by side with this, the memory of a former life on Earth when he had still been united far more intimately with the wisdom of the ancient Mysteries. Hence, he rebelled against the central idea of the Copernican system which was to place the Sun in the center of our solar system. He evolved a system of his own, wherein he tried once more to give the Earth a position of central importance. Then Kepler came and worked with him as his assistant. When Tycho felt his end approaching, he begged Kepler to base his future work not on the Copernican but on his own, the Tyconic system. Kepler, however, did not do so; he based his subsequent researches on the Copernican idea.

Thus we see connected with the constellation of Libra one of the greatest and most decisive turning-points in spiritual evolution. The world-picture of the ancients, the Ptolemaic system for example, is superseded by the modern point of view of scientific research and experiment. Men now devote themselves to the examination of external visible nature.

Now we come into the sphere of Scorpio. There we see Mars, both in the horoscope of death of Kepler and in that of Galileo (8 January, 1642). In Kepler's Mars is inscribed his turning to the Copernican system after the death of Tycho Brahe; in Galileo's there is the period of his life when he was carrying on important researches at Padua. Moreover, in the later life of Galileo it represents the time when he was taking a courageous stand on behalf of the Copernican system before the Inquisition. To Scorpio, therefore, belongs a profound transformation in the world-outlook of humanity. Kepler, Galileo, and many others confront the old ideas with the foundations of an entirely new method of research. Scorpio has to do with the destruction of old traditions, yet at the same time with transmutation and progress.

The cycle of evolution now leads us on into the sphere of Sagittarius. This sphere, as we already saw in the destruction of the Order of Knights Templars, is connected with the rise and fall of spiritual streams in evolution. There is a wrestling for spiritual continuity in human progress. The horoscope of death of Martin Luther for example (18 February, 1546) is penetrated in a very decisive way with this constellation. Saturn and Mars are in Sagittarius, while Jupiter is passing on from Sagittarius to Capricorn. Saturn in Sagittarius represents the time when Luther, nailing his theses to the castle church at Wittenberg, set foot along the way which led to separation from the Roman Church. Also in the horoscope of death of Leonardo da Vinci (2 May, 1519), Saturn is in Sagittarius. This is a picture of the great master's struggles to achieve new spiritual points of view in all the realms of art and science. It is true that his powers, as against the old, are not yet strong enough, and most of his attempts fail any immediate success. Yet both in Leonardo and in Luther the sincere striving of humanity for progress, for the achievement of new forms of life, comes to expression very strongly. This is the mood of Sagittarius.

The next constellation, that of Capricorn, is filled with human destinies where the essential thing is the carrying to a quick conclusion of some definite task or mission. Many examples might be given. One who expressed this in a most beautiful way was the great painter Raphael. At his death, on Good Friday 1520, Saturn was in Capricorn. This position of Saturn belongs to the events of Raphael's early youth when his mother died and he was received as an apprentice into his father's studio. It was an important moment in destiny when this tender and delicate being was thus removed from motherly protection and placed into a stream which was to carry him so rapidly on to the greatest heights of creation. In the 30 years that followed, with an incredible ease and lightness of touch, he brought the deepest spiritual truths through the medium of his art into humanity. This carrying of a spiritual impulse to a successful issue, almost without resistance, is the true mood of Capricorn.

Through the constellation of Aquarius, cosmic spiritual streams of evolution make themselves felt in the currents of human history on Earth. As a representative of this type we may mention once more Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, in whose horoscope of death Saturn and Jupiter were in conjunction in Aquarius. This was connected above all, with the course taken by the Council of Basle during the 1430's. Nicholas of Cusa had much to do with this Council. The men assembled there were really trying to come to terms with an event which, in the spiritual realm, was already an accomplished fact. There was the growing rebellion of humanity against the old hierarchic principle represented by the Roman Church. The tendency and purpose of the new age then dawning was to embrace the whole of humanity in an united spirit, in spite of their immense differentiations. Nicholas himself had spiritual experiences from which he learned that the most diverse, including even the non-Christian religious faiths, could be brought to a peaceful understanding with one another. That such a feeling could arise in a human soul, while simultaneously in the Reformation, powerful movements were arising in opposition to the Roman Catholic authoritarian principle. All this is due to the fact that in the spiritual world the transformation to a new age had already taken place. Human beings upon Earth—those at the Council of Basle for example—experienced this fact, reflected as it was in the deep places of their souls, and were at pains to master it and understand it. This human experience was inscribed in Aquarius through such horoscopes of death as Nicholas of Cusa's.

We are led on from there into the constellation of Pisces where the great battles for the world-outlook and the forms of life in humanity are pictured, as we explained when dealing with Scholasticism. Such battles may extend over many centuries, and yet they have their focal points in single individuals, by whose horoscopes they are then recorded in this constellation.

So, we can recognize the continuous passage of Western humanity through the entire Zodiac. About the 12th and 13th centuries there is a kind of knot, a nodal point in evolution. On the one hand the last relics of old faculties of knowledge, still in a more direct connection with the real spiritual world, were dying out, but scholasticism by dint of heroic efforts in the life of thought was still able to maintain a slight connecting link. Yet even this was ultimately lost in medieval Mysticism which, with its deep longing for an experience of the divine, was no longer able to raise this experience into full consciousness. In consequence, humanity turned more and more to observation and experiment of outer nature. In its turn this was the beginning of an evolution reaching far on into the future, an evolution seeking liberation on the one hand from ancient rules and traditions, while on the other hand people strove, in depths of soul, toward a new, freedom-born knowledge of the spiritual relations of the Earth and the cosmos. Admittedly, in our time this deeper trait in modern evolution is often misunderstood or even denied altogether; nevertheless, through the dark night of the prevailing emptiness of spirit, a new kind of human being is striving toward the light. The outlines of this human being of the future are written in the cosmos in the way we have now tried to indicate—however briefly.

We should not only look at single sections, chance perspectives of external history with their one-sidedness and imperfections, we should try to see the whole. This whole is represented in the cosmic picture, and here the wonderful thing is to see how the most opposite tendencies do, after all, enter harmoniously into the cosmos, into the cosmic places they belong to by their several virtues and inspirations. So, they do find their place in this striving toward the perfect human being; a striving written by humanity into the universe through horoscopes of death, transcending the individual human being and summoning us ever and again to rise from our one-sidedness into the whole.

This twelve-fold cosmic spiritual being can be experienced in the Zodiac, even as in the twelve-fold Zodiac there is a real archetypal picture of the human form. We take our start from Aries, which represents a directing

and leading sphere comparable to the head of the earthly body; then it rays through the living spiritual body, through a deep inwardness and out again into a sphere of movement and activity comparable to the limbs in the earthly body. Thus are the several constellations of the Zodiac connected with the spiritual strivings of the human being:

- Aries:* Spiritual impulses are poured into evolution.
- Taurus:* Impulses try to incarnate in Earth-realities; they meet with resistance and yet are able to bring about transmutations.
- Gemini:* The light and the dark twin-brother; the spiritual impulse wrestles with the two aberrations of the human soul: flightiness and Earth-boundness.
- Cancer:* The turning inward into inner silence.
- Leo:* Seeking the fountain-head of the Spirit in the depths of one's inner being.
- Virgo:* The gateway to the inner being of all Beings.
- Libra:* Out of the inner life, the turning outward once again; herein the problem of balance—the decisive moments of the Spirit.
- Scorpio:* Ancient connections are destroyed and new must be created by clear purpose and good will.
- Sagittarius:* The alternation of great spiritual currents in human history.
- Capricorn:* The carrying of destined tasks to a successful issue in the earthly sphere.
- Aquarius:* The streams of spiritual life on Earth, as images of cosmic streams.
- Pisces:* The wrestling of the spiritual streams in humanity for the world's future.

As will be revealed in the further course, this macrocosmic spiritual human is a reality in every detail.