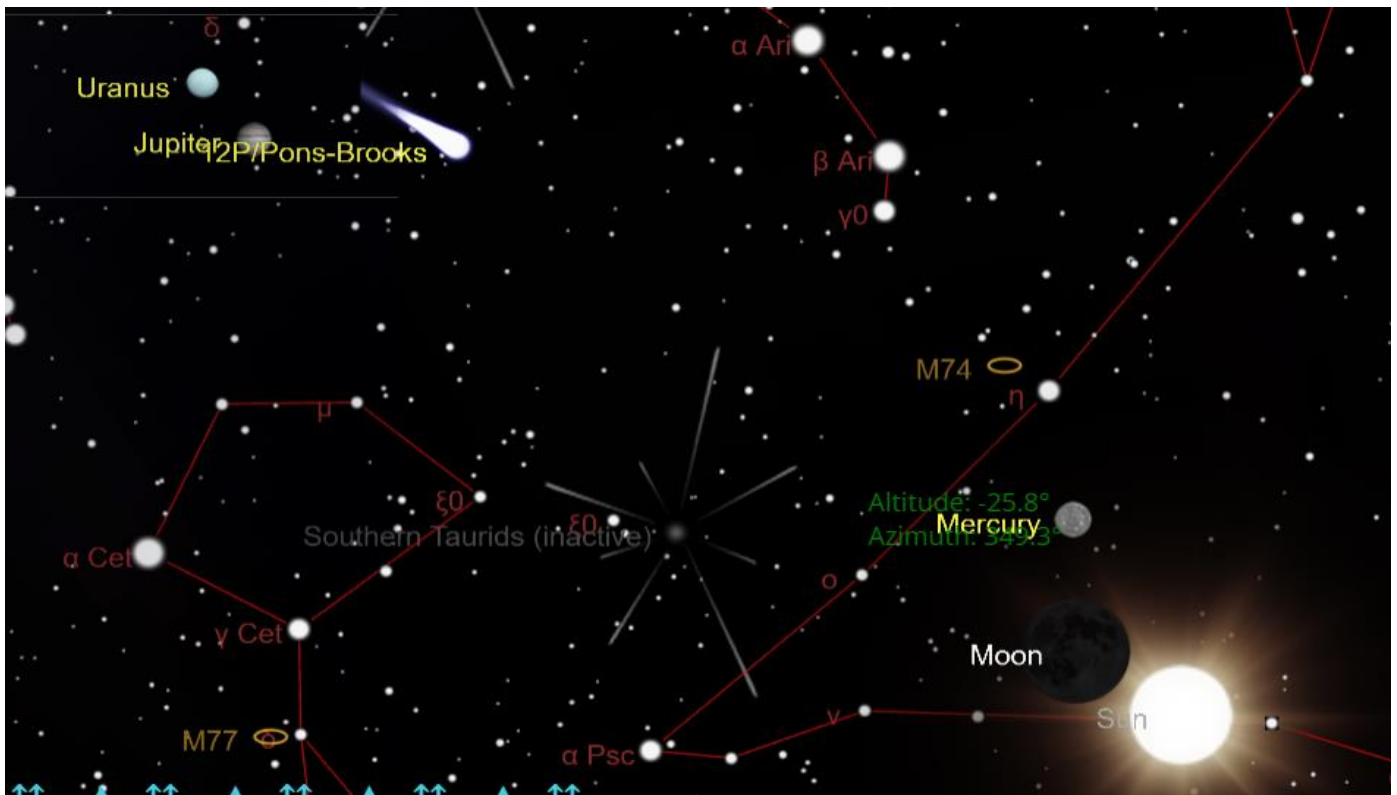
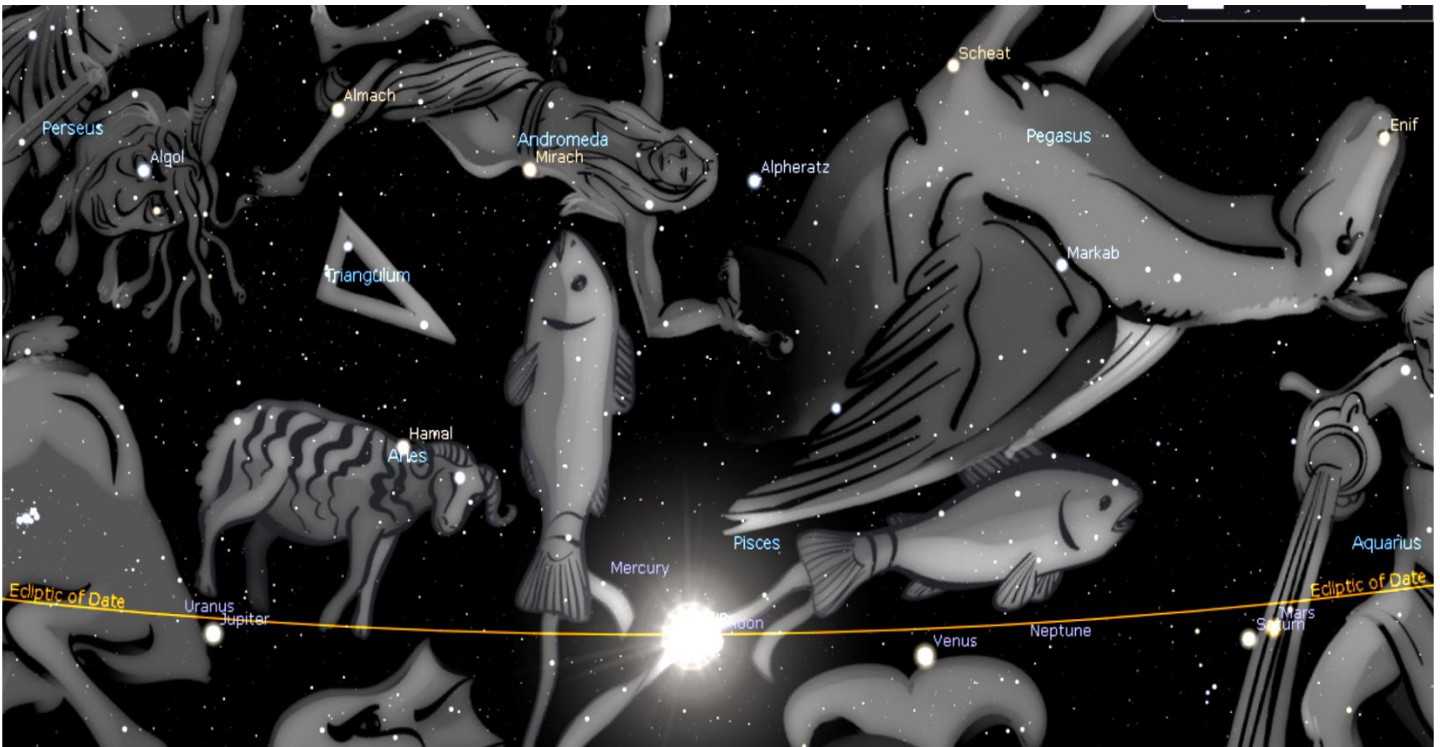


April 8 SOLAR ECLIPSE and PLANETARY ALIGNMENTS

PART 1



Working on this article during Holy Week, while inwardly living with the daily stages of the progression towards Good Friday and Easter Sunday, as described by Emil Bock in his book *The Three Years*, has been a deeply moving experience. Just as the event of Golgotha marked the greatest turning point in world evolution, this particular eclipse, and the range of simultaneous cosmic starry events around it, also point towards something quite especially significant. In fact, it is such a large and complex coming together of the cosmic intelligences of the planetary and starry worlds that it is somewhat overwhelming to consider the full import of meaning. Because of the complexity of events, this article will be in two parts. The first part will focus on the surrounding events in which the eclipse will occur. The second part will focus on the eclipse itself.

To begin, I would like to bring to awareness the fact that in astrosophy, when we speak of the stars, we must become conscious of the fact that we are striving to know the cosmic intelligences, the ranks of beings engaged in our cosmic evolution.

For these ancients knew that the Gods alone knew the secrets of the stellar world: the Gods, or as they were called later, the Cosmic Intelligences. The Cosmic Intelligences know the secret of the stellar world, and they alone can tell it. Therefore, the student had to follow the path of cognition which leads to an understanding intercourse with the Cosmic Intelligences... 'Intelligence' means the mutual relationships of conduct among the higher Hierarchies. What they do, how they relate themselves to one another, what they are to one another, — this is the Cosmic Intelligence.

Rudolf Steiner, Mystery Centres, Lecture XIII, GA 232, Dornach, 1923

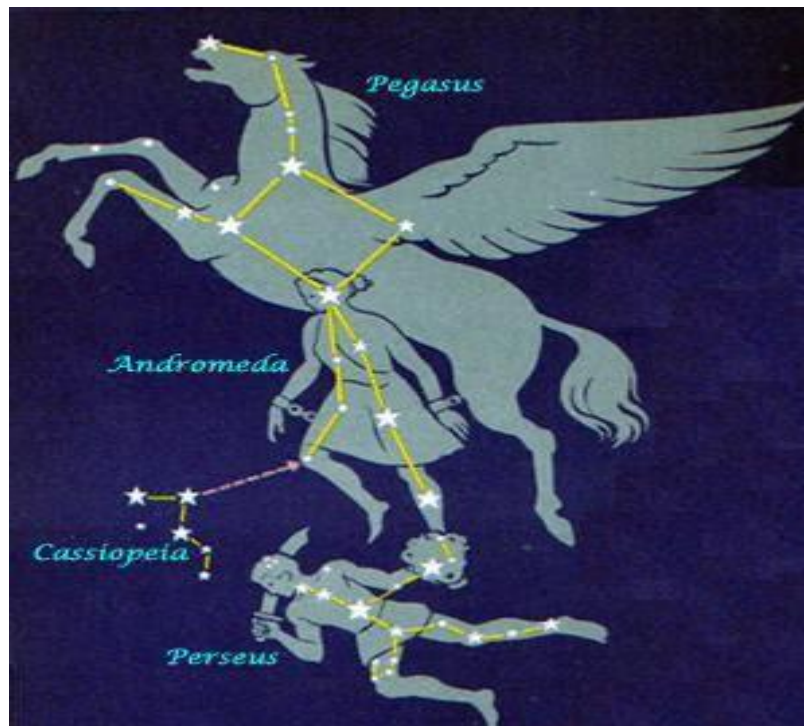
In describing the current events, I will simply try to present images and thoughts about the nature of the 'mutual relationships of conduct' among these cosmic intelligences which each person can then deepen in their own understanding. Second, it is no coincidence that certain configurations come together simultaneously, as these 'visible' planetary and star movements are for our materialistic consciousness helping us to discover the interrelationships among these cosmic spheres of being at particular times. It is not a matter of asking "what are the stars doing to us?" but rather, considering how we can raise our consciousness to better understand the potentialities as well as the challenges for humanity that these intelligences are expressing out of our own spiritual understanding. It is a modern spiritual fact that the higher intelligences no longer guide or compel us, but rather proceed with cosmic evolution and are waiting for us to unite ourselves with them. Only those beings in opposition to evolutionary principles seek to compel.

It is my experience in working with the current star configuration, which includes the eclipse as well as a comet, that we are engaging almost all the planetary intelligences in three zodiac constellations, as well as special stars in other constellations and a comet...the full spectrum from the highest spheres of the first Hierarchy to the Moon sphere nearest to us. This article can at best only point to certain indications.

Above are two images. The first from Stellarium, an excellent free software program for tracking the heavens, and the second from the Planetarium program on the website, TheSkyLive. The first shows the full heavens above the horizon at eclipse time, which will be elaborated on below. The second shows a smaller view of the heavens, where you can see the Moon just having passed the Sun, and the comet Pons-Brookes very near to Jupiter and Uranus, at its closest point, its perihelion. So, let us begin to explore and hopefully take the parts to build a whole cohesive imagination.

At eclipse time we are about 3.3 years since the Great Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter at winter solstice, 2020 – a Christic interval. As I have written about extensively, this Great Conjunction inaugurated a twenty-year theme calling for a new annunciation in humanity. This new awakening will come through a catharsis, as do all breakthroughs. So, we can follow these two great outer planets, the one carrying the intentions and consequences of world karma from the past and the other carrying the potential for a new vision for the future, as they progress. Their ongoing relationships to each other and other planets are pointers for us in the

unfolding of the great conjunction impulse. At eclipse time both planets are significantly situated in relation to each other and to other planets which can further point to this over-arching theme. If you refer to the top image, the yellow line is the path of the Sun and planets through the zodiac. On the right, you can see Mars and Saturn together in conjunction in the water flowing from the urn of the Waterman, Aquarius. They will be conjunct for several days around the eclipse. On the opposite side of the image, about 60 degrees (a sextile relationship) away from Mars and Saturn, you can see Jupiter and Uranus in conjunction. This 60-degree aspect is a Mercury relationship, one that generally promotes communication (or of course, it can be failures in communication). These slow-moving planets of Jupiter and Uranus conjunct about every 14 years and will be in orb of conjunction for weeks. So, this conjunction is infrequent and important, particularly in our times. On eclipse day they are only 2 degrees apart and will come into exact alignment on April 17th. They stand in the stars of the Ram, Aries. In the center, equally 30 degrees away from these pairs of conjunctions stands the Sun and the Moon in eclipse in the stars of Pisces. The 30-degree relationship is what is called a semi-sextile, and though often not used, is you could say a more combusive, difficult split-sextile. Mercury is also there, near conjunct the Sun, in retrograde, meaning coming around between Sun and Earth, with its inferior conjunction exactly on April 11th. Very near to Jupiter and Uranus is the comet Pons-Brooks (see image), called the Devil Comet due to two "horns" formed by its tail. So here we have a mighty and expansive cosmic picture of planetary, zodiac and comet meetings. But before we begin to dig deeper, we must add to the zodiacal star backgrounds to these conjunctions, some additional elements that bring the picture to fullness. If you observe the first image from Stellarium and follow the line up from Jupiter and Uranus, you will come into the constellation of Perseus, who is a kind of Micha-el cosmic figure. I will elaborate further on this constellation and its full story in the stars a bit later. But the line of Jupiter and Uranus is very close to and approaching a specific star in Perseus, which is the star Algol, the eye of Medusa, also called the Winking Demon. If you now go to the location of the Sun at eclipse, and follow the line up, you come to the other end of this Perseus story told in the stars, to the star Alpheratz, which is both the star in the forehead (third eye) of Andromeda as well as the star in the navel (or sometimes wing tip) of Pegasus, the Winged Intelligence. In some myths it is said that Pegasus arose out of the blood of the severed head of Medusa in others out of the head of Andromeda. (The Stellarium figures are not exactly true to astronomy as it does not connect Andromeda and Pegasus. See a more accurate picture below) As you can see, we now have quite the picture unfolding at eclipse and the days around it! How can we begin to gain some insight? How can we meet and speak to this imagination?



For star observers, on April 8th and for days before and after, if you go out before sunrise, you can see Mars and Saturn above the eastern horizon, preceding the Sun rising. Go out and speak to them. After sunset, you can see bright Jupiter (Uranus is of course not visible) in the western sky. Go out and speak to them. In North America, during the day and at about noon in the eastern USA, the Sun will stand darkened in Aries below Alpheratz with Uranus and Jupiter 30 degrees away in the east and the comet close by, and Mars and Saturn 30 degrees away in the west -- a powerful imagination. Speak to this eclipse and this star imagination! Rudolf Steiner in his verse about our new relationship to the stars, says that it is now time for humanity, out of the silence and loss of our descent into separation from the divine world and the development of our earthly consciousness, to again awaken a new spiritual sight and spiritual understanding and learn to now speak to the stars. But what do we speak? This is the work of a new astrosophy. It begins by learning to know the beings working through the stars and planets.

So, let us further develop our speaking on this eclipse day and during the days of these planetary conjunctions. In this configuration, due to the eclipse, it is important that we carry the transformative power of the Sun I AM force in our thinking and feeling and particularly in the lower realm of our consciousness, because during the darkening of the Sun, there is unleashed a kind of outpouring and release into the cosmos of the shadow and adversarial forces working in the lower realms of diminished human consciousness. I will develop the activity of the eclipse, and particularly its traverse across North America and especially the heartland of the United States, in the second part of this article.

As I write this article during the Easter week, I become aware of this star picture: the Sun being darkened in the center with the conjunction of Uranus and Jupiter on our left and the conjunction of Saturn and Mars on our right. The thought arises of the two thieves crucified with Christ, the one on the left (His right) asked for forgiveness. The one on the right (His left) jeered saying if He were really Christ, save Himself and them. The Christ/Sun on that day is also darkened in the crucifixion. As we proceed with this configuration of Jupiter/Uranus and Mars/Saturn, perhaps something of this image of Golgotha can add to our understanding.

Let us begin to enter these pictures, not so much to arrive at an intellectual answer to "meaning" but rather as a large living imagination to hold in our consciousness and let arise then our own inner pictures for a deeper understanding. If we consider Jupiter and Uranus conjunct on one side and Mars and Saturn conjunct on the other, we have a definite contrast. Saturn and Mars point us more to the past. Jupiter and Uranus point us into the future, yet with a specific challenge connected to Uranus. Saturn is the sphere which is the great cosmic memory. It carries and records everything, the great akasha, since the beginnings of our cosmic evolution, which in spiritual science is called Ancient Saturn. Saturn bears and orders world karma and in this way serves to carry the will of the Divine Plan of the Father principle. In this sense it works to reconcile and balance out humanity's journey to ultimately align it again with the higher cosmic intentions for evolution. Saturn stands for justice and the law of karma, sometimes as a harsh judge of the consequences of humanity's diversion from the Divine plan. He now meets with Mars, the god of War. Mars represents our current evolutionary stage that is already past due for transition to the next stage. Mars represents the first half of Earth evolution in which humanity separated out from divine guidance to become independent egos and to develop a relationship to earthly matter, eventually our materialistic world view. Mars also carries the memory of a past Earth incarnation in cosmic evolution called in spiritual science Ancient Moon, during which the great rebellion and war in heaven took place, which was ultimately overcome by the Sun beings. (See Rudolf Steiner's *Occult Science*) So, it carries a memory of aggression, war, rebellion, and separation, yet ultimately also reunion with the Sun. Mars we can imagine as a sphere which asserts independence, even aggression, because of the descent of humanity into egoism. But this too is part of the Divine Plan to allow human freedom in this separation. The choice now is whether with this freedom, human beings will turn towards a path of reunion with the Divine spiritual out of the new Christic power within. This is a choice, not an inevitability. These planets are conjunct in the stars of the flowing waters of life from Aquarius, the cosmic

etheric forces. This is the zodiacal constellation which will bring the new impulse to humanity for the next cultural age, the Aquarian Age, or the 6th Cultural Age, after our current age concludes. Aquarius also carries our future potential of a new living or “etheric” thinking that we can develop to work with Earth existence out of a spiritual understanding. So, here we have the planet of the law of karma, the judgement, which presents to us our karmic situation, meeting the planet of our current materialistic, rebellious, egoistic time, in those stars which herald the future potential awaiting if we can transform this separate egoistic humanity into one which is receptive to the waters of Aquarius. It is the Mars sphere in us, the rebellious astral nature, that is to be transformed to achieve the higher Spirit Selfhood which will be the foundation for the new culture of the 6th Age. This is the challenge and the question posed by this Saturn and Mars conjunction. Yet, if humanity cannot consciously rise to this challenge, the old ways could lead to violence and war. This is akin on a cosmic level to how we in our own lives, when we refuse to transform our egoistic selves encounter only more difficulties in our becoming. The adversarial forces will fight to hold onto materialism and the laws of the old world and block the forces of Aquarius, thus fixing and resisting the further proper unfolding of world karma. Saturn in astrology is often called the Great Malefic, as a negative planetary influence. Yet seen in a higher light, the often harsh law of Saturn is only the higher effort to guide karma back to alignment with the true Divine plan This is true in both for our individual lives as well as in humanity as a whole. Actions have objective consequences, not as punishment but as re-alignment. This is the question of this conjunction...whether a militaristic, materialistic culture based only on the laws of the past will prevail or whether this “gift” of Mars can be transformed to further world karma and move into the future aquarian potentialities.

That is one picture out of the larger threefold imagination. Now if we look to the left side, we find this relatively rare (every 14 years) meeting of Jupiter and Uranus. It occurs in the stars of Aries, which it has not done for over a thousand years. However, this Uranus and Jupiter conjunction does share a location in the stars where it was in 1941. This year the exact conjunction is at 51 degrees which is still just in the stars of Aries as you can see in the picture. In 1941, the conjunction was at 55 degrees, just at the transition into the stars of Taurus. This location is below the fixed star Algol, the Demon Eye of Medusa’s head. In this Uranus/Jupiter conjunction we also have great potentiality as well as great adversarial possibilities. This conjunction in the Ram can point to a time of new vision, new ideals for the future, even enlightenment. It can become even a kind of revolution in our vision for the future. Steiner describes Jupiter as the Great Thinker of the cosmos. It is the sphere associated not only with life-filled cosmic wisdom, the workshop so to speak of the Kyriotetes, but also that sphere which carries the expansive vision of the Earth’s distant future evolution, called in spiritual science Future Jupiter. Jupiter can connect us with our higher ideals, our visions for the future. Uranus, as one of the new planets, has a twofold nature which depends on our own cognitive development. It can become the sphere of true Imaginative cognition, as described by Rudolf Steiner, or it can fall to the Luciferic sphere of illusion and a “spirituality” that takes us to the past of unfreedom. It would return to a spirituality based on blood and nation, a kind of group consciousness based on old relationships to the divine, not the new spiritual freedom we are called to achieve. Aries, where they meet, is the first constellation associated with the “I AM,” the Ram (Lamb) of God. It is also associated with the head and the development of thinking, where we experience our “I.” On the one hand we can see the gesture of the symbol for Ares in the line of the brow into the nose, with a downward movement into the brain and the development of logical thinking. In our current light age, we are ready to reverse this downward thrust into the brain into an upward gesture towards a new kind of spiritual thinking. Willi Sucher used to call it “clair-thinking” as opposed to clairvoyance.



This dynamic can be seen in the relationship of Uranus to Jupiter in Aries. On the one hand we can work at the transformation of our souls out of the new I AM force in us. Or we continue with a thinking of the brain based on the senses alone. Jupiter is associated with that chakra connected to the new vision, the third eye in the forehead, which we can see in the brow image of the Aries symbol. This image of the third eye will appear again in another star picture later. So, this conjunction in Aries can become a real call from the divine intelligences for humanity to raise its thinking to the new, to ascend to the higher stages of cognition and create new ideals and new forms for the future. However, we have two elements that add to this important conjunction of Uranus and Jupiter in Aries. One is that the conjunction is below the star Algol, in Medusa's head. The other is the Pons-Brooks comet passing this conjunction. I will address Pons Brooks in part two of this article.

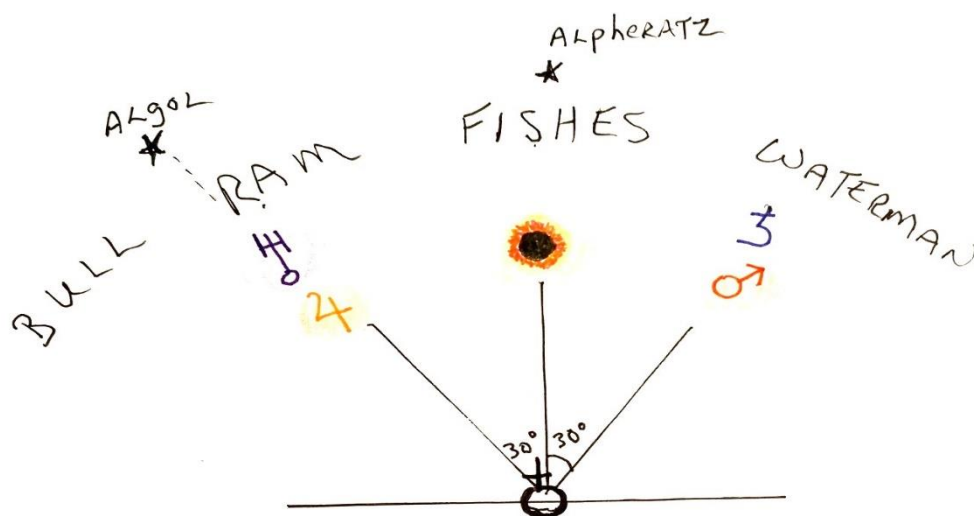
How can we understand the star Algol? It is contained within the greater story of Perseus (Mercury/Micha-el) which one can read for oneself. We must see it in the full context of the battle of Micha-el to raise the dead earthly intelligence to a cosmic intelligence. The battle for our thinking. This story is told in the star constellations spanning from above Taurus/Aries where Perseus stands in the sky all the way down through Pisces, where Pegasus stands above. The myth is a powerful story of the evolution of thinking in the Greek consciousness. Briefly, Perseus, half human/half divine, is sent to slay Medusa, a once beautiful creature, one of the Gorgons also half human/half divine, who has serpents (old symbol of wisdom) as her hair. If one looked into her eyes they would be turned to stone. Perseus, girded in the armour of god, used his shield to protect himself from her gaze and cut off her head. As he was returning home through the air with his winged sandals, he saw Andromeda, the princess daughter of a King and Queen, who was chained to a rock by the sea and about to be devoured by a sea monster, Cetus (the constellation below the ecliptic). He directed the gaze of the head of Medusa on the sea monster turning it to stone. Thus, he rescued Andromeda (the image of the human soul). This is a wonderful story of the evolution of thinking. Perseus and the Greeks were to overcome the old decadent clairvoyance of the serpent-headed Medusa which had become deadly and save the human soul from being devoured by the monster from the sea, the dark forces of instinct, through the new faculties of thought. From out of Andromeda, the rescued soul, Pegasus, the new winged-intelligence, arises which we will come to later.

The star name Algol comes from the Arabian name Ra's al Ghul, the Demon's Head. Al Ghul literally means Mischief-maker, and the name still appears in our word ghoul. The Hebrews knew it as Satan's Head. It has also been associated with Lilith, Adam's legendary first wife, the nocturnal vampire from the lower world. The Chinese called it Piled up Corpses. It was considered by early astrologers as "the most unfortunate, violent, and dangerous star in the heavens." (from *Star Names* by Richard Hinckley Allen, 1889) So, here we have this important conjunction of these two planets in Aries, below Perseus, associated with the potential for new thinking and a new vision for the future, taking place below this star Algol. This presents a challenge to humanity with regard to the potential of Jupiter and Uranus in Aries. Can we work on our soul faculties or do we fall to the Luciferic tendency of Uranus and the deadening force of Medusa's Algol star? Their prior conjunction below Algol was in 1941, which of course we remember as a time of great and terrible world events. There was also in 1940-41 another Great Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, this time in Aries! Though

one cannot form a causal link with these conjunctions, it is worth consideration in relation to this current conjunction to remember the evil at work in the world against human freedom and the new Christic I AM and the group consciousness of nationality which was an attack on the spiritual blossoming that was to unfold in central Europe particularly. In this year alone we had Pearl Harbor; Germany invading the Soviet Union, USA entering the war in Europe, plutonium (the ingredient for the atomic bomb) first produced and isolated.

So, here we can see the two great outer planets of Jupiter and Saturn, which carry world karma and the vision for the future unfolding the ongoing impulse of their meeting in December, 2020. Now they meet these other planets in very particular star backgrounds, all at the time of this solar eclipse. Both pose great questions about the choices and directions we will take as humanity. From these configurations alone without a vision of the power of the spiritual I AM in humanity, one can imagine quite volatile and potentially destructive events on the world plane, from war to earthquakes, shaking the foundations of our existence hopefully to awaken us to our humanity and our true task. In their aspect relationship, will there be possible productive communication or a breakdown and failure in communication? Will we break through to a new consciousness which can lead us into the future? Or will the forces which want to hold on to the past battle for supremacy?

Now we can move to the center of this configuration, the Sun, the cosmic image of the I AM coming into total eclipse. I will elaborate on the eclipse itself in Part 2. But now we will look at its location as part of this tri-fold theme in the heavens, the larger planetary context of the eclipse. The Sun stands in the stars of Pisces, the Fishes, the stars of our cultural age. One fish swims towards Aries, the thinking developed out of the Greco/Roman times and the independence from the gods which it brought to us. The other fish swims towards Aquarius, which heralds the future etheric thinking of the next age. We stand in our age between the two, in the age which Rudolf Steiner once described as the age in which humanity learns to stand on its own two feet. We are well past the mid-point of our age, astronomically (vs. culturally) only a few hundred years from the dawn of the 6th age. We are well into the transition from the old into the new. Preparation must be made. The Sun also stands on this day below the star of the third eye of the Soul, Andromeda, out of which the new winged intelligence, Pegasus arises. Here again we have another picture associated with thinking and with the "eye." Jupiter, the third eye chakra with Uranus, potential for enlightenment, in Aries, are below the demon star, the death eye of Medusa. Sun and Moon are eclipsing under the eye in the forehead of Andromeda.



One other planetary element should also be mentioned. Mercury is close by in this picture, now coming between the Sun and Earth into exact inferior conjunction on April 11th. In his research on the planetary

gestures during the Three Years of Christ's incarnation, Willi Sucher followed the movements of Mercury during that time and brought them into association with the so-called Seven Signs of Christ. The gesture of Mercury, as messenger of the gods, is its movement from superior conjunction where it "picks up" substance from the cosmos and then goes retrograde coming between the Earth and Sun to "hand over" this substance to humanity. One of these seven signs of Christ occurred with the full gesture of Mercury from superior conjunction in Aquarius to inferior conjunction in Pisces. It was the sign of the Feeding of the 5,000. In this sign, the Christ picked up one could say, the "nourishment," the spiritual food from Aquarius, which was then brought down in Pisces to feed the humanity of the future 5th Age (the 5,000). This inferior conjunction of Mercury occurring at the time around this eclipse is a repetition of this sign of the Feeding of the 5,000. It can become for us a living memory, even an archetype for our actions of this original Christic Mercury gesture. We can emulate this deed in our work to bring the living nourishment from the waters of Aquarius to feed the need of our age, which is to begin to work out of the spiritual in practical ways for moving into the future.

I am under no illusions that these planetary alignments at eclipse time as described above have highly explosive possibilities for the world. Yet, as the Great Conjunction heralded, the new initiation, the new annunciation for humanity will be brought about through catharsis, a painful purification and reckoning of our karma in order to awaken in new ways. I believe one can witness in these current challenging times of opposition, violence, and destruction, and perhaps because of it, new signs of spiritual light and hope for the future. There is a kind of awakening happening out of the destruction. We can only be confident that the few, who unite themselves consciously with the guiding spirit of our time, can have a profound effect in countering the efforts of opposition to our human becoming. How can we penetrate into a true seeing of what is really taking place in the current struggles of world powers as a spiritual battle for the soul of humanity? The higher spiritual potentialities of these configurations can be a source of great hope. We must be awake to the realities of the world around us and yet persevere with confidence in "the ever-present help of the spiritual world."

I will close this Part 1 with a quote of Steiner, from a lecture given during the Christmas Conference 100 years ago. Though it can appear quite bleak, it presents a reality as well as a hope for the future.

..the age when humanity, if it wishes to remain in the old materialism – and a great part of humanity does wish to do so – will inevitably fall into a terrible abyss. Such individuals have absolutely no alternative but to go under and become sub-human; they will simply be unable to maintain themselves on the human level...If we would maintain the human level, we must open our senses to the spiritual revelations that have again been made accessible since the end of the 19th century. That is now an absolute necessity.

World History and the Mysteries in the Light of Anthroposophy, Dec 29th 1923

Jonathan Hilton
4.1.2024
Astrosophy.com