

February 2nd and Capricorn
Cross Quarter Day – Candlemas – Imbolc/Groundhog Day
2nd Letter, February 2022



Yesterday I was on the train returning to New York City. It's a lovely ride because for the whole trip the train travels along the banks of the Hudson River. As I was looking out the windows at the frozen Hudson, I was also thinking about the festival of February 2nd, Candlemas (or Groundhog Day in the USA) and its deeper meaning in regard to nature and to life. I was also thinking about the constellation of Capricorn, through which the Sun is now passing from January 19th to February 16th (this refers to the astronomical constellations). One can take a contemplative path through the year as the Sun passes through the twelve constellations as a way to enter into the nature of these constellations and the differentiations of their cosmic "beingness".

As a student of star wisdom, it also continually raises in me the question of the precession of the equinoxes in relation to the festival year. The vernal point moves backward along the zodiac about 1 degree every 72 years. This is a profound cosmic rhythm affecting our life experiences and consciousness on Earth over evolutionary cycles of time. This shift has brought a shift in the relation of the Sun passing through the constellations of the stars during the cycle of the year. In our time this has resulted in the fact that the tropical sign through which the Sun is passing has almost completely shifted so that now behind the "tropical sign" one actually finds that the Sun is in reality passing through a completely different constellation of fixed stars. So, on Candlemas, February 2nd, though the Sun is in about the middle of the sign of Aquarius it is actually in about the middle of the constellation of Capricorn. How then can we relate Capricorn to this festival?

First, let us understand the deeper nature of this February 2nd festival. Living my life in the mid-northern latitudes, I can naturally find a relationship to the nature aspect of the festival of Candlemas or, as the Celts called it, Imbolc, for this is the European/North American heritage of my “nature” experience at this time of year. So it is only from my experience that I can speak, though it is worthwhile to consider what might be the nature experience on other parts of the Earth that could bring new dimensions to this real moment in the Earth’s breathing cycle and in the Christic experience of the cycle of the year. I think this deeper meaning can be found globally if one takes up the esoteric or “hidden” element of this point of the year. This esoteric element can be found in the annual renewal and transformation, as our consciousness evolves, of the story of the union of the Christ being with the Earth as it manifests in the cycle of the year. The central element of this esoteric activity around February 2nd is the transition or turning point in the Life ether activity in the Earth. We find this expressed in the repeated imagery of the element of water in relation to this nature festival in the north as well as the activity of the light. In all aspects we come into the mysteries of the Mother, the bearer and birther of Life. In a future work, this realm of the Mother, in Her many manifestations, in relation to the Cross Quarter days is of deep significance worthy of a full study.

How is this reflected in the nature festivals of February 2nd in the northern latitudes? This takes me to a broader question, which I plan to explore in a more complete undertaking on the cycle of the year, about the nature of what are called the Cross Quarter Days of the yearly nature cycle. The essence of this question is that as humanity has become more and more embedded in sensory experience and lost a spiritual awareness, we have identified the solstices and equinoxes with the start of each season, because we can “see” the changes in nature. We call Sumer Solstice the “first” day of summer, yet at the same time we call it “mid-summer”. Which is it? We call March 21st, Spring Equinox, the first day of spring and base our Easter dating on this equinox point. But is it the “first” day of spring? In my own working with the cycle of the year, I have come to the thought that these Cross Quarter days are the actual start of each new season, but the start is esoteric, meaning hidden from our senses. It is rather a beginning on a spiritual/etheric basis with which the ancients were more attuned. So, this will be reserved for a future exploration, but for now, let us consider how February 2nd might be the “start” of Spring as it was seen by the Gaelic people. What happens around February 2nd in nature in the north? The Celts called it Imbolc, which literally translates as “in the belly” but also as “budding” and as “ewes’ milk”. So, it is associated with new life, with the ewe’s beginning lactation, the milk begins to flow for the lambs in their “bellies”. It also has the meaning “cleansing” and in that region it marked the cleansing rains, the watering of the Earth. We can broaden this into an imagination of the Earth as Mother, the beginning of the flow/movement of the fluids of life from the mothers in the Earth. It is the time when the sap begins to run in the trees, flowing upward, the bulbs begin their process under the earth of moving towards the Sun, some like the snow bells, quickly emerging. It is the time of the awakening of some hibernating animals, thus the origin of Groundhog Day, as well as the time when the Queen bee begins to lay her eggs. So, we can see on this day the marking of new life returning, of the Earth Mother purification and flowing of new life forces for germination and birth deep in her “body”, in her “belly”. Added to this nature festival of Imbolc of the ancient Celts, we have grafted the Christian Festival of Candlemas, which now brings in the element of the return of the Light. It was the time of year (long before electricity) when the people no longer needed to light a candle on rising at the start of the day. The light was beginning already to be bright enough. This was brought into Christian religious life as the time when the candles were blessed that would be used in the church for the rest of the coming year. So, we have evolving from and into the early Mother-centric nature festival of the flow of waters from within the Earth, the flow of new life from “the belly”, the added element of the Sun, the

male force, the start of the return of the Light marrying with the Mother in the joint renewal of Earthly life in nature.

But now we can take this festival into another relation of Mother-Life and Son-Light, into a more “non-nature” dimension, though still related to nature, yet a deeper Christic dimension. Staying with this imagination of the purifying waters and the Mother, we have in the ancient Hebrew tradition, after 40 days, women who had given birth would perform a ritual bathing, which symbolized many things. First the bath would mean the woman’s fertility was symbolically “restored” and she could again conceive. She was purified by the waters of the bath and could re-join the community from which she had isolated with her child for 40-days, because during this time the infant is etherically bonded to the mother, and thus needs to be protected from the external world. After this time, the etheric forces of the mother are freed up and the child moves out of the mother’s etheric sheath into a new level of bodily independence. This brings the time when the naming of the child occurred at the presentation in the Temple. This is related in Luke 2:22-40. *When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...* and goes on to tell of Simeon, who had been awaiting the “One” who was to come, and the prophetess Anna, who both recognize in Jesus, the Messiah. Naming is a powerful, spiritual deed. In this naming ceremony we have something of the emergence of the self into the world, the light of the I am takes a first step into personhood. Simeon declares his eyes have seen *a light for revelation*.

This 40-day cycle begins from the birth of the child, which in the case of Jesus as dated in our Christian year, is the time from December 25 to February 2. One could also explore more deeply this number 40 as a cycle of time and see it in general as a period indicating a time of purification and transformation that marks a transition into a new cycle. We can see this in the 40 days temptation of Christ in the wilderness after the Baptism; in the 40 days and nights of the Great Flood and Noah arriving to the new land; in the 40 years in the wilderness when the Hebrew people wandered with Moses before entry into the Promised Land; and in the 40 days between Easter and Ascension when the teaching by the Risen One concluded and He ascended into the etheric realm.

So we journey from the northern latitude, early festivals of nature in relation to February 2nd, which one could really describe as the birth of spring in the Earth, the start of generative life from the Mother in the fluids flowing in the dark Earth, on to the broader Christian nature of this festival in the story of Jesus as vehicle for Messiah in relation to the purification of the Mother of Jesus and the emerging of the child out of the protective etheric envelope of the Mother along with his Naming in the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. This takes us into the broader Christic nature of this time of year, bringing the Light into the Mother mysteries of Life, of the Earth, of the generative womb.

Every festival occurs in relation to the stars. The stars do not change as the festival seasons change. They are the same around the whole Earth. Easter around the globe occurs when the Sun is in the stars of Pisces. February 2nd, occurs when the Sun is in the stars of Capricorn globally. What do the stars of Capricorn reveal to us about this season? As I looked at the ice on the Hudson with the sunlight glistening across it, it was like I was viewing a field of quartz crystals. The jagged edges of the ice as it had been broken up by the moving waters underneath and reformed in solid masses, created sharp translucent white crystals jutting out across the river. It made me aware of the waters flowing below the hard mineral ice crystal field and it was a perfect image for Capricorn. In Capricorn we have this combination of the horns and hooves of the goat, that creature at home in the mineral rocky realm and the tail of the fish which is a creature at home in the watery etheric element. In this sense we can see this festival as this struggle of life forces in relation to the hardening forces of mineralization, both in

nature and in our consciousness. Both in the north and in the south one could look at this festival in this way, whether the Mother must generate new life out of the cold mineral earth realm or whether the life realm must enter into and survive the dying into the cold mineral realm of the autumn Earth. This is the essence of the Capricorn imagination and of its deeper spiritual meaning.

This is illumed further when we traverse the mythological narratives of the past that are associated with Capricorn. They all take us back to this challenge of the hardening forces in relation to the flowing spiritual sources of life. Even as far back as the early Chaldean myths, Capricorn is associated with the god, Ea, (whose Sumerian equivalent was Enki). This god was often represented with a horned head piece but whose body was enwrapped by a flowing river with fish swimming in it. He resides in the ocean of life which was called abzu, which is underneath the surface of the mineral earth. Babylon was said to have been built on top of the abzu, the living waters. Ea is also the protector of humanity who in the Babylonian flood myth instructed a sage named Atrahasis to build an ark so that humanity could escape the destruction.

As we proceed in the evolution of consciousness into the Greeks, we come to a few stories related to Capricorn. One is the story of the sea-goat Pricus. Pricus is the father of a race of sea-goats, who were known to be intelligent and honorable creatures who lived in the sea near the shore. They could speak and think and were favored by the gods. However, Pricus notices that his children, the younger race, are drawn to the shore and more and more wish to live on the earth/land and not in the water/sea. They are even beginning to evolve goat hind legs rather than fish tails. This distresses him, so he uses his powers and his friendship with Chronos to reverse time so that the young sea-goats return to the way they were before, at home in the sea and the shore. Though no matter how he tries to continually reverse time, he cannot forestall the destiny of his children and eventually they leave the sea and become goats, living on the land. In his sadness, Pricus begs Chronos to let him die, as he cannot bear to be the only sea-goat left. Chronos instead allows him to live out his immortality in the sky, as the constellation Capricorn. Here we have a wonderful imagination of the waning of the relation to the life forces, to the spiritual life element and the move into the earthly, mineral consciousness.

Finally, we come to two narratives which bring us closer to our modern experience. One is related to the Mother Feminine and the other to the Son Masculine. The first is the story of Persephone, which is too lengthy to go into detail here, but to summarize, it is the story of the daughter of Demeter, the Mother Earth, who is kidnapped by Pluto and taken as his bride into Hades, the underworld, the interior of the Earth. The story tells of the pleas to Zeus and the destructive rage of Demeter who cannot retrieve her daughter, but then tells of how Mercury/Hermes was sent to rescue Persephone. However, she chose rather to remain as Queen of the underworld and to return only for part of the year to unite with her mother, Demeter, in the world above. The interesting feature in this story is how Persephone, after her initial loss and sadness, became accustomed to her place in the underworld and became the consort of Pluto. It is then that she takes the name Persephone, which has the meaning "she who brings abundance", "she who brings light" or "she that is capable of grasping what is transformed". This brings us into a great mystery of the Mother forces working from within the Earth darkness as the source of bringing life and abundance, out of the Earth. Something to contemplate in relation to the Mother element in the below as well as above in the various manifestations of the Divine Feminine in the cycle of the year.

The Masculine/Son mythology connected to Capricorn is the story of Hercules and his 12th Labor. Again, it is too long a story to go into in detail, but this labor captures perhaps most clearly the culmination of the pre-Christ challenge of Capricorn and brings us to the transition into the Christ-potentialities of this

constellation and to deeper new meaning for this February 2nd festival. In Capricorn we find the gate into the spiritual world, the gateway of initiation through which the initiate enters and identifies with spirit, not with matter. This is the 12th Labor, the final task for Hercules, who after seeking help for this task through initiation in the Eleusinian Mysteries, which were the mysteries of Demeter and Persephone, descends into Hades, the kingdom of Pluto and Persephone. His task was to bring the monstrous dog, Cerberus, who is the guardian of the threshold to Hades, to the upper world. This descent was a journey from which no mortal had ever returned because for the Greeks, every soul after death and descent had to remain forever in Hades, in the depths of the Earth. Hercules succeeded in his task, but unlike the other monsters Hercules conquered, Cerberus was allowed to return to Hades to his former task as Guardian of the underworld. The guarded boundary to Hades still held firm.

Here we have the mighty story of the initiation of Hercules, his final task completed, which then allowed him to ascend into the spiritual kingdom of the gods. This is the myth behind Capricorn. An additional element to the story which opens up this initiation feat and is pointed out by Willi Sucher, is that after his ascent to the heavens, Hercules married Hebe who was the immortal cup bearer for the gods. She bore the waters of life to the gods. This is intended to convey that after death Hercules received those gifts which alone give eternal life. After Hercules had married the goddess Hebe, Zeus chose a new cupbearer, Ganymede, a son of a king of Troy, who was mortal! Thus, now a mortal is chosen as the one who can be made the trustee of the life-bestowing, cosmic nourishment.

This challenge of Capricorn which is shown in the dualistic nature of the horn/mineral element and the water/life element can also be understood from a spiritual scientific perspective. In his years of research, Willi Sucher worked through the great evolutionary cycles described by Rudolf Steiner in Esoteric Science, associating them with the zodiac. The lower or dark zodiac is deeply connected with Ancient Moon evolution and Capricorn specifically is connected to that time in Ancient Moon when the Great War in Heaven took place. What was this war? After the great rebellion of Ancient Moon, the human being had been for long times experiencing a kind of double life, with part of its existence with the Sun and part with the Moon/Earth. However, the hardening forces, the "horn" forces of the Moon/Earth were causing too much densification of the human. So, the higher Sun beings took action to re-unite the Earth/Moon with the Sun and thus a great war between the lower beings of hardening associated with the Earth/Moon and the higher beings of life and light of the Sun. This resulted in the reunion at the end of Ancient Moon. This great War in Heaven is associated with the constellation region of Capricorn. As one future imagination for Capricorn, which also has this element of war against the lower hardening forces, we can look to the 7th Cultural Age of our great epoch of time. It is the Age of Capricorn when the vernal point will have left Pisces, our cultural age, and have passed through Aquarius, the 6th Cultural Age when Manas will be achieved by those who strive towards the spiritual life. Then humanity enters the Capricorn Age which will take us into the final battle of the War of All Against All and the true battle for the redemption and spiritualization of humanity and the transition into the Budhi, etheric existence.

So, perhaps you can see in these narratives the deeper nature of Capricorn in its relation to the eternal struggle of the dark/mineral element with the life/light element in the story of humanity. This story evolves as humans evolve, as can be seen starting with the human relationship to the spiritual forces of life from Ea and the city built on the cosmic sea, to the sea-goats who chose the earthly over the sea and the descent to the mineral earthly element away from the waters, to the story of Persephone, the daughter of the Mother uniting with the interior of the Earth to become a source out of the darkness to bring abundance, and ultimately to Hercules, the hero initiate, who was able to overcome the forces of opposition culminating in his final initiation labor of descending into Hell. This myth takes on new and

deeper meaning when historical fact meets mythological narrative in the incarnation of the Christ and His deed in Hell/Hades to overcome death and bring the resurrection forces to all humanity through the power of the Christic I AM in every human. In this way do the words, I AM the Bread; I AM the living water; I AM the life, all have true meaning and bring us to the present tasks in our times in relation to Capricorn.

The symbol for Capricorn, the Sea-Goat, is drawn in various ways but has a kind of sharp hornlike gesture with a flowing curled line. This was the gesture I experienced in the mineral/crystal hard ice over the flowing water below. Capricorn along with the other “dark or lower” zodiac constellations carry this challenge and mystery of transformation. In Capricorn we find the struggle of the one who is part earth/mineral and part fish/water, which is we ourselves and our challenge to take our own initiatory path of transformation. The path of initiation takes one through catharsis, to meeting the Guardian, and to the gateway of the gods. Capricorn carries this process as cosmic representation. The February 2 festival, or cross quarter day, is a memory of the descent into the hardening forces as well as a vision for the overcoming of the forces of darkness, of cold, of matter through the Christ power of the true I AM working in each of us. Yet, this is not a path of escape from matter, but a path into matter, into the darkness of the hardening Earth, into Hades, with the forces of transformation born out of love for the Earth.

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