



The Geminid Meteor Shower

Overnight tonight, Dec 13/14 at about 2 AM local time (no matter where you are on the globe), the Geminid meteors will peak. First let us look at what modern astronomy tells us about this meteor shower. Then we will attempt to “pierce the veil” of astronomy to better understand this meteor shower from a spiritual astrosophical perspective.

The Geminids are not like other meteor showers. Other meteor showers are created when the Earth passes through the remnants of a comet. However, the Geminids are caused by fragments of an asteroid, named Phaethon. Phaethon asteroid is about 3.7 miles wide (4 kilometers) and has a very short orbit around the Sun of about 1.5 years. It comes nearer to the Sun than any other asteroid, which is where it gets its name (see below about Phaethon). The shower consists of various rock sized pieces that brightly burn up in the atmosphere but do not leave trails. They cross inward, close over the Earth’s orbit and appear to be coming from near the star Castor in the constellation of the Twins, which is what is called the “radiant” point (see image above), where they streak through the entire sky. This meteor shower does not produce the storms of the Leonids, but since about 1960 it has surpassed the Perseid meteors in August as the most reliable of meteor showers to be seen. If the night is dark, you may be able to see 50 or more meteors per hour. On the best nights one may see up to 150 meteors an hour.

With a new Moon, (darkest night) on December 4th, we are now just past the first quarter of the Moon, so the Moon will be about three-quarters shining which will block out many of the meteors in its light. But the Moon will set at about 3 AM, which will offer a dark sky for a couple of hours, perhaps the best times for viewing. This shower is best viewed in the Northern Hemisphere but is also visible in the Southern Hemisphere.

(Sources: Earth Sky Magazine and Guy Ottewell's Universal Workshop)

How can we now understand the deeper meaning of this meteor shower? First, let us call to mind that they occur during Advent, the time in which we are to confront our untransformed earthly nature and work to prepare our inner soul for the "birth of the pure spirit child" of Christmas. (see my recent article on Advent at astrosophy.com in Current Articles) This brings us to understand better how this meteor shower originates from an asteroid, not a comet. Herein lies an important distinction to consider and can lead to the possible difference between this meteor shower and the other meteor showers that occur throughout the year at various times. This meteor shower occurs during Advent, during the dark time of the year when the Sun is passing through the "lower" zodiac, Scorpio through Pisces, those regions of the zodiac related to the lower human being, the metabolic/will human in which live the instincts and soul urges more connected to the body and the earthly in us...that in us which we must transform out of our higher Self, which is our work during Advent.

Rudolf Steiner speaks about the meteors during August, the Perseids, in relation to the cosmic iron they carry and how this works to assist us, even in our blood, to awaken to the Michael season. This iron is of a Mars nature and serves to strengthen our forces of will and assist in our uniting with the Michael "awakening" within. Mars also has another nature, which can become confrontational egotism. However, this meteor shower does not have comet origins but has asteroid origins. It does not originate from the special extra-zodiacal cosmos of the comets, which come from outside our solar system, but rather from the asteroid belt, within our solar system as a regular revolving presence along with the planets and in special relationship to Mars. Like the meteor showers which originate from comet debris left behind with their cosmic iron, these asteroids too contain iron, the iron of Mars. Physically speaking, comets are composed of dust and ice, whereas asteroids are composed of mineral and rock. I see this as having a distinctive difference in the nature of these meteor showers from those originating from comet "debris". Why?

Let us digress for a moment to explore this distinction. Steiner speaks of the comets as having a kind of purifying element, a cleansing element in the cosmos. They come from outside the solar system, from that distant realm of the Kuiper Belt and even beyond from the Oort Cloud, as visitors passing through. As a side note here, though it's not possible to go into this in this article, exactly during this time of the Geminid meteor shower, there is a visible comet appearing in the heavens (hardly visible to the naked eye, most likely viewed through binoculars). In fact, it comes closest to the Earth on December 12 and also sweeps very close (close in cometary parlance) to Venus on December 18th and then is visible on through the winter. It will round the Sun at its perihelion on January 3rd for greatest visibility. This is Comet Leonard, named after its discoverer, Greg Leonard (no relation to the constellation Leo!) which Earth Sky Magazine has awarded as "2021's best comet". (a bit of humor here). According to astronomers, this comet has been wending its way towards our Sun for 35,000 years. So, for certain, it will not be seen again! It reminds us of the truly extra-zodiacal nature of the home of the comets. I include this only for some contemplation this year during Advent, but one must consider, since cosmic timings are never merely change or coincidence, that there is a relation here to this meteor shower. We

have a comet coming closest to the Earth at the same time as the Geminid meteor showers in these few days.

But let us return to my thinking on the unique spiritual quality of this meteor shower as asteroid, not comet, debris. What are the asteroids? The asteroids are scattered in the asteroid belt between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars. The planetary spheres of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn carry the memories of the previous evolutionary cycles before Earth Evolution, known as Ancient Saturn, Ancient Sun and Ancient Moon. In fact, one can picture the “size” of the orbits of these planets as the “size” of the cosmic spheres of our evolutionary existence which became smaller as evolution progressed. In Ancient Saturn the origins were laid down for the very foundations of the human physical (non-material) body; on Ancient Sun the etheric body was developed; on Ancient Moon, the astral body. Earth evolution is the great cycle of the development of the ego, the human stage. In *Occult Science*, Rudolf Steiner elaborates the great cycles of these evolutionary epochs. He describes the cycles of Ancient Moon and the development of the astral nature. He describes how during the Ancient Moon evolution a Great Cosmic War took place between the higher evolutionary beings and those beings who rebelled or remained behind during this great cycle. The results or remnants of this War are what we see in the asteroid belt. So these Geminid meteors have the more mineral element of iron, unlike the cometary cosmic iron element and they have a relationship to the Great War of Ancient Moon.

We can now look at the mythological stories to help with understanding. The Geminids are named so because they radiate out of Gemini, specifically the area of the star Castor. Also during the time of this meteor shower, the Sun is at the very end of the stars of Scorpio, actually near the star Lesath, which is the Stinger of Death of Scorpio, about to cross into the Archer, which stands opposite Gemini. Winter Solstice and the Holy Nights of Christmas occur when the Sun is passing through the Archer, which means the Earth is passing opposite through the Gemini, the Twins. As I spoke about in my recent article on Advent, in Scorpio, based on the work of Willi Sucher in relation to Occult Science, we also have the memory of that cycle of Ancient Moon which was the great rebellion and War in Heaven. So at the time of the Geminids, our Sun is going through those stars of “rebellion” of Scorpio and its relation to the fallen nature of the human being, the dragon whom Michael battled and has cast down into humanity. With the picture of the Sun crossing into Archer on Dec. 18th opposite this region where the Geminids have just completed and in which the Earth is passing, in Gemini, we can perhaps think about this imagination of “twins” or of dualism, which both of these constellations carry. This again would be another article to go into in depth.

One could see in this time of Advent approaching Christmas, our encounter with our darker twin, our double, or one could even go so far to say, our meeting with the lesser Guardian of the Threshold who’s terrible gaze protects us from unauthorized entry into the spiritual world. In future we must transform and bring with us this “double” twin into our further evolution, or we may succumb to its powerful instinctual life bound to the earthly, as individuals or on a humanity-wide scale.

Here we can take the two myths associated with the Geminid meteor shower for a deeper perspective. These myths of course have many levels of meaning so in this article, I am really touching on one aspect of the complexities in the myths to build this perspective for today.

The first myth is of course the myth behind Gemini, the Twins, Castor and Pollux. The meteors radiate from Castor. Who was Castor? The twins were both born by the same mortal mother but by different fathers. Castor had a mortal father, the father of Pollux was a god, none other than Zeus. So Castor was

of earthly and Pollux of heavenly origin. Here we have a picture of dualism, the polarity of the earthly and heavenly. There are several stories about these twins, but the key element in relation to the spiritual nature of Gemini for us today lies in the story of the death of Castor. He was killed in fighting and Pollux was given the choice by Zeus to either ascend and live with the gods on Mount Olympus or to sacrifice his immortality to rescue his brother Castor from Hades. He chose the sacrificial deed. They both then would spend half their time on Olympus and half their time in Hades, together. (This is also a picture of the Twins as part of the year in the night sky and part of the year in the day sky.) This is a beautiful story for the Greeks and for us today about the deed of sacrifice. Not to elaborate now, but the deed of Christ on Golgotha has a deep cosmological relation to Gemini. So here we have perhaps one picture of the twins as portrayed in Gemini, in which the higher twin sacrifices himself for the lower, earthly twin rather than choosing to ascend to the world of the gods.

The other story is not about twins, but I think we can discover a twin element in relation to the Advent task of preparation. The Sun is passing through Scorpio and into Archer for Christmas, opposite Gemini. The Geminid meteors have a relation to the great Rebellion of Ancient Moon and the asteroid belt, which are of the nature of Mars and a memory of this great War. Here too we can find a twin analogy. If we consider the path of Advent as a path of meeting and transforming our lower twin, our unredeemed nature, as expressed in Scorpio, where the Sun is passing now, then the story of Phaethon can show us another picture. It is a picture that can illuminate the lower nature without the preparation and guidance of the immortal higher nature. I will include the complete story of Phaeton at the end of this article, but here I include a brief summary. Phaethon was the son of the Sun God Helios and a mortal woman, Clymene. (in some stories she is a nymph). So Phaeton was also of this double nature of god and man. Phaethon was teased and bullied by classmates when he claimed he was the son of Helios, so he demanded to confirm his godly birth by visiting his father, Helios, who lived far away and was the Charioteer of the Sun in the heavens. He went to his father's splendid sun-like palace adorned with gems and shining gold. He told his father of his humiliation and his father was moved and told him he would grant him any favor he asked to show him that he was indeed the son of Helios. To test his father, Phaeton demanded that his father allow him to drive the Sun Chariot, and though his father did not want to, he had granted him any favor, so he allowed it. As soon as Phaethon took the reins of the Sun Chariot, he saw that he had no control and he wreaked destruction upon the Earth until Zeus intervened and struck him dead with a thunderbolt, where fell into the River Eridanus. Here we have the mortal who demands to enter where he is not prepared to enter irrespective of the Sun God's warnings. One can even see it as a kind of attempt at initiation, at crossing the threshold by force without preparation or knowledge. It resulted in destruction and death. The asteroid from which the Geminids arise is named Phaethon because it is the one asteroid that travels most closely to the Sun.

As I think about these Geminid meteors during Advent, coming from the asteroid belt and occurring as the Sun in the cycle of the year is in Scorpio, approaching the Archer, it seems a warning and cautionary tale. It presents two paths of how humanity must deal with the dualism or polarity between our two selves. Both myths are connected with this relation of the heavenly to the earthly, the mortal nature with the immortal nature. In the one, the immortal one sacrifices its own divine nature out of love to rescue the earthly twin, his brother, from Hades. This is the Christic path. In the other, the pride and recklessness of the earthly one who attempts to ascend to the Sun chariot rashly and with no awareness of the tools needed for such an ascent, results in destruction for the self and the world.

At Solstice/Christmas, the Sun stands in this vertical zodiacal axis of Gemini/Archer. This vertical cosmic axis is the axis of egoity, of selfhood. The horizontal axis of Virgo/Pisces carries a different task, related to love and wisdom. So, as we approach this Christmas, passing through Advent, through Scorpio,

through the Geminid meteors and the memory of the Great Rebellion against the Sun beings, we are called to prepare the way for the One who is to be born in us. We are called to become the true nature of the Self, of the human individuality, out of a spiritual deepening and recognition of the deed of sacrifice, both in the birth and baptism events celebrated at Christmas as well as the coming Easter event. We are, I think, during these Geminid meteor days, offered imaginations that show us these two paths, one of sacrifice of the higher to the lower to bring redemption to the Earthly, the other the egoistic rash impulsive path of self-seeking without true knowledge, driven by our lower instinctual life. This is not only a picture for each individual in our times, but for the greater choice of humanity in these days, which if we but look we can see playing out around the world.

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The Story of Phaethon

Phaethon, whose name means "shining", was the son of the Sun-God Helios and a mortal woman, Clymene. He was living only with his mother as his father had a difficult task to perform. He was

responsible to drive the horse chariot with the Sun from the one side to the Earth to the other during the daytime. One day, a school-mate of Phaethon laughed at his claim that he was the son of a god and said he didn't believe him. In humiliation, Phaethon went to his mother and demanded proof of his paternity. Clymene assured her son that he was indeed the son of the great god Helios and sent him on his way to the palace of his father to establish his legitimacy.

A delighted and hopeful Phaethon travelled to India, as there was the palace of his father who was supposed to begin every day his course from the East. When he reached the palace of Helios, he was astonished at its magnificence and luxury. His eyes were almost blinded by the dazzle of the light all around him. The palace was supported by massive columns adorned with glittering gold and precious stones, while the ceilings and doors were made with polished ivory and silver. Phaethon watched with awe the exquisite representation of the earth, the sea and sky on the walls of the palace.

Amazed with all the luxury he had faced, Phaethon came into the august presence of his reputed father, Helios, sitting on a diamond-studded throne surrounded by the presences of the Day, the Month, the Year, and the Hour. His other attendants included Spring, bedecked with flowers, Summer, with a garland of spear-like ripened grains, Autumn, with feet reddened with grape juice and Winter, with hoar-frost in his hair.

Phaethon told Helios about the humiliation he had to suffer because of the imputation of illegitimacy. He pleaded with Helios to recognize him as his son and establish beyond all doubt the legitimacy of his birth. Helios got deeply moved and firmly affirmed Phaethon's paternity and legitimacy. In fact, he declared, in the presence of all his attendants, that he will gladly grant his son any favor that he would ask him.

Phaethon decided to test the limits of his father's love and benevolence. The rash boy asked to be allowed to drive the awesome Chariot of the Sun for one day. Helios was fearful at his son's irrational request. He tried to explain to his son that even the mighty Zeus could not presume to drive the Chariot of the Sun, much less a mere mortal. That onerous task was reserved solely for him, the god Helios. Unfortunately, once the gods promised a favor, they could not withdraw or deny it. Helios used all his persuasive skills to plead with the rash Phaethon to withdraw his outrageous demand, but to no avail. The boy insisted that Helios keep his promise. The god of the Sun could do nothing else but to give in. Helios tried to warn his son of the dangers involved in driving the Chariot with its fiery horses which even the great god himself had found difficult to control on many occasions. As soon as Phaethon took off, he realized that he had taken on more than he could handle. He found himself utterly powerless to control the fiery horses. When the horses realized the weakness and inexperience of their young charioteer, they began to steer a wild and dangerous course. The Chariot of the Sun was said to have blazed a gash in the skies which supposedly became the Milky Way, a spiral galaxy. Then the uncontrollable Chariot with the Sun began to steer a too low course, hitting the earth and unleashing immense destruction, including the burning of the African continent and turning it into desert, making the Ethiopian people black-skinned, since they were burnt from the fire of the Sun, and even causing considerable damage to the river Nile.

The danger of a greater destruction infuriated the chief of the gods, Zeus, who struck the boy down with his thunderbolt. The body of the dead Phaethon fell into the Eridanus River.