

Aquarius

*The Good, the Pious, and the Just are born
When first Aquarius pours out his Urn. – Manilius*

(“Harmony and understanding, Sympathy and trust abounding,
No more falsehoods or derisions, Golden living dreams of visions,
Mystic crystal revelation, And the mind's true liberation, Aquarius”)

In the silent visage of the great Sphinx is etched the attitude of the timeless Watcher who waits "through the ages for the coming of man who shall rend his earth-wrought chains and achieve the destiny of his race." On the opposite side of the zodiac, the Lion looks to the full emergence of the Aquarian Man. The great potentialities of Leo in their highest aspect await the time of their manifestation in the ascending sign of the Water-Bearer. In air the most refined and powerful fire abides.

Aquarius represents the ideal toward which humanity is moving. The name itself is a haunting reminder of the hopes for a better world that many bury along with their all-too-fleeting youth. 'The Age of Aquarius' seems to hesitate in its dawning, whetting the longings of a world-weary generation. **But no thoughtful observer of nature's process could presume that a new birth, transcending these limiting expectations, would take place until the old dead forms had disintegrated and become mere compost for the future.** It has been known since ancient times that Aquarius was bound up with destruction and rebirth. This is why the Water-Bearer is linked with the great floods and with Him who rides out the deluge and lays down the seed of a new order.

Like the Hindu *bhisti* who walks the town prepared to quench one's thirst, the Water-Bearer is shown with a vase that overflows with waters which nurture the soul. The Sumerian god Anu was believed to keep the bread and water of immortal life in heaven, and because of his overflowing vase, was identified in lesser forms as the god of springs and rivers. Another name for Anu was *Gula*, 'the great star,' the Sumerian astronomical designation for Aquarius which literally means 'the Great Urn.' *Gula* was seen as a goddess who was identified with the 'dark waters' and saved the soul from death as it passed into rebirth. The Euphratean designation for Aquarius was Ramanu, 'the Exalted,' who is depicted in one bas-relief as a deity holding an urn from which flows a double stream of water. Another relief shows Ramanu clothed in a robe ornamented with symbols

of five planets and holding a thunderbolt in each hand and accompanied by a leashed dragon. The connection can be made here between thunder and the giving of water through rain, but much more is implied in this elaborate and bold symbol. These meanings are echoed in the Assyrian tablets which depict the Nimrod Epic. In the eleventh tablet, representing the eleventh sign of the zodiac, the god Rimmon is shown together with the emblems of thunder, lightning and rain. The zigzag lines projecting from the hands suggest the serpentine motion of water as well as arcane electricity.

Aquarius is sometimes identified in the mythological figure of Ganymede, the cupbearer of Jupiter who holds an inclined urn, which pours forth a river that runs from his feet and makes its great tour over the entire globe. He was believed to have been carried away from earth by Zeus who admired his youthful beauty. In fact, Ganymede was reduced to the personification of the object of lust. This is, lamentably perhaps, borne out in the personal characteristics of the Aquarian, who is often envied by many, sought after, loved and poorly appreciated by those who may be ungrateful for his bounty. The Aquarian may squander his gifts and even endanger his own interests while friends look on and despair. But he is always saved at the 'eleventh hour' by his keen intellect and the protecting hand of 'God.' All that he has squandered is replenished easily, to be lavished once again. The Buddhist *Nidana* ordinarily associated with Aquarius is *Jati*, which belongs to the future and marks the time when the soul shall break its bonds and realize its unity with its brethren. *Jati* means 'birth' and is strongly reflected in the Aquarian's inclination to give freely of the fruits of his labour. He knows that they cannot but stagnate in his clutches, so his hand is always open, always seeming to deplete his riches but never closing to contain them. Ideas in thought, speech and the written word are constantly forthcoming while the inner nature maintains a cool agnosticism and confident distance from froth. The inwardly reserved person abstains from identifying with the outer vestures which his soul-powers may assume. **Thus, the fully developed Aquarian is not protective of any form but acts to break them up and permit the birth of ever-new modes to take their place.** If an Aquarian does not manifest the positive potential of this sign but instead is passive, this tendency to disintegration of external forms may express itself as a hypersensitivity to criticism and an inclination to 'fall apart' with its impact. Instead of transcending the pairs of opposites, the weak Aquarian becomes crushed by them. If Capricorn symbolizes a solidly independent, rock-like stance, Aquarius represents a crumbling hillside of granite. The lessons of

Capricorn must be learned well before the soul is ready to blossom fully in Aquarius.

The lightning and thunderbolt are symbols of the mighty force that has been emerging with increasing strength from the sign of Scorpio onwards. **The wavy glyph of Aquarius signifies the final manifestation of the undulatory forces of evolution. Like two serpents, the one above is reflected in its lower counterpart, the lines indicate both electricity and its fluid medium, water.** The sting of electricity is like that of the scorpion which propels Scorpio into conscious awareness of the evolutionary task ahead. This sting, like a quick bolt, breaks up the complacent stance of the personality and forces it to abandon obsolete perspectives.

The sacred alchemical phenomenon of self-transmutation is powerfully symbolized in a vision experienced by a gifted seer. In this vision there were two vases linked together with a golden chain. The upper vase was beautifully sculpted of translucent amber and filled with a shimmering liquid. The lower vase was fashioned of crude earthenware and contained dark and muddy water. A hand appeared and gently tilted the amber vase, allowing its luminous contents to pour gently into the clay jug below. The waters mingled and wherever the shimmering liquid fell, the dark fluid seethed and boiled. Bubbles rose and burst upon the surface in many colours, while the murky waters slowly began to change. Gradually, with steadily altering aspect, the waters became as clear and pellucid as the contents of the amber vessel. The unification of the Higher and Lower Self had been brought to a final and irreversible consummation. Thoth-Hermes succeeds in reconciling Horus and Set in that age yet fully to emerge – when the transmutation of the lower by the higher is universally possible.

At Esneh in Egypt there is a planisphere which depicts the goddess Maat with her arms fully outstretched like the beam of a scale. She represents unchanging Truth and Equilibrium and is seated beside Hapi, the Water-Bearer, who is the 'Man made Perfect.' Her two arms point to the past and future and her head is an upraised feather which balances the consummation of evolution. **The combined figures symbolize the equilibrium of balanced harmony and synthesis which are the hallmarks of the Aquarian influence.** After the breaking up of the old, the loosening of the bonds, there is a formation of the new which reflects the essentially synthetic nature of soul-evolution. After ages of culling the wheat of wisdom from the dead chaff of form, it is brought to the portals of culmination.

Thoth-Hermes is repeatedly connected with Hapi as both the bearer of the water vessel and keeper of the Gates of Heaven, as Nebo was the Lord of Wisdom at Bab-el, the Gate of the Gods. The Egyptians held that drinking the Supernal Waters provided the key to the Immortal Gates. The *Book of the Dead* records this in vivid prose:

May the abyss of water be opened to me by Tehuti-Hapi (Thoth-Hapi), the lord of the horizon in my name of Opener.

The horizon alluded to here is the meeting place between heaven and earth, and Thoth-Hapi, its Lord, is the Divine Wisdom which becomes manifest in the fully Aquarian mind. **Both reason and intuition become balanced like the arms of the goddess Maat.** Like the other airy signs, Aquarius tends to harmonize and synthesize that which, in some contexts, would seem to be at odds. But to express fully the fruits of this ability requires a separation out from common lines of thinking and courage to fully explore entirely original modes of thought and expression. In this sense Aquarius and the other airy signs are like spiral movements which permit the completion of an upward curvature along the evolving zodiacal wheel. That this takes place in the case of isolated individuals, there is no doubt, but it is the universalization of this ability which is longingly anticipated by all those who are not steeped in either gross materialism or pathetic salvationism.

The originality of thought necessary for this transformation can be acquired, in a time still heavily encased in the old modes of consciousness, only by swimming valiantly against the current of Lethe's waters. **At every turn, the true Aquarian will find himself at odds with the sentiments of the present.** He will be one of that lonely tribe that ventures onto the uncharted continents, turning away from the limiting guidelines of contemporary civilization. He will fight his way against the prevailing tide and find the source of the river itself and, in doing so, will discover Aquarius face to face. The river is like the lines of life that stream out like arteries from the solar source. Great indeed must be that being who holds their initial flow within his vessel. Like the heart of the sun containing, in the rhythm of its beat, the fluid that enlivens the world, the vessel passes on the precious water.

When will we let go the myriad forms and emulate the heroic pioneers of mankind who struggle ceaselessly against the 'evidence,' against the muddy tide? We who are privileged to live in the present can alchemize our entire sphere of

influence by focusing steadily upon the Akashic archetype of the Man of the Future.
