

## Astronomical Letters

By Willi Sucher while at Albrighton Hall – November 1951 to 25 December 1952

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### Letter 4 - August 1952

The letters preceding this present one were more or less occupied with attempts to delineate some methods of approach with regard to our studies of the stars. Please consider it only as an outline of the methods that we must apply from the viewpoint of anthroposophical spiritual science. We shall have much more to say about these questions as we go along in our studies.

However, we have now reached a point where we should enter a bit more deeply into practical considerations of events in the sky. Thus we shall gradually build up a solid foundation for a practical and realistic star wisdom that will stand firmly on the two pillars of exact methodical approach and of systematic realization of cosmic implications.

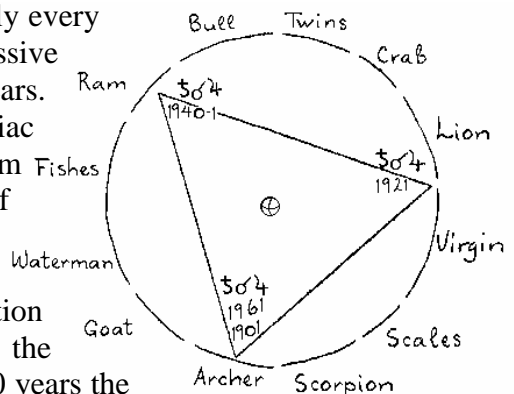
First of all, we must find a guiding line with regard to that which happens in the sky. There ought to be a direct connection somewhere with the past that has been carried over into the present and which expresses itself by the ever recurring aspects of the planets among themselves, though in manifold modifications. Likewise, we also expect threads leading into the future. If we find these guiding lines of the history of cosmic events, which I am going to explain presently, we will be able to establish a sound knowledge of the inter-relationships between celestial and terrestrial history. Thereby we shall gradually attain the capacity to read the calendar of the starry events in a humanity-wide sense and without those narrow and very often egoistic astrological interpretations, which you know very well.

You will have experienced yourselves how unsatisfactory the usual picking out of a single aspect is—how it usually leads to the most trivial interpretations, which have unfortunately contributed much to make the wisdom of the stars a ridiculous and superstitious pastime of a humanity that no longer takes the reality of the spiritual world seriously. We need methods of interpretation that will enable us to get beyond our narrow margin of sheer daily drudgery and to become citizens of the whole universe again, ascertaining our true spiritual dignity.

The cosmos of the stars has grown in the hands of modern science to overwhelming spatial dimensions, so much so that our Earth and its humanity are in danger of dropping back into insignificance. Whether we need to follow such modern world conceptions is a different question. But isn't it ridiculous to think that such a majestic universe can be made responsible for such trivial happenings such as breaking a cup, or asking whether we ought to transact business on a certain day or not? The mere existence of modern science demands that we, of this present age, cultivate a different moral standard, especially with regard to cosmic facts.

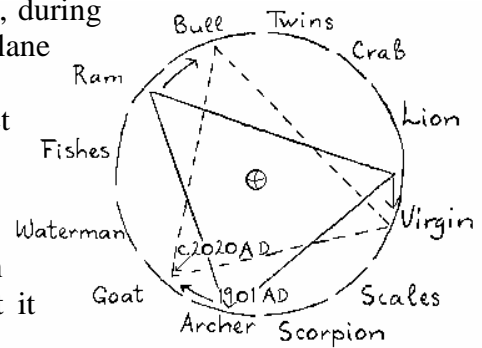
The year 1951-52 has been marked by the threefold opposition of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellations of Virgin and Fishes. We know that these kinds of cosmic events do not happen very often and that they are cornerstones in the history of the sky. They are like the hour divisions on a clock, and they can therefore be a guide that enables us to read other, smaller rhythmic events and aspects in the sky as the smaller hands on that clock. From this point of view, today we will especially consider a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter that will happen in February 1961. That conjunction will take place between the constellations of Archer and Goatfish.

Let us now briefly recapitulate the facts that are connected with these so-called Great Conjunctions, about which we have spoken so often in lectures, etc. They take place roughly every 20 years (first diagram), but a closer study reveals that three successive conjunctions occur in three different positions of the Zodiac over 40 years. The fourth one, after 60 years, comes back to the point in the Zodiac where the first one took place 60 years before. The following diagram will help us to understand this fact better. In 1901 a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter took place in the constellation of Archer (second diagram). Twenty years later another conjunction occurred in Virgin, and you will remember that in 1940 during the war, another conjunction occurred in Ram, which was repeated twice during 1940-1. In 1961 the 1901 event will happen again, between Goat and Archer. Thus, after 60 years the

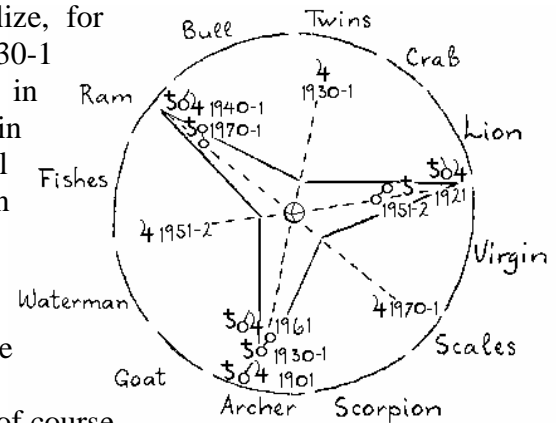


Great Conjunction will have come back to roughly the same point in the Zodiac where the one of 1901 took place. We see the planets Saturn and Jupiter joining hands, as it were, during the Great Conjunctions at the corners of an equilateral triangle on the plane of the Zodiac.

Yet the conjunctions do not come back after 60 years to the exact same positions. For instance, the conjunction of 1901 still took place in Archer, but the same one of 1961 will occur a few degrees further on, between Archer and Goat. The same applies to the other corners of the triangle. We must therefore imagine that this triangle is revolving in a forward direction through the Zodiac. Calculations will show that it needs about 200 years to move from one constellation to the next.



A similar rhythm applies also to the oppositions of Saturn and Jupiter, at which time Saturn stands in one of the corners of the triangle, but Jupiter occupies the opposite constellation (third diagram). These oppositions take place about 30 years after the conjunctions. Let us visualize, for instance, once more the Great Conjunction of 1901 in Archer. In 1930-1 an opposition occurred during which Saturn was again standing in Archer, but Jupiter was in Twins. And also thirty years after 1961, in 1990-1, another opposition will happen, but at that time Saturn will be in Goat and Jupiter in Crab. We see that the triangle will then have already moved into Goat.



Thus we can perceive the triangle of the Great Conjunctions and Oppositions as a kind of invisible star in which the Earth is embedded. This “star” is slowly moving through the Zodiac like the big hand on the great cosmic clock.

We said that this three-cornered star is moving in time. We can, of course, calculate its movements, which will lead us to the most interesting and illuminating discoveries. For instance, the corner of the triangle that has now arrived in Archer, and will soon enter into Goat, has moved through all the preceding constellations of Scorpion, Scales, Virgin, and so on. If we go far enough back, we come to a time when we can find it, for instance, again in the constellation of Goat about 2020 AD. This happened about the 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. A complete rotation of the triangle through the fixed-star Zodiac takes about 2600 years. Especially one Great Conjunction at that time is most interesting. It took place in the year 543 BC, and it is remarkable for the fact that about the time of the conjunction, the planets Mars and Venus were standing close to Saturn and Jupiter in Goat. (You will recollect that the planet Venus has a connection with the Mercury of the Mysteries.)

This was the age of Gautama Buddha. We don't have absolutely reliable dates about him, of course, but it is quite possible that this year of 543 BC was somehow connected with his life. We need not press it, for we know all too well that cosmic events, or rather the spiritual facts indicated by them, may work on Earth long before the aspects appear in the sky and vice versa. The occurrence of the historic event and the time of the planetary aspect may nevertheless be related to each other according to exact mathematical-astronomical laws.

Although we cannot know what happened in Buddha's life at this date, the event in the sky is instructive. It happened in November 543 BC. The Sun was then in Scorpion. First, Mars moved past the closely standing Saturn and Jupiter, later on Venus (Occult Mercury) followed. All this happened in Goat, which signifies something like a great turning-point.

We know that Buddha is also called “Mercury” because he is connected with that great spiritual stream that has set itself the task to transform and heal the “Mars” Earth. Buddha's teaching can be regarded as a way or path to purify the Mars faculties, which are inherent in all of us born on the Earth. Those events in 543 BC, suggest therefore a certain correspondence to the Buddha impulse in humanity.

(You will realize that this is a rather subtle subject. The way in which we consider it here is naturally all too open to attacks from misunderstandings. I would thus advise you to treat these communications as confidential and only as intended for your personal information. The same applies to the following explanations in this letter.)

The Great Conjunction in 543 BC signifies the position of one of the points of that three-cornered, invisible “star” of which we spoke earlier. During the following years it moved on through the Zodiac. At the time of Christ it had arrived in Fishes, and in 7 BC a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter also took place in Fishes.

Many of you will recall what we have worked out in the past, in lectures, etc., about this Great Conjunction in 7 BC. We have discovered that it was connected with the Birth of Jesus, though we cannot share the view of many that the birth actually took place in 7 BC. The date of the birth of Jesus has become the subject of great controversies on account of difficulties with regard to the chronology of the events in Palestine at the beginning of the Christian Era. This chronology is based on the year of the foundation of Rome, whose date, itself, is not absolutely certain. According to the available historic sources, the information ranges from 753 BC to 747 BC. Therefore, also the date of the death of Herod, which for instance plays a certain part in the accounts of the Gospels, is uncertain. This led to difficulties with regard to the actual date of the birth of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke, and a belief has gradually come about that the celebration of Christmas on 25 December, referring to the year 1 BC, is based on fiction. However, as there is no agreement on the foundation year of Rome, it is rather futile to take the modern views too seriously. We take the year 747 BC as the year of the foundation of Rome against 753 BC of orthodox science of history. The former date, given by the Roman historian Fabius Pictor, has been confirmed by Rudolf Steiner.

You will remember that in our researches we simply took the traditional date of 25 December 1 BC. Thereby we have achieved very illuminating results. For instance, the aspect of the sky at midnight of the traditional first Christmas reveals a very clear connection with the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, even with that year 543 BC, which we mentioned above. Furthermore, we have found that the Great Conjunction of 7 BC is closely related to the sky of the original Christmas. That conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Fishes in 7 BC is the “Spiritual Nativity” belonging to the actual nativity on 25 December 1 BC. (See Steiner’s *Cosmic and Human Thought*, concerning the Spiritual Nativity.)

We cannot be surprised by this connection of the birth of Jesus, mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, with those cosmic events at the lifetime of Buddha. From the indications of Rudolf Steiner, we know how closely the Luke Jesus was related to the Buddha Impulse.

Thus we follow that one point of the “three-cornered star” through the ages. It becomes more and more alive, more related to definite events in the history of humanity, and also we see it develop like a living being. We should certainly find many more interesting points, if we would follow this specific set of Great Conjunctions through the centuries after Christ. This would be a special task on which we cannot embark now. However, we shall single out a few more of these conjunctions and thereby try to create a feeling for their essential nature.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, this point of the “three-cornered star”, which we have in mind, had arrived in the constellation of Lion. Actually, in 826 AD a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter took place in front of the Lion’s head. Mars was also standing close to the two planets at that time, whereas Venus (occult Mercury) had performed a superior conjunction earlier in the same portion of the Zodiac.

We know that during the 9<sup>th</sup> century the historic Parsifal events took place. Facts and conclusions derived from the asterograms of Julian the Apostate and of Tycho Brahe suggest that the year 828 AD was most decisive with regard to the movement of the Holy Grail and Parsifal. (I presume that you know Rudolf Steiner’s indications about Julian-Herzeleide-Tycho Brahe and, also of Herzeleide’s connection with Parsifal.)

From the implications of the constellation of Lion, in which those planetary events of 828 happened, we gather that the stream of esoteric, cosmic Christianity went through a decisive phase. We can even say that this was a point in history when esoteric and exoteric Christianity definitely went different ways. Forty years later, in 869-70, the famous Council of Constantinople took place, about which Rudolf Steiner has spoken so often. At that time the spiritual nature of the human being was denied by the decrees of that Council. This event in Christianity stands under the implications of another set of Great Conjunctions of the three-cornered star. In 868, after the famous Pope Nicholas I had died, a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter took place in Archer. This set of events lead us back to the time immediately after Golgotha, to the time of St. Stephen and the Saul to Paul conversion (see Acts of the Apostles).

We notice most interesting events as we follow the corners of the star of the Great Conjunctions during the following centuries, and we find these closely related to the destiny of esoteric Christianity. For instance, the

conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Virgin in 1246, which we mentioned in an earlier letter in connection with the final destruction of the Cathars, belongs to the same set of cosmic events that appear in diagram 3 above, in Archer. In 1305-6 another such conjunction took place, but by this time this one corner of the star had already moved into Scales. Shortly afterward the destruction of the Order of the Knight Templars began, which had been the last stronghold of esoteric Christianity.

After that time, this particular Great Conjunction moved into the constellation of Scorpion. In 1425 it already appeared in that part of the Zodiac. Later conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter in Scorpion took place in the course of the years 1484 and 1604. These cosmic events point to certain developments in humanity that can provide us with the key for the deeper understanding of the implications of this set of Great Conjunctions in our present Age. You will notice that the years 1425 and 1484 are associated with the working of Christian Rosenkretz, during that long incarnation when he became more than a hundred years old. But still more will you realize that the year 1604 was a most decisive year for the true Rosicrucian Impulse.

You know, of course, those grand aspects that Rudolf Steiner revealed in connection with the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Let us very briefly recapitulate the facts. At the beginning of the modern Age of the consciousness-soul, it became more and more apparent that the sphere of Mars had entered a phase of tremendous decline. We must take this concept of "Mars" in a very universal sense and not only look at the planet of the same name that appears in the sky. Also the planet Earth is deeply associated with this Mars, and the great spiritual leaders of humanity became aware that souls incarnating on the Earth brought materialistic impulses into this life from that sphere of declining Mars, which could lead only to the development of purely external and spirit-denying science and technology.

Another part of humanity developed a kind of mystic attitude, keeping them apart from the realities of physical life. Such attempts were made, for instance, in the Franciscan movement. This would have led to a deep rift in humanity, one part entirely devoted to a spirit-forsaken handling of the physical side of earthly existence, the other part given up to mysticism and asceticism, which were apt to neglect the physical and material aspects of life.

Christian Rosenkretz and his friends, among them also the last Buddha (who was, of course, not incarnated in a physical body), were aware of this extreme danger. Toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was decided that Buddha-"Mercury" should go to "Mars" in order to Christianize and heal that cosmic sphere.

This sending of Buddha out to Mars was for him an event similar to the Mystery of Golgotha for the Earth. Not only does the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Scorpion in 1603-4 imply this decisive stage of esoteric Christianity, but also the planets Mars and Venus (M-Mercury) indicate by their movements in those years profound developments in the spiritual world. We shall have to reserve a detailed description of these events for a later letter, because it seems to be important that we get a very clear picture of this whole complex. Also, we should not forget that during that year of 1603, the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkretz Anno 1459* was written down by Valentin Andreae, about which we shall have to say much more in future letters.

This corner of the three-cornered-star of the Great Conjunctions has now moved into Archer, and in 1961 it will be seen just ahead of the constellation of Goatfish. You will now also see why we have made this long detour in this letter. We did it in order to get a glimpse of the historic affiliations of this particular set of conjunctions. We shall make it the backbone of future considerations of cosmic events. You will then also see that the minor aspects and events in the planetary world from now till 1961 bear a close relationship to that Great Conjunction in 1961.

Thus we will come to a point where we will be able to stand in complete freedom facing the starry world. We shall read its implications only as gentle pointers to events in a realm that is closely associated with our individual moral Imagination and Christian responsibility.